Charlotte Brontë’s recently rediscovered manuscript: BOOK OF RYHMES will be on view for the first time in more than a century at the booth of James Cummins Bookseller in the New York Antiquarian Book Fair on Thursday 21 April.

This beautiful miniature manuscript, titled ‘A Book of Ryhmes by Charlotte Brontë: Sold by Nobility, and Printed by herself’, is a collection of 15 poems written by Brontë at the age of seven and eight. The fifteen-page manuscript, smaller than a playing card, is dated December 1829, and is attributed to the author by Mrs. Gaskell’s Life of Charlotte Brontë (1857) from the transcription of Charlotte’s own handwritten catalogue of the books she wrote in 1829.


This book is written by myself but I pretend that the Marquis of Duro & Lord Charles Wellesley in the Young Men’s World have written one like it, & the Songs marked in the Index so * are written by the Marquis of Duro and those marked so † are written by Lord Charles Wellesley. At the end of this Book of “Rhythm” she refers to the secondary world created by the Brontë children amongst themselves, while asserting her authorship and creative control over that world.

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“Little girls write a great deal about Angria and Glasstown, with wrapping paper inhabitants, while the boys prefer to read the Old Testament. At the head of the page she also alludes to one of her best known early productions, Tales of the Islanders: “I began this book, the second volume of the Tales of the Islanders, 2 magazines for December, and the Characters of the most Celebrated Men of the Present time on the 26th of October, 1829, & finished them all by the 17 of December, 1829”.

This shared activity cemented what Mr Brontë called ‘a little society amongst themselves’ (Transactions of the Brontë Society) that fostered creativity and imaginative planning.

From the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography: “The content of the young Brontës’ imaginary world remained a secret from the eyes of adults and strangers. This shared activity cemented what Mr Brontë called ‘a little society amongst themselves’ (Transactions of the Brontë Society) that fostered creativity and imaginative planning.”

The miniature manuscripts were put away, but were known to Charlotte’s biographer Mrs. Gaskell. Beginning in the 1890s, the manuscripts were sold to collectors in Britain and America. The manuscript was sold in the dispersion of the effects of the second owner, a private individual who wishes to make certain of the work’s future preservation.

James Cummins Bookseller of New York City and Maggs Bros. of London will be exhibiting and offering the manuscript for sale on behalf of the owner, a private individual who wishes to make certain of the work’s future preservation.