

The Handwritten Worlds of Early Modern England

An NEH Institute for College Teachers

Directed by Steven W. May

at the Folger Shakespeare Library

20 June to 29 July 2005

What accounts of manuscript cultures can we provide in our college classrooms? How, and why, will those accounts enrich our understanding of the period? In addressing these large questions, quite specific concerns will guide discussion throughout the institute and facilitate some provisional conclusions. Working directly with important classes of surviving materials, we will carefully analyze manuscripts, providing bibliographical descriptions, and attending to the identities of scribal hands, the means of production, the economics of trade, and the stages of transmission—where such matters can be deduced—and discussing alternative means of analysis where they cannot be. We will query such notions as authorship, originality, intellectual property, the associations of gender with particular kinds of writing, and the dimensions—and relations—of public and private, amateur and professional. Who participated in the creation and reception of certain types of manuscripts, how, and to what ends? Such analyses will open our discussions about the roles these manuscripts had in formulating and sustaining communities of readers and writers, as well as about the foundations of various communal identities.

In seeking to resituate manuscripts in a larger discursive world, the scope of the institute's inquiry will be broad, roughly encompassing the centuries from 1400 to 1700. We will begin our investigations at a point in time before the existence of a print trade in England, acknowledging the mature trade of manuscript production and circulation in the late middle ages and examining the transitions from one dominant mode of publication to another. We will next consider a transitional period, when the book trade in England is fully developed, to examine the exchanges among manuscript, print, and oral cultures in such genres as poetry, song, and drama. Finally, we will extend our investigations to the late seventeenth-century, continuing to explore multiple relations among inscriptive media, to discern parallel realms of circulation in specific knowledge communities, and to consider the causes for the survivals of manuscript circulation. The scope of the institute will thus add a diachronic dimension to our inquiries, asking why, for example, certain topics and types of documents were virtually restricted to manuscript circulation long after the arrival of the printing press. We will ask as well what genres during the period in question were gradually monopolized by print culture as they simultaneously disappeared from manuscript circulation. There will be yet further questions: Did manuscript texts circulate at all levels of society? Did literate classes read printed and transcribed materials in similar quantities with similar expectations? Did the ratios of printed and transcribed materials or, indeed, of readers and writers, evolve or remain constant during the centuries under review?

A key feature of these investigations will be an introduction of the many resources available. These resources are the materials themselves—the holdings of the Folger Shakespeare Library, to begin with, but also the modern printed editions and the growing number of documents now available digitally on the websites of research libraries and in other electronic media. The institute's resources are also, crucially, its community of scholars. The institute gathers an expert, international visiting faculty at the forefront of contemporary studies of manuscripts. Our sixteen scholar-participants will bring their own research and teaching agendas, and will welcome the visiting scholars, in turn, into ongoing investigations. The Folger Curator of

Manuscripts will consult closely with the institute on the use of rare materials and codirect informal tutorials with the program director. Steven May, Professor of English at Georgetown College, will direct the institute. Professor May is an accomplished editor of manuscript materials, most recently of *Queen Elizabeth I: Selected Works* (Washington Square Press, 2004). In the long course of preparing his monumental *Bibliography and First-Line Index of English Verse, 1559-1603*, Professor May has worked in more than one hundred archives, amassing references to more than thirty-thousand individual poems. The *Index* is a foundational work, one that gives scholars of this generation the materials with which to mount fresh investigations of primary sources, challenge conventional expectations, and perhaps revise literary histories.

The institute does not require or aim to produce an expertise in paleography or editing. Rather, "The Handwritten Worlds of Early Modern England" gathers experts in those fields to work with college teachers to focus upon the many questions that figuratively crowd the margins of paleographical instruction. What materials survive? In what numbers and in what contexts? How do we incorporate new materials and new strategies for reading them into a fuller, richer picture of cultural production? With the series of engagements with authoritative visiting faculty described below, the selected participants will collaboratively articulate a set of terms by which the status of manuscripts may be assessed in the literary, cultural, and social histories of England.

