

Bethan Stevens, *India-proofs of wood-engravings by the Brothers Dalziel* (British Museum, 2016) [dataset]

<https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/search?keyword=%22Bethan%20Stevens%22&keyword=dalziel>

India-proofs of wood-engravings by the Brothers Dalziel is a monograph-length dataset (over 70,000 words), sole-authored by Stevens. Enabled by an AHRC Fellowship Grant (2015-17), it catalogues the British Museum's Dalziel Archive: a comprehensive visual archive of more than 54,149 proof engravings, made by the leading image-making firm of Victorian London, Dalziel Brothers, who collected their oeuvre systematically between 1839 and 1893, pasting their works into 49 large albums that comprise the archive. Acquired by the British Museum in 1913, the Dalziel Archive's fragility and complexity (with many images disconnected from their original contexts and without any attribution) meant that it remained uncatalogued and largely unused until Stevens' project. Her work was able to foreground the company's radically collaborative methods of commissioning and engraving works of art, bringing previously unknown illustrations to light, with often anonymous designers (including women such as Margaret Dalziel, or Ann and Mary Byfield, working in an industry dominated by men) identified for the first time. It also developed innovative methods for recovering and re-contextualising images and artists otherwise lost in the archive. The resulting dataset, once integrated into the British Museum's Collection Online, transformed an obscure archive into an open access resource with global reach.

Dalziel Brothers made landmark prints including all the illustrations to Lewis Carroll's *Alice* books (1865 and 1871), Pre-Raphaelite illustrations to Tennyson's poetry, Edward Lear's *Nonsense* illustrations, numerous illustrations to novels by Charles Dickens and Anthony Trollope, and many more. Stevens' dataset is divided into 49 substantial catalogue entries – one per album – totalling more than 70,000 words of new research. The research is visual, literary, historical and bibliographic. It includes thousands of new attributions and is illustrated by nearly 14,000 professional digital photographs taken under Stevens's supervision as part of the research project. These photographs record every album page that comprises the archive.

The 49 substantial catalogue entries that comprise the dataset include the following information:

Each of Stevens's records include a detailed summary of discoveries about the cultural and bibliographic history of prints in the archive. Most of the Dalziel Archive consists of visual documents only, with little or no textual information about the proof illustrations pasted into the albums. Stevens' project matched prints to Victorian book editions, periodical publications and advertising campaigns; her extended catalogue descriptions trace the publishing histories of individual prints. Where publication details have not been traceable, important information about historical, literary and cultural material is recorded. The dataset includes details of commercial firms who worked with Dalziel, and numerous records of cultural-historical interest, from representations of war and cultural imperialism, engagement with the Great Exhibition of 1851 and reproductions of fifteenth-century Italian

paintings, to important domestic histories, recording amateur theatricals, diagrams of gendered keep-fit routines, and plumbing and sanitation equipment.

Records include thousands of new attributions of illustrations and prints. Victorian wood engraving was a collaborative medium in which the engraving firm Dalziel Brothers worked with hundreds of artists who made drawings for their prints. These include famous artists such as John Tenniel, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, John Everett Millais, George Cruikshank and others. They also include hundreds of little-known women and men who earned their livings as illustrators. The research project examined every print in the archive for a monogram, signature, annotation, or other physical evidence of authorship. It also examined textual and paratextual data in Victorian publications for evidence of new authorship. As a result, thousands of prints in the archive have here been attributed to a designing artist for the first time. Coded annotations found pencilled into the archive meant that ephemeral prints such as covers to yellowback novels could now often be attributed to named artists. Each catalogue entry has a list of artists whose work is represented in that album, with a list of print numbers indicating which works they designed. Biographical information about these artists has also been recorded in the British Museum's linked database of biographies.

Catalogue descriptions include a physical account of the album and technical analysis of the artworks within it. This presents considerable new information about the making of mass visual culture, particularly with regard to wood engraving and related media. For example entries trace the archiving of monochrome proofs of colour blocks, revealing the Dalziels' role in colour printing (working from woodblocks, and using other media including aquatint and photomechanical processes); the inclusion of pencil drawings and annotations that reveal engravers' working practices; and the emergence of photomechanical processes such as line blocks, increasingly used alongside wood-engraving in Dalziel's firm. The use of overlay proofs (indicating these were often the earliest proofs made of a print); the inclusion of drawing, proofing corrections and annotation; the inclusion of delivery dates and other notes about production.

The catalogue also includes an additional 26 descriptions of previously uncatalogued printing-blocks engraved by Dalziel. *India-proofs of wood-engravings by the Brothers Dalziel* brings together substantial new data on authorship, medium and publishing and cultural histories, published on the British Museum's world-leading, open-access museum database (with 1.3 million page views a month). It makes publicly available new research on a unique print-cultural archive, which is key to our understanding of the explosion of modern mass visual culture that developed through the nineteenth century and beyond.

Dissemination and Access

Steven's Dalziel dataset has provided an innovative curatorial model for the British Museum and the basis for further research, including Bethan Stevens, 'Wood Engraving as Ghostwriting: The Dalziel Brothers, Losing One's Name, and Other Hazards of the Trade'. *Textual Practice*, 33.4 (2017), 645–77; and Bethan Stevens, 'News from the Thames (Blake! There's Something in the Water)' in Helen P Bruder, and Tristanne J Connolly (eds.) *Beastly Blake* (Basingstoke Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 253–91.

Access to the dataset is through the British Museum's Collections Online. This link – <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/search?keyword=%22Bethan%20Stevens%22&keyword=dalziel> – opens a page which includes images of all the 49 albums in the Dalziel archive. Clicking on an image allows access to all the engravings in that album, with a left-hand marginal catalogue entry that includes date, artistic attributions, publication information, and contextual data (as described above). The first album that appears on this page is no. 49 (1893).