A Manuscript Miscellany

A Summer 2005 Institute
Directed by Steven W. May

Introductions

A Word on This Web Project

A Manuscript Miscellany is a collaborative production of the college teacher-participants in a 2005 NEH summer humanities institute, "The Handwritten Worlds of Early Modern England" sought to compare the states of scholarship and consolidate research on the role of manuscripts in a variety of discourses for a variety of audiences in a period extending from the late middle ages into the eighteenth century.

Our goal was to look more closely at the surviving manuscript materials (such as those that fill a rare-book library like the Folger) to write a more nuanced history of the period. We examined literary, domestic, epistolary, devotional, dramatic, legal, and business documents and texts with an expert visiting faculty. We surveyed the state of manuscript studies in these genres, and we asked repeatedly, how do we re-envision the period that saw the rise of the printing press when we take into account the role of handwritten works?

We hope you enjoy and learn from a sample of our work. Our postings include an introduction by Steven W. May, the institute's director and a complete syllabus. We also gather individual commentaries and class assignments by our program participants, each featuring some selections from the Folger's collections (many complete with transcriptions). Each commentary challenges received wisdom, such as the assumption that manuscripts are drafts, moving always towards a final, fixed product in print, for instance. Collectively, they provide exciting new materials for undergraduate teaching and scholarly research. Among other topics, our commentaries investigate the intimations of privacy, immediacy, and authenticity that adhere to that which is written by hand; they ask what professional and social spaces are occupied by those engaged in the production, transmission, and reception of manuscripts, and how those variables change over time and within discourses. They provide new light on such topics as authorship and literacy in a time (not so unlike our own) of multiple and overlapping mediums of expression.

Kathleen Lynch
Executive Director
The Folger Institute
An Introduction to the “Handwritten Worlds of Early Modern England”

Steven W. May

Our work on the "Handwritten Worlds of Early Modern England" began in 1400, the year of Chaucer's death, when all discourse intended for any kind of meaningful preservation was inscribed by hand on one medium or another. We closed our investigations at the turn of the seventeenth century, the year of Dryden's death. By then, the printing press in England had rivaled handwriting as an alternative means for transmitting texts in a (more or less) permanent fashion for more than 200 years. Across the disciplines, scholarly analysis of these first few centuries of competition between the two forms of transmission has been heavily weighted toward the newer technology, often to the disparagement of the old. Where editors had to choose copy texts, for example, from early printed texts or among their handwritten counterparts, the vast majority opted for printed exemplars. Similarly, studies of early modern culture, from music to biography, to gender studies and social trends, have turned overwhelmingly for primary evidence to printed sources rather than manuscript sources. And as the printing press has dominated scholarly research in these centuries, so understanding in the classroom has been almost exclusively a print-based experience.

Only in the past decade or so have these basic contours of understanding across the disciplines shifted toward a reconsideration of the importance of manuscript culture in early modern England. Pioneering studies of this culture by such scholars as Peter Beal, Mary Hobbs, Harold Love, Arthur Marotti, and Henry Woudhuysen have shown, persuasively, that transcribed documents of all sorts have much to tell us about the early modern period, much that cannot be gleaned from printed sources. Throughout the work of this Institute, our study of the period's handwritten documents was indebted to the discoveries and insights set forth by these authorities. A distinguished visiting faculty augmented our understanding of manuscript culture with case studies from a comprehensive set of disciplines. Our program was further enriched by "hands on" experience with manuscripts from the Folger Library's superbly varied and wide-ranging collection.

