

Most Sacred Things: Report on completion of CHRG project GASR010112

Project Team

PI: Professor Daniel Pett; **Co-I:** Dr Suzanne Reynolds; **Project Researcher:** Dr Lisa Gee; **Consultant Academic:** Dr Naomi Billingsley; **Digital Humanities Specialist:** Georgina Doji (until Nov 21); **Consultancy:** Philo van Kemenade, Alexa Steinbrück; **Research support:** Jo Vine, Amanda Bluck

This project completed all the goals laid out in the original application document, most notably the fully working pilot digital edition of a selection of William Hayley's correspondence, which can be accessed through the Fitzwilliam Museum website research pages at <https://amor.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk> & <https://amor.fitz.ms>

We created this edition as follows:

- Dr Gee selected just under 100 letters from Hayley's correspondence for imaging, and undertook transcription, analysis and research, in discussion with Reynolds.
- Dr Gee completed 78 days of research to enable the above task and subsequent tasks laid out below.
- The Fitzwilliam Museum's head of Photography, Michael Jones, professionally photographed each page of the selected correspondence, generating over a 1000 raw images and surrogates to FADGI standards.
- These images are now available in the Museum's Digital Asset Management (Portfolio) and Collections management software (Axiell) for public use and have been processed into IIIF format.
- Gee and Reynolds ran three palaeography workshops for undergraduate and postgraduate students and volunteers to kickstart the transcription campaign.
- Every page of the letters has been transcribed through the application of citizen science with 15 individuals (many of them attendees at the palaeography workshops) contributing time to the project; each transcription was checked at least twice.
- 3 days of User Interface design was delivered by van Kemenade and Steinbrück to inform the design of the pilot digital edition
- 3 days of User Experience consultancy was delivered by van Kemenade and Steinbrück to inform development of the pilot digital edition
- 3 return trips with accommodation for Dr Billingsley to Cambridge from Manchester to participate in the research activities and advise on content and approach

The digital edition was constructed within the following timeframe:

- 20 days of Fitzwilliam Museum Digital and IT staff (Pett & Doji) was delivered to:
 - Configure server for hosting final web resource (1 day)
 - Configure Omeka and Mediawiki for back end infrastructure (2 days)
 - Development of the front end of the project in Laravel and Vue, to include visual language developed by van Kemenade & Steinbrück, mapping, API development and ingest, search engine integration (16 days)
 - Deposition of code with Zenodo (CERN), Google Analytics setup and preparing open source archives (1/2 day)
 - Collections management adjustments and server maintenance (1/2 day)
- 3 years of reserved instance Amazon Web Services EC2 server hosting has been purchased.

Other outputs and impacts

- Due to the pandemic, the co-authored paper was replaced by a single author publication by Dr Gee entitled 'A Task enough to make one frantic': William Hayley's Memorialising', *European Journal of Life Writing*, 9 (2020): DOI <https://doi.org/10.21827/ejw.9.36899> and a blog post on King's College London's Strandlines: <https://www.strandlines.london/2021/03/15/john-flaxman-420-strand/>
- Gee and Reynolds co-hosted Hayley2020, the first conference dedicated to William Hayley and the Fitzwilliam Museum's first ever online symposium (90 registrants and high attendance levels of over two days (12-13 November 2020): <https://hayley.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/conference>. A volume of essays arising from the conference is now under consideration for Palgrave Studies in Life Writing series, and several heritage professionals expressed strong interest in the digital platform.
- Fitzwilliam Museum's social media outputs will broadcast this project over the coming months.
- Gee will ensure the site is widely shared on appropriate networks and forums, and will present the project at a workshop – *Before Mail Art - Early Modern and Nineteenth Century Visual Letters* – at the Manchester Centre for Correspondence Studies on 23/02/22
- The project has been crucial to showcasing the value of the Museum's archives. The Fitz has recently recruited its first post dedicated to this area of the collection and to unlocking its research potential.
- Successful application to British Academy Small Grants scheme, and unsuccessful application to AHRC research fellowships scheme.