Week One (20-24 June): The Creation and Transmission of Literary Texts in Transition

Faculty: **Dr. Julia Boffey** (Professor of Medieval Studies, Queen Mary, University of London) and **Dr. A. S. G. Edwards** (Professor of English, University of Victoria)

The institute begins by exploring the roles of manuscripts in English literary culture before and immediately after the advent of the printing press. Working together, Drs. Boffey and Edwards will vividly illustrate the effects of media on the means of transmission of two distinct bodies of verse. They will first illustrate some of the distinctive features of fifteenth-century manuscript collections of Chaucer's works. They will then survey the full range of early printed editions of Chaucer's works, with Folger examples of the work of William Caxton, Wynkyn de Worde, John Stow, and others. Participants will also examine the processes by which anonymous medieval lyrics—a body of relatively ephemeral ballads and songs—were transmitted from handwritten to printed collections. Drawing from examples in printed editions and facsimiles, the group will review the range of forms in which these lyrics survive, and consider the evidence for different kinds of compilation—authorial, generic, topical, or audience-specific. The group will then compare the processes of transmission of this much less cohesive body of texts with the more readily definable stages in the transmission of the works of 'major authors'. Both cases—that of a seminal author in the tradition of English literature and that of more ephemeral verse—throw into sharp relief the social contexts in which these manuscripts were compiled, along with their intended audiences and their functions as entertainment or moral and political instruction. Using particular manuscripts and printed books from the Folger collection as well as modern facsimile editions and microfilm, participants will develop their skills in describing the practicalities of textual production during the Middle English period while also developing their own source-lists of pedagogical materials.

Week Two (27 June-1 July) Controversy & Contestation: Religious and Legal Manuscripts

Faculty: **Dr. Mary Erler** (Professor of English, Fordham University) and **Dr. Laura Gowing** (Reader in Early Modern History, Kings College London)

Participants will continue to explore a period of transition from one dominant mode of publication to another with a type of reading which could be said to be everyone's reading: Books of Hours. Mary Erler, author of *Women, Reading, and Piety in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge, 2002), will introduce participants to these devotional materials—which ostensibly

signal a membership in a common culture, but which also register the social divisions of the time. Books of Hours, or primers, were the most common type of manuscript individually owned throughout Europe from the mid-thirteenth century through the early sixteenth century. At least 1,400 manuscript Books of Hours survive from this period, while some 760 printed editions of these works were published between 1485 and 1530. Professor Erler will assign individual investigations of examples from the collection, coaching participants to consider such questions as who owned Books of Hours, how widespread they were at different levels of society, what the patterns and networks of production and distribution were, and how those patterns may have changed in the decades under consideration. Participants will also consider the nature of literacy as suggested by what must have been complex accommodations to the mostly Latin texts. Participants will explore the multiple—competing—orthodoxies of the primers, reformers' condemnations of them, patterns of ownership, levels of expense in production, and even the diversions to secular uses by their owners, with many copies recording family births and deaths, notes about friends and colleagues, and even serving as albums amicorum. Moreover, the traces of ownership found in them reveal to an inordinate degree that they were used, and their contents expanded, by women.

Participants will continue to enlarge their repertoires of manuscript sources as well as their investigations of women's experiences with two classes of legal documents from the early Tudor period—the records of ecclesiastical courts and the local assizes. Dr. Laura Gowing has a close familiarity with such records, having brought them to bear on her research on women's history and its intersections with the law, work represented by her first book, *Domestic Dangers: Women, Words, and Sex in Early Modern London* (Oxford, 1996). She will present the institute with selected copies of depositions, informations, and examinations from court records and discuss with them the availability of such source materials. Defamation, marriage disputes, illegitimacy, fornication, homicide, and witchcraft are among the most common topics of these most quotidian of documents. Such records comprise another type of manuscript document, known to all classes of society, yet still today remaining virtually unpublished. Social historians have begun to demonstrate the many ways such records allow us to explore the dynamic relations between power and the law and to recover marginal or suppressed historical voices: those of women, the poor, and the illiterate. With the group, Dr. Gowing will discuss how legal records tell stories, how freely women told stories in court, how legal narratives replicate or rework other cultural discourses, and why witchcraft depositions might be classified as a genre unique to manuscript culture.