Ironically, handwritten testimony to early modern culture, the primary documents at the center of our investigations, proliferate throughout the handpress era. More legal documents, private notebooks, letters, treatises, and every other form of handwriting have survived for the sixteenth century than the fifteenth, as for the seventeenth versus the sixteenth century. Yet this trend reflects not only the normal increase in the preservation of more recent documents of all kinds at whatever time. It reveals as well the rapidly increasing production of manuscript materials in early modern England—more and more documents were being produced decade by decade if not year by year, from 1400–1700. This trend was not just a function of an increasing population coupled with increasing rates of literacy. No considerable increase in handwritten materials could have occurred had manuscripts been confined primarily to parchment and vellum, as was the case throughout the Middle Ages. Similarly, without the growing availability of relatively cheap paper, the printing press could have made little impact on European culture. Yet the advent of this cheaper (if not cheap) recording medium is perhaps the most overlooked factor in the continuous proliferation of handwritten documents that began in the fifteenth century. Paper invited middle class and eventually even lower class writers to put pen to paper. By the seventeenth century, almost anyone able to write could afford a few sheets of paper, if not a thick notebook, for writing letters, recipes (both medical and culinary), the recording of money spent and received, or memoranda of tasks accomplished and anticipated. Paper changed everything, for the pen as for the press.

The growing volume of documents handwritten on paper greatly expands the sources of evidence for understanding the culture of early modern England. However, this process also creates new challenges for students of that evidence. As long as handwriting was largely confined to expensive parchment or vellum, its practitioners were largely confined as well to a professional scribal class. Medieval documents are, on the whole, carefully prepared and relatively legible (at least in their pristine state). The medium was simply too expensive to be wasted on trivial texts scrawled by inexperienced hands. As paper made manuscript production more and more democratic, it left behind a dwindling percentage of works by professional scribes. Now ordinary writers with untrained hands scrawled whatever they thought important because they could afford to do so. What they have left us is no less valuable for its frequently careless, amateurish production—often, quite the opposite—but to understand this evidence often requires a good deal of training in how to decipher the varied quality and expertise of early modern hands.

We discovered that the printing press, far from stifling manuscript culture, flourished in a context both parallel to the older tradition and inseparably connected with it. Both means of textual production were critically nurtured by the availability of paper, and both depended on growing literacy for their expanding influence in society. Their interdependence emerges at the most basic level in the fact that printed texts were set from handwritten copy. Increasingly, too, throughout the period, printed texts were copied back into manuscript volumes. On this website, Lara Dodds analyzes an example of the practice in a manuscript copy of Dryden's dramatization of Milton's Paradise Lost that was transcribed from the ninth edition of the play. As William Quinn and Donna Crawford demonstrate in "The Marginalized Voices of
attention it deserves, and it remains an unparalleled source for new insights into the early modern era. A
corpus of material has not been thoroughly studied. It has only recently begun to attract the scholarly
interest of a wide range of scholars, including those working on the history of print culture, from works intimately linked to print culture (indeed, physically combined with it at times) to a
broader disciplinary perspective. This includes the study of handwritten documents such as personal letters, legal records, and official records of church and state, to
 LIBRARY AND INFORMATION STUDIES. Smith also considers “receipt” books, collections often compiled in manuscript by women in order to preserve culinary recipes,
with calligraphy as well as mastery of a content field such as arithmetic. Smith also considers “exercise books”, which, Emily Smith demonstrates, might involve practice
drills or exercises in mathematics, or other subjects. The impact of these practices on the development of handwriting styles is a topic of ongoing research.

Common physical medium for recording private memoranda of all kinds was the “table book” or “tables.” This format was often used by women to record their personal lives,
and early modern English civilization.

Add to this archive the handwritten records of the state church and local courts of law, and this
repository became the “Paper Office” in the late seventeenth century, evolved into the Public Record Office
(now the National Archives). Here were preserved the handwritten State Papers, records of the royal
court, Exchequer, Chancery and other law courts, the Admiralty and related bureaucratic departments.
Add to this archive the handwritten records of the state church and local courts of law, and this
cumulative mass of manuscript material comprises the primary source for most research into medieval
and early modern English civilization.

