

The Boyce Papers: The Letters and Diaries of Joanna Boyce, Henry Wells and George Price Boyce edited by Sue Bradbury. Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2019. 2 vols. xiii, 1144 pp.+ 44 colour plates, 10 b/w illus, 14 line illus. ISBN 978-1-78327-050-7. £95.00; \$145.00.

The Boyce Papers, edited by Sue Bradbury, offers an engrossing glimpse into the lives of three figures on the periphery of the Pre-Raphaelite circle: Joanna Mary Boyce (later Wells, 1831-1861), George Price Boyce (1826-1897), and Henry Tanworth Wells (1828-1903). The two-volume collection includes excerpted letters and diaries of all three artists, as well as several works of art criticism penned by Joanna and a collection of writings by Alice Street (1860-1945), the daughter of Joanna Boyce and Henry Wells.

Bradbury, an established editor, transitioned into the role of author with the publication of *Joanna, George and Henry: A Pre-Raphaelite Tale of Art, Love and Friendship* (2012), a triple biography based upon the documents printed in *The Boyce Papers*. Bradbury's interest in her subjects grew from her acquaintance with the artists' descendants, who lovingly preserved their extant art works, correspondence, and diaries. Bradbury's enthusiasm for the interconnected stories of the Boyce siblings and Henry Wells is evident here in the abundance of narrative detail and charm that indeed make for a good story. For example, the courtship between Joanna Boyce and Wells offers a fascinating look into the fraught nature of Victorian romances, particularly when (as was the case with Joanna) a woman chose to delay marriage in pursuit of professional success.

The tale of how these letters and diaries survived since the nineteenth century is every bit as compelling as the dramatic romance of Boyce and Wells. Much credit is due to Alice Street, who meticulously transcribed the letters and diaries with the intention of publishing the documents in a memoir of her mother's life – a life that was cut tragically short when Joanna died after giving birth at age 30. The published memoir never materialized, but Street's transcriptions proved invaluable when in 1942 the original letters and diaries were destroyed in the bombardment of London during the war. Many of Joanna's paintings and drawings, still in the possession of the family, were also destroyed during the air raids. For this reason, Street's transcriptions and Joanna's remaining extant works are especially precious.

Of the three figures at the heart of *The Boyce Papers*, it is the Boyce siblings that emerge as the most robust and engaging historical figures. As a woman artist active during the 1850s, a key turning point in Victorian art, Joanna provides tremendous insight into the challenges women faced when pursuing professional careers as artists. George worked primarily as a water-colourist specializing in landscape, and associated with key members of . Her