Week Three (5-8 July) The Transmission of Texts: Verse Miscellanies and Private Letters
Faculty: **Dr. Henry Woudhuysen** (Professor of English, University College London) and **Dr. Alan Stewart** (Visiting Professor of English and Comparative Literature, Columbia University)

In this week, the institute moves into the middle period of its investigations. The printing press was no longer a novelty, and it was disseminating materials to a much larger audience than was possible with scribal publication. There was nevertheless a stubborn resistance to print in the case of poetic verse, as participants will explore with Dr. Woudhuysen, author of *Sir Philip Sidney and the Circulation of Manuscripts, 1558-1640* (Clarendon Press, 1996). Such authors as Sir Philip Sidney, John Donne, and even George Herbert thrived in a "coterie" culture of relatively private circulation. It was a culture that denigrated print, and indeed much of the verse of this period—including that of these major authors—was not published until after their deaths. Our current reception of this verse, paradoxically, is most frequently indebted to the work of editors who have until very recently privileged the early printed versions over the manuscript evidence. Of course, as participants will trace out in several case studies of collation, the manuscript evidence can be fragmented, startling in its variances, and always open to further

discoveries. It can exist in schoolboy commonplace books, in anthologies created by individual readers, in volumes prepared by professional scribes. What does one make, for instance, of the twenty-four lines of verses from Sidney handwritten on the endleaf of a printed volume of Tasso's verse—a recent addition to the Folger collection (MS Add 1216)? Or of the recently revised attribution of a pocket-size bound manuscript of heroic couplets to Thomas Traherne (MS V.a.70)? For whom were such productions intended? Mindful of Harold Love's definition of a range of modes of "scribal publication," Dr. Woudhuysen will pose the question of how we can distinguish verse miscellanies of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that were compiled for individual use from those prepared by professional scribes. And how can we incorporate a truer sense of reception and adaptation into our classrooms? Participants will report on other verse miscellanies in the collection, to consider how the patterns of circulation may have differed from the coterie model—or whether or not there were intersecting audiences. In exploring these associated problems, participants will confront related questions of the transmissional processes requisite for the creation of any manuscript anthology. They will also continue their studies of practical matters through examples of the key artifacts that contribute to a fully developed manuscript anthology, instruments including writing-tables, tablets, and notebooks.

Letters were the most frequently circulated of all manuscripts in the early seventeenth century. Participants will study modes of letter writing with Dr. Alan Stewart, Associate Director of the AHRB Centre for Editing Lives and Letters at the University of London and a co-curator (with Heather Wolfe) of a forthcoming exhibition at the Folger on the subject. Participants will consider how surviving letters reflect (or contradict) the various prescriptive models of letter-writing that evolved from the medieval *ars dictaminis* through the writings of Erasmus and Juan Luis Vives to the Elizabethan "books of presidents [precedents]" edited by such figures as William Fulwood, Angel Day, and Thomas Phaer. With examples from the letter-rich Loseley papers and Bagot papers, the institute will examine both the language and the physical realities of writing, sending, and receiving letters in the age of quill pen and iron gall ink. They will attend to the preparation of pens, paper, and writing space, the folding, sealing, and posting of letters, and the use of physical space in letters to signal social deference or intimacy.