Meanwhile, handwritten documents were prominent as well at the most private levels of discourse. A
common physical medium for recording private memoranda of all kinds was the “table book” or “tables.”
Andrew Walkling reminds us, meanwhile, that the central government carried out its business and
preserved its records almost entirely in manuscript. The official repository of these documents in
England, termed the “Paper Office” in the late seventeenth century, evolved into the Public Record Office
(now the National Archives). Here were preserved the handwritten State Papers, records of the royal
court, Exchequer, Chancery and other law courts, the Admiralty and related bureaucratic departments.
Add to this archive the handwritten records of the state church and local courts of law, and this
cumulative mass of manuscript material comprises the primary source for most research into medieval
and early modern English civilization.

Common physical medium for recording private memoranda of all kinds was the “table book” or “tables.”
A common physical medium for recording private memoranda of all kinds was the “table book” or “tables.”
Andrew Walkling reminds us, meanwhile, that the central government carried out its business and
preserved its records almost entirely in manuscript. The official repository of these documents in
England, termed the “Paper Office” in the late seventeenth century, evolved into the Public Record Office
(now the National Archives). Here were preserved the handwritten State Papers, records of the royal
court, Exchequer, Chancery and other law courts, the Admiralty and related bureaucratic departments.
Add to this archive the handwritten records of the state church and local courts of law, and this
cumulative mass of manuscript material comprises the primary source for most research into medieval
and early modern English civilization.

The ever-expanding reading public of early modern England was nurtured, of course, by a growing
availability of print publications. At the same time, a parallel source of handwritten reading material
spread in networks across the country with the advantage that its contents were essentially free rather
than purchased. These networks of manuscript transmission conveyed a wide variety of subject matter in
formats ranging from scraps of paper to hefty volumes. Their contents included practical information,
from current events to instructions for alchemical experiments. Speeches, prayers, poetry, satire, jokes,
and full-blown literary works were copied and recopied as they were passed along to others. The system
in many ways resembled today’s gratuitous transmission of all kinds of texts by email, and it included quite
substantial works. In Sir Philip Sidney’s 1561-1640 (1996), for example, Henry Woudhuysen has shown that Sidney’s Old Arcadia, averaging more than 300
manuscript pages of prose and verse, was transmitted in multiple copies to the far corners of the
kingdom in a few years’ time.

Accordingly, early modern authors learned to use the networks of manuscript transmission to circulate
texts that, variously, were and were not intended for eventual publication. One aspect of this practice
was the restriction of manuscript works to a coterie of readers who, supposedly, confined their circulation
to a tightly knit social circle. Shakespeare’s sonnets, for example, were said to be circulating among his
“private friends” as early as 1598. A few of these lyrics appeared in print during Elizabeth’s reign but the
entire sequence was not published until 1609. Yet no pre-publication text of any of the sonnets has
survived in the manuscript. Did Shakespeare circulate the poems for the 1609 edition? Chris Ivic notes that Ben Jonson may have attempted something of the sort by circulating in
manuscript poems he addressed to John Donne and Lucy, Countess of Bedford, then including them in
his 1616 Works. George Justice documents Pope’s similar practice a century later. Matthew Rusnak
notes examples of pastoral verse published only in manuscript in a tradition parallel to the simultaneous
print publication of works in the same genre. Authors who submitted their works to manuscript
circulation, however, lost control over all aspects of their texts, including attributions. Garth Bond shows
how Donne’s “To His Mistress Going to Bed” accumulated multiple variant readings as it was copied by
scribe after scribe, the normal fate of all texts in verse or prose that entered the channels of manuscript
circulation.

In many other instances, we found, manuscript practice never yielded to print. Letters, for example, both
public and private, remained handwritten throughout the period (and, indeed, until the invention of the
typewriter). Personal correspondence was the mainstay of communication for those separated by
distance and, again, the volume of letter writing increased throughout the early modern period, unraveled
by telephones, cell phones, or email. The conventions of early modern correspondence were, however,
somewhat different from today’s in the absence of typewriter, word processing, or a uniform postal
service. Rebecca Laroche examines these elements in one letter in the Bagot family papers. The letter
was sent, if not wholly written, by a wife to her absent husband. Beyond such utilitarian functions, letters
became a recognized genre of writing. Collections of letters began to appear in print during the first half
of the sixteenth century, and were, increasingly, transcribed into manuscript anthologies as well. Timothy
Billings argues that one such letter, purporting to be written by Ovid in the first century BCE, is in fact a
parody that plays off the widespread recognition of letters as a serious form of writing.

Andrew Walkling reminds us, meanwhile, that the central government carried out its business and
preserved its records almost entirely in manuscript. The official repository of these documents in
England, termed the “Paper Office” in the late seventeenth century, evolved into the Public Record Office
(now the National Archives). Here were preserved the handwritten State Papers, records of the royal
court, Exchequer, Chancery and other law courts, the Admiralty and related bureaucratic departments.
Add to this archive the handwritten records of the state church and local courts of law, and this
cumulative mass of manuscript material comprises the primary source for most research into medieval
and early modern English civilization.

Meanwhile, handwritten documents were prominent as well at the most private levels of discourse. A
common physical medium for recording private memoranda of all kinds was the “table book” or “tables.”
Jason Powell and Tricia McElroy explain the make-up and function of such notebooks in relation to other
pedagogical practices, including the keeping of commonplace books. Table books were compact,
erasable equivalents of noti-storm datebooks, set into one. Students also copied their lessons into “exercise books” which, Emily Smith demonstrates, might involve practice
with calligraphy as well as mastery of a content field such as arithmetic. Smith also considers “receipt”
books, collections often compiled in manuscript by women in order to preserve culinary recipes,
medicinal formulae, or both. From the standpoint of content, other subjects were largely restricted to
manuscript circulation including political satire and libel, although George Justice examines a potentially
libelous poem that did eventually find its way into print.

The heritage of English manuscripts from 1400 to 1700 supplies us with a wealth of material for
expanding our understanding of the period. These documents range in content from mundane accounts,
memoranda, and legal records, to personal correspondence and official records of church and state, to
the age’s highest literary accomplishments in poetry, prose, and drama. Handwritten documents range
as well from works intimately linked to print culture (indeed, physically combined with it at times) to a
broad, interdisciplinary spectrum of cultural evidence that survives only in manuscript. To date, this
corpus of material has not been thoroughly studied. It has only recently begun to attract the scholarly
attention it deserves, and it remains an unparalleled source for new insights into the early modern era.
Syllabus

Week One: The Creation and Transmission of Literary Texts in Transition 20–23 June 2005

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

Monday: The Structure of the Middle English MS—Terminology & Bibliography

Core Readings:


Suggested Readings:


Tuesday: Chaucer, Transmission of Shorter Collections

Core Readings:


Suggested Readings:


Wednesday: Provincial/Metropolitan Book Production; Miscellanies, Anthologies, the Role of the Patron/Commissioner

Core Readings:


Suggested Readings:


Thursday: From manuscript to print: author collections

Core Readings:


The Canterbury Tales / Geoffrey Chaucer. [London]: Cornmarket Reprints in Association with Magdalene College, Cambridge, 1972. PR1400 5083

[This edition is edited by William Caxton.]

The Workes of Geffray Chaucer Newly Printed. [London: Thomas Godfray, [1532]]. STC 5068 copy 1

[This edition is edited by William Thynne.]

The Workes of Geoffrey Chaucer, Newly Printed. [London: John Kngston,] 1561. STC 5075 copy 1

[This edition is edited by William Thynne with additions by John Stow.]

The Workes of our Antient and Lerned English Poet, Geoffrey Chaucer, Newly Printed. London: George Bishop, 1598. STC 5077

[This edition is edited by Thomas Speght.]