Week Four (11-15 July) Manuscripts and the Early Modern Theatre

Faculty: **Dr. Paul Werstine** (Professor of Modern Languages, University of Western Ontario) and **Dr. Susan Cerasano** (Edgar W.B. Fairchild Professor of Literature, Colgate University)

In this week, Professor Werstine, general editor of the New Variorum Shakespeare and co-editor of the New Folger Shakespeare Editions, will guide participants through a reconsideration of the great variety of dramatic manuscripts that have come down to us from the playhouses of London. Because virtually no manuscripts of Shakespeare's plays are extant, it has been easy to overlook the predominance of dramatic manuscripts in early modern theatrical production. Not only would actors' "parts" have been written out, but also company promptbooks, authors' playbooks, and presentation copies were in manuscript. The plays from the period that reached print were only a small portion of the drama. Contemporary theatre historians and editors have unprecedented access to dramatic manuscripts, and they are actively exploring them, in the process revolutionizing our understanding of the life of the theatre as well as challenging received scholarly notions.

A transcript of John Fletcher's tragedy, *Bonduca*, will be among the dramatic manuscripts to be explored by the group. The transcript was made by the scrivener Edward Knight of what he called the author's "fowle papers." This was the name then given to a draft manuscript that could be expected to be superseded by a "fair copy." The famous *Sir Thomas More* manuscript will provide a chance to study what seems to be in part such a fair copy made by dramatist Anthony Munday for use in the theatre—but, as participants will see, it has been heavily censored by the Master of the Revels Sir Edmund Tilney, as well as revised and

supplemented by several other hands, one of which, it has been argued by some, may be Shakespeare's. While *More* may never have been staged, *The Honest Mans Fortune* (also in Knight's hand) and *The Second Maidens Tragedy* both show us kinds of manuscripts that were used as the basis of productions. Finally, among the Folger Library's own holdings is *The Beggars Bush*, a fine presentation copy (like Knight's of *Bonduca*) evidently made to be read by a well-to-do patron of the theatre. The Folger also has one of dramatist's Arthur Wilson's copies of his *The Inconstant Lady*, which the institute will compare to a photographic facsimile of another extant copy in his hand at the Bodleian Library.

Dr. Susan Cerasano will draw upon her extensive archival research in order to flesh out a portrait of the theatrical world. Some of the Folger's manuscripts and printed transcriptions of manuscripts from other repositories will be used to reconstruct both the physical fabric and what she considers the "human fabric" of the English stage, 1590-1620. The diary of the prominent theatre entrepreneur Philip Henslowe (owner of the Rose Playhouse) will serve as a primary focus, as will some of the unique, theatre-related manuscripts from the Henslowe-Alleyn papers. Other manuscripts and printed transcriptions of manuscripts will explore aspects of theatrical architecture and construction, actor biography, and the organization and management of acting companies. The survey of manuscripts relating to the theatres and their personnel will include economic records, probate records, personal letters, parish records, property records, London civic records, and records from the civil law courts.

Week Five (18-22 July) Contexts of Class and Gender in Seventeenth-Century Manuscripts

Faculty: **Dr. Victoria Burke** (Associate Professor of English, University of Ottawa)

and **Dr. Adam Fox** (Professor of Economic and Social History, University of Edinburgh)

Pushing forward into the seventeenth century, the institute will adapt strategies from the reading of literary texts for the reading of non-literary manuscripts. With works including account and receipt books, letters, diaries, mothers' legacies, and autobiographical writing, they will also consider what this apparently non-literary writing can reveal about literary culture. Here, the surviving evidence proliferates, and here the involvement of women comes to the fore. Dr. Victoria Burke is a founding member of the "Perdita Project" as well as a member of the "Brown University Women Writers Project," the two premiere online guides to women's writings. She will introduce participants to those resources, as well as to a range of documents in the Folger collection owned and written by identifiable women. With Anne Southwell's miscellany (MS V.b.198), for instance, participants will examine the practices of compilation that permitted Southwell to mix her own original poetry with transcriptions of poems by Henry King, Arthur Gorges, and others, including Walter Raleigh (with the latter poems attributed to herself). In order to appreciate the heterogeneity of much manuscript writing of the period, seminar participants will look to Dorothy Philips' collection of sermons, receipts, and family records (MS V.a.347). Easy assumptions about gender roles in the production and circulation of mid-Stuart manuscripts will be disabused through examination of Folger MS X.d.24, which was compiled by a husband and wife with the surprising twist that its political poems were transcribed in the hand of Mary Cruso while the cookery receipts were entered by Timothy Cruso.