Suggested Readings:


Bibliography

Articles:


Books:


Week Two: Controversy and Contestation: Religious and Legal Manuscripts 27–30 June 2005

Dr. Mary Erler (Professor of English, Fordham University)
Dr. Lena Cowen Orlin (Professor of English, University of Maryland Baltimore County)

Monday: Women's Reading and Ownership: Books of Hours

Texts under discussion:
Folger V.a.228
Folger V.b.236—Robert Mannyng, Handling of Sin ["Handelyng off Synne"]

[Book of Hours (Salisbury)]
Impresse Parisii: Pro Symne Le Vostre ..., [1498] STC 15889

[Book of Hours (Salisbury)]

[Book of hours (Salisbury)]
Impressum est hoc orariu[m] Parisijs: In edibus spectabilis viri Germani Hardouyn ..., [1533?] STC 15982

More particular sources:


Also of potential use:
Tuesday: Women’s Reading and Ownership: Devotional and Secular Books

Readings:


Tuesday: Women’s Reading and Ownership: Devotional and Secular Books

Texts under discussion:

Walter Hilton's *Scale of Perfection* (1497)

*Tree and xii. frutes of the holy goost.*

[London: R. Copland and M. Fawkes, 1535]

STC 13608

Gower, John, 1325?–1408.

[Confessio amantis]

London: Thomas Berthelette, [1532]

STC 12143

Higden, Ranulf, d. 1364

*Polycronycon.*

Southwark: Peter Treveris, 1527.

STC 13440

Readings:


Wednesday and Thursday: Tudor Women in the Archives

Readings:


Week Three: Verse in Miscellanies and Broadsheets

5–8 July 2005
Professor Henry Woudhuysen (Professor of English, University College London)  
Dr. Alan Stewart (Professor of English and Comparative Literature, Columbia University)

Core readings:


Further suggested readings:

Reference works


Handwriting


Manuscript poetry


**Manuscript and print**


**Materials and Provenance**

Finlay, Michael. *Western Writing Implements in the Age of the Quill Pen*. Wetheral, Carlisle, Cumbria: Plains, 1990. 260422


Stevenson, Allan, "Watermarks are twins," *Studies in Bibliography* 4 (1951–2), 57–91

**Editorial Theory and Practice**


**Some MSS**

**Facsimiles and Editions**


Poems, 1640 by Thomas Carew, together with poems from the Wyburd manuscript (1699)


Hughes, Ruth (ed.), The Arundel Harrington manuscript of Tudor poetry, 2 vols (1960).

John Milton: poems, reproduced in facsimile from the manuscript in Trinity College, Cambridge, with a transcript (1970).


Epistolary Theory

Texts under discussion feature extracts from:

Desiderius Erasmus, De Conscribendis Epistolis (1522).


Justus Lipsius, Epistolicalinstitutio


William Fulwood, The Enimie of Idlenesse (1568)

Abraham Fleming, A Panoplie of Epistles (1576)

Angel Day, The English Secretarie (1586, and other editions)

John Browne, The Merchants Avizo (1588)

Thomas Blount, The Academy of Eloquence (1656)

Packet Readings:


Week Four: Manuscripts and the Early Modern Theatre

11–14 July 2005

Dr. Susan Cerasano (Edgar W.B. Fairchild Professor of Literature, Colgate University)

Dr. Paul Werstine (Professor of Modern Languages, University of Western Ontario)

Monday and Tuesday: The Rose Playhouse, Henslowe's Diary


Wednesday and Thursday: 'Foul Papers' and 'Prompt-books'

Manuscripts:
Folger MS J.b.8, Christopher Marlowe, Massacre at Paris. (fragment)
British Library MS Harley 7368, The Book of Sir Thomas More, ff. 8 r–9 r (both examples of 'foul papers' for Greg).
British Library MS Lansdowne 807, The Second Maidens Tragedy, ff. 56v, 56r, 55r, 54v (a 'prompt-book' for Greg).
Victoria and Albert Museum MS Dyce 9, The Honest Mans Fortune, ff. 1r, 28v, 34v
British Library MS Additional 36758, John Fletcher, Bonduca, ff. 1r, 19r, 23r
Folger MS J.b. 5, Beaumont, John Fletcher, Philip Massinger, The Beggars Bush, ff. 158r, 174v, 175r, 175v, 176r
Folger MS J.b. 1 Arthur Wilson, The Inconstant Lady, ff. 3r, 18v, 19r
Bodleian Library MS Rawlinson Poet. 9, Arthur Wilson, The Inconstant Lady. 1st page, ff. 25, 25v, 26
Archdall MS of Middleton's Game At Chesse
Folger MS V.a.231, Thomas Middleton's A Game At Chesse.

Transcriptions

Secondary sources


Week Five: Contexts of Class and Gender in Seventeenth-Century Manuscripts 18–21 July 2005

Dr. Victoria Burke (Associate Professor of English, University of Ottawa)
Dr Adam Fox (Professor of Economic and Social History, University of Edinburgh)

Monday and Tuesday

Core Readings:

Klene, Jean, ed. The Southwell-Sibthorpe Commonplace Book: Folger MS. V.b.198. Tempe, Ariz.: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1997: Introduction (pp. xi-xliii); fols 1r–11r (pp. 1–17 of Klene), 59r-69v (pp. 93–107), 73r–74v (pp. 113–116) [please browse]. PR2349.S49 A6 1997


Supplementary Reading:


Potential questions for discussion:

What can apparently non-literary writing tell us about literary culture of the early modern period?
What can material characteristics reveal about the audiences and functions of individual manuscripts?
Could privacy offer a space enabling to women writers? To what extent was collaboration enacted within family groups and immediate circles, or across time and distance? What effects do class, education, religious affiliation, political sympathies, geographical location, and other factors have on the production of manuscripts by women?

Wednesday and Thursday

Locality, Orality and Textuality: Popular Engagement with the Handwritten Word in Early Modern England

Vernacular Culture and Oral Tradition in Early Modern English Manuscripts

This session will begin by exploring the great variety which existed in dialect speech in the many local societies of which early modern England was comprised. It will do so by the collective reading of copies of the following manuscripts:

- Folger MS V.a.308 (Poetical commonplace book, c.1690-1730; contains 'A Lancashire Tale'; 'A Yorkshire Tale'; and 'Clavis') Film number: 147.6
- Folger MS V.a.232 (Commonplace book of Henry Newcome, begun 1669. Contains at the end of Pt II a catalogue of Lancashire words with their 'true English' equivalents) Film number: 4370.2
- Cumbria Record Office, Carlisle, D&C / Machell MS 1 (Thomas Machell, Description of Westmorland, 1678–98)

Suggested Reading:


Questions for Consideration:

To what extent is it possible to generalise about popular culture in modern England when, in terms of language and mentality, there could be so much variety across the country? What does the oral repertoire of English villagers in this period, as recorded by contemporary observers, reveal about the attitudes and beliefs of the lower orders? Why were both literacy rates and the use of written documents increasing during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries?

The Popular Use of Writing in Early Modern England

This class will build on our investigation of developing popular literacy by moving on to examine some of the ways in which people from the lower ranks of society used their ability to read and write. We will focus upon three areas in particular. The first is the use of written rhymes or songs as a weapon of ridicule or shame in local communities. The rather unpleasant practice of composing a scurrilous verse or ballad about a neighbour in order to
mock or humiliate may not be very edifying but it does at least allow us to observe the way in which an essentially oral form was also written down in this period in order to aid its dissemination and heighten its impact. Victims of such poetic assault often prosecuted their detractors at law. Since the courts required copies of the alleged ‘libel’ to be produced in evidence, the records of their proceedings contain texts of the material in question together with accompanying testimonies which shed invaluable light its composition, transcription and circulation. Sources to be considered include:

- Wiltshire Record Office, Trowbridge, A1/100/ T 1618. 168; and A1/100/ M 1626, 149-50 (Wiltshire Quarter Sessions Great Rolls, Trinity Term 1618 and Michaelmas Term 1626)

- National Archives, London, STAC8/100/18 (Proceedings in the Court of Star Chamber, Reign of James I, Cunde v Browne, 1605)