Adam Fox will lead a comparative exploration of the production and circulation of the written word at the lower levels of society and within differently—if no less carefully—defined local communities. Songbooks and broadsheets testify to this corpus of handwritten work circulating among the poor on the literate fringe of early Stuart England. Participants will examine Folger MS V.a.308 for its examples of verse in dialect—in this case Yorkshire and Lancashire, complete with a glossary and pronunciation key at the end. Dr. Fox will draw further examples from his own *Oral and Literate Culture in England, 1500-1700* (Clarendon Press, 2000). Participants will consider the roles such verse had in its communities as well as the ways in which this body of hand-written verse both reflected the norms of "orthodox" print culture and

contributed its own rhetoric and even entire texts to the dominant culture. Members of the group will also present case studies of these materials to examine the reciprocal exchanges of print and manuscript, elite and popular, and even oral and literate cultures.

Week Six (25-29 July) Manuscripts at Home and in Public in the late Seventeenth Century
Faculty: **Dr. Margaret J.M. Ezell** (The John Paul Abbot Professor in Liberal Arts, Texas A&M University) and **Dr. Harold Love** (Professor of Literary, Visual, and Performance Studies emeritus, Monash University)

In the concluding week of the institute, participants will conduct one final, searching examination of documents representative of the on-going uses of handwritten texts, in this case, on the brink of the Enlightenment, some two centuries after the advent of the printing press. They do so in the company of two highly influential scholars, each with an expertise that extends well beyond the designated period or any single class of documents. The session, therefore, promises a rigorous re-examination of the group's own provisional methodologies and conclusions as they have developed. Definitions of public and private spheres provide the context. To begin, Dr. Margaret Ezell will present the group with an especially challenging class of materials: the "domestic" or family composite volume, bound and preserved in individual households often over several generations. This fairly common class of late-Renaissance manuscripts ordinarily includes as many different kinds of voices as they do materials—from financial records and inventories to poems, records of births and deaths, devotional exercises, and personal memoranda. Dr. Ezell will invite the group to consider an alternative to the typical choices made by editors in search of materials by individual authors as well as by librarians attempting to catalogue an item. What if (she will ask) we take the nature of the volume to be just as it is—a multi-authored, multi-functional, multi-gendered, multi-generational mode of textual transmission? How does that affect our own professional habits of reading?

Moving from the household to the city, Harold Love will direct the institute's attention to the significance of manuscript circulation for metropolitan culture in the second half of the seventeenth century, especially after the 1666 loss of the great oral information centers of Paul's Walk and the Royal Exchange in London. He will invite participants to consider the social, economic, and political factors that sustained the "informational economy" of the capitols of London, Dublin, and Edinburgh. Participants will study the political documents and clandestine "state" satires that circulated. They will study the work of enterprising "scribal publishers" such as Robert Julian and John Somerton. They will investigate the court at Westminster, the Inns of Court, and the non-conformist meeting houses—along with the celebrated coffee houses of the capitol—as centers of still vibrant manuscript cultures.

Schedule

The Library is open from 8:45 to 4:45 Mondays through Fridays and from 9:00 to noon and again 1 to 4:30 pm on Saturdays. The institute will meet Monday through Thursday afternoons. The average week will feature wide-ranging discussion with the director, faculty, and participants taking the lead at various times. As this is an intensive schedule, mornings are dedicated to reading and writing in the Folger's Reading Room or at other area research libraries such as the Library of Congress, across the street, or the National Gallery, down Capitol Hill. There will be occasional, optional, small-group sessions in the morning or at brown-bag lunches. You might also consult with the director or the professional staff at the Folger in the mornings. Your evenings are free, apart from a weekly reception, at the close of the day where informal conversation may continue with fellow scholars. Daily tea is another opportunity to meet other scholars in residence at the Folger.