- Essex Record Office, Chelmsford, D/DO B24/5; AND D/DU 65/86 (Court of King’s Bench, Tiffin v Wing)

The second case study will focus on the still unusual writing of personal memoirs by people of humble station. Diaries, autobiographies and letters written by those below the level of the gentry or the formally educated are rare from this period, either because such people did not often write things or because they have not come down to us. The gradual expansion of this material over time, however, is testimony to the growing use and perceived utility of the written word at all social levels. Where they can be found, such documents provide precious glimpses the lives and letters of ordinary people in the seventeenth century. Examples to be examined in this context include:


- Wigan Archives Service, Lancashire MS D/DZA58 (The diary of Roger Lowe, apprentice shopkeeper of Ashton-in-Makerfield, Lancashire, 1663–74)

- Somerset Record Office, Taunton, MS DD/SAS C/1193/4 (Memoirs of John Cannon of Meare, 1684–1742)

Our third and final case study in this session will be concerned with the use of written instruments by local people in the business of parochial administration and daily business. One consequence of the expansion of the central government and the growth of the state in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England was that people of the middling sort became co-opted into position of responsibility in local government as constables, overseers of the poor and jurors. This involved them in the necessary reading and writing of the written word to a much greater extent than ever before. At the same time, their dependent neighbours found themselves needing to resort to the written word in their petitions for poor relief or their license to beg or to travel. Thus writing was coming to structure the routine and define the parameters of daily life in altogether new ways. Consideration will be given to:

- Huntington Library, California, MS Ellesmere 6162, fols. 34a–36a (Swallowfield Parish Meeting, 1596)

- Poor Law Petitions drawn from various English County Record Offices

Suggested Reading:


Week Six: Manuscripts at Home and in Public in the late Seventeenth Century 25–28 July 2005

Margaret J.M. Ezell (The John Paul Abbot Professor in Liberal Arts, Texas A&M University)


Some thoughts for discussion about domestic papers and multi-generational texts:


- Victoria Burke, "Reading Friends: Women’s Participation in 'Masculine' Literary Culture," pp. 75–90.
### A Glossary of Manuscript Terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Autograph</strong></td>
<td>A manuscript in an author's hand that includes the author's signature (See Ivic, Rusnak)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bifolium</strong></td>
<td>A large sheet of paper folded in half and resulting in a four-page &quot;booklet.&quot; (See Ivic, Walkling)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Catchword</strong></td>
<td>A word at the bottom of a page in a manuscript or print book indicating the first word of the following page. In manuscripts produced by multiple professional scribes, catchwords were provided at the ends of quires to assure that the finished product would be assembled in the correct order. Catchwords that appear in the manuscripts of amateur scribes may serve a similar function, but may also be a decorative element introduced to give the manuscript a more professional look. (See Bond)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Colophon</strong></td>
<td>A statement providing the details of publication, sometimes found at the end of a book, but more often at the bottom of a printed book's title page. (See Rusnak)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Commonplace book</strong></td>
<td>Sometimes used as a catch-all cataloguing term for manuscript miscellanies. Commonplaces (quotations or excerpts from reading, including aphorisms, precepts, maxims, anecdotes and other sententiae) were entered under subject headings in MS volumes produced by grammar school students. Commonplace books were given subject headings, usually in alphabetical order, before entries were transcribed under them. Many legal commonplace books survive from the early modern era, while literary collections of the kind are far less common. (See Bond, Ivic, Powell and McElroy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Copy book</strong></td>
<td>A book comprising texts for a student to imitate. A copy book might be handwritten or printed. These books were often used to teach students calligraphy, arithmetic, and languages. Moral distiches and mnemonic devices were frequently used as copy texts so that students could learn moral virtues in tandem with their lessons. (See Smith)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Copy text</strong></td>
<td>For editors, a text identified as the most authoritative source. (See Justice)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coterie</strong></td>
<td>An exclusive literary or social circle. (See Ivic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exemplar</strong></td>
<td>The immediate model for a manuscript transcription. (See Crawford and Quinn)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exercise book</strong></td>
<td>A blank book in which a student copied out exercises. (See Smith)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fair copy</strong></td>
<td>A manuscript showing signs of polish and finish, unlike foul papers, or drafts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Folio</strong></td>
<td>From the Latin word for leaf, a paper size designating one-half of a standard-size sheet of paper. Achieved by folding the sheet in half once. Also the size of the book or manuscript comprising such sheets. Shakespeare's plays were first collected in the famous First Folio of 1623. (See McElroy and Powell, Rusnak)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hand</strong></td>
<td>The style in which a particular alphabet is written; or, in a broader sense, any one standard style of writing (such as 'italic' or 'secretary'), or one individual's execution of that style. A single person could often have two or more 'hands' if s/he has learned multiple standard styles. (See Bond, Ivic, Laroche, McElroy and Powell)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Holograph**
A manuscript in its author's handwriting (See Bond)