Pedagogical Project

The primary goal of an NEH summer institute is to deepen understanding of a complex topic and analyze scholarly approaches to it in order to advance humanities teaching. It is always a challenge to bridge research and teaching, especially when the research involves rare, archival materials. Participants in NEH institutes at the Folger regularly discover rare materials in the archives that they would love to bring to their classes. We have introduced a component to our institute to help you do just that. As we will describe in the early weeks of the institute, we will encourage you to select materials from the Folger collections or identify links to materials at other research libraries that you would like to make available to your students. Collaboratively, we will contribute such supplemental texts as transcriptions, brief introductions, study questions, and suggestions for further reading. That is, we will create an electronic sourcebook along the lines of the examples you may view at www.folger.edu/institute/from_archive.cfm. Each participant contributes only as much as they want to, and the production of the website is undertaken by Folger staff at summer's end.

Resources

You will be registered as a reader at the Folger, and so have access to the full range of materials in the Library. The Folger holds the largest collection outside Britain of early English printed books, with about 50,000 volumes from the period 1475-1700. That collection is more than matched by its 55,000-piece manuscript collection, especially rich in royal documents, personal correspondence, family papers, poetical miscellanies, commonplace books, and the literature of early modern England. Authors represented include everyone from monarchs to that most prolific of scribblers, Anonymous. Special collections include the Losely papers of the More family (16th-17th c); papers of the Bacon-Townshend families (16th-17th c); the Cavendish-Talbot families (1548-1607); the Rich family (1485-1820); the Bagot family (1557-1671); and the Robert Bennett papers (17th c). The Library's online catalogue, HAMNET, is available through its web site at www.folger.edu. Generally speaking, individual manuscripts are not yet catalogued in HAMNET, but summary finding aids for the larger collections are available online.

Before the program begins, we will send you a copy of *English Handwriting 1400-1650* (by Jean F. Preston and Laetitia Yeandle), and direct you to several instructional paleography websites. During the summer, the institute will provide some additional practical training in paleography with informal tutorials led by Professor May and Curator of Manuscripts, Dr. Heather Wolfe.

In the first week, Reference Librarian, Georgianna Ziegler, will share her research strategies with the group, and Curator of Books, Rachel Doggett, and Curator of Art, Erin Blake, will also be available to consult on Folger holdings.

Eligibility

Applications are welcome from full-time faculty members in any of the humanities disciplines at colleges and universities in the United States. Enrollment in "The Handwritten Worlds" is limited to those sixteen participants selected to receive N.E.H. support. Those eligible include United States citizens, residents of U.S. jurisdictions, or foreign nationals who have been residing in the United States or its territories for at least the three years immediately preceding the application deadline. Candidates for degrees are not eligible.

Housing

Efficiency apartments on the campus of George Washington University, a short subway ride from the Folger Library, will be reserved for participants. The apartments are for single occupancy only, and each includes private kitchen facilities, bath, and telephone. The Institute expects the negotiated rate to be as much as \$1,800.00 for each participant, though the firm price will only be negotiated in the spring with a group contract. Participants are encouraged but not obligated to stay on the G.W.U campus. If a participant requires alternative arrangements, the Institute staff will help you locate relevant resources and finding aids. We will survey local faculty for any housesitting opportunities that may be available. But you should understand that affordable, convenient short-term lodging is scarce in the Washington area.

Stipends

The NEH provides eligible participants with a stipend of \$4,200. This amount is intended to contribute to living expenses for the six weeks, including travel and housing expenses. It may or may not cover your actual living expenses. You will need to make your own travel arrangements and we encourage you to make those arrangements at the lowest available rates. For those participants who take advantage of the housing provided by the Institute, the negotiated amount will be deducted from the stipend and submitted to George Washington University on the participant's behalf. One-half of the remaining stipend will be distributed at the first meeting. The second half will be distributed at the beginning of the fourth week.