**Italic**
A style of handwriting created in Italy and associated with the humanists. The italic hand was first adapted to print publication in a 1501 edition of Virgil issued by the Aldine Press. Today, the italic hand is often used for emphasis in print and is most readily recognized by its pronounced slope to the right. (See Clifton, Ivic, Laroche, Smith)

**Leaf**
A single sheet of paper or vellum, each side of which constitutes a page.

**Letterbook**
A bound collection of letters sent, received, or circulated that have been copied by the owner or a professional scribe. (See Billings)

**Manicule**
Also called an index or printer's fist, the pointed finger found in the margins of books. May be hand-drawn or printed. (See Crawford and Quinn)

**Miscellany**
A bound manuscript containing disparate elements, or in literary practice, disparate genres, such as poems, short stories, or plays, often collected or written over time. A genre that goes back to ancient Greek anthologies, this term gained popularity in the seventeenth century. (See Bond, Ivic, Justice, Rusnak)

**Monogram**
A design composed of one or more letters (usually initials), typically those of a name, used as an identifying mark. (See Rusnak)

**Octavo**
A paper size (or the resulting book) designating one-eighth of the standard-sized sheet (called a broadside). This size was achieved by three successive, equal foldings of the sheet. (See Ivic, McElroy and Powell)

**Page**
A single side of a leaf, and part of a system of enumerating the leaves in a book.

**Paleography**
The study of old forms of handwriting.

**Paratext**
A term coined by critic Gérard Genette to describe the portions of a text conceptualized as extrinsic to the text proper. Paratexts include prefatory elements (prefaces, acknowledgments, introductions, title pages), supplementary or concluding elements (footnotes or endnotes, conclusions, appendices), and elements which facilitate the use of the text (tables of contents, indices, page numbers, chapter or section headings, marginal notes, running titles) or increase its aesthetic appeal (borders, illustrations, decorative or historiated letters). (See Bond, Crawford and Quinn).

**Provenance**
A record of the origin and history of ownership of a specific copy of a manuscript.

**Quarto**
A paper size (or the resulting book) designating one-fourth of the large, standard-sized sheet. This size was achieved by two successive, equal foldings of a sheet. (See Crawford and Quinn)

**Quire**
For medieval manuscripts, a set of four sheets of parchment or paper folded in half as a single unit, so as to form eight leaves; by extrapolation, any collection or gathering of leaves, one within the other, in a manuscript or printed book. (See Rusnak)

**Receipt book**
A collection of cookery or medicinal recipes, or any book that details ingredients, formulas, remedies, prescriptions, and processes concerned with the production of foods, medicines, and other household items. (See Laroche, Smith)

**Recto**
The front or obverse of a page, leaf, or sheet of paper, vellum, or other surface designed for writing. (See Walking)

**Scribe**
A writer, whether professional or amateur, of a text in manuscript. The scribe may or may not be the author or composer of the text in question; often used to
describe a writer who prepares texts as an amanuensis for others or who produces copies of texts for further distribution. (See Bond, Crawford and Quinn)

**Scribal publication**
A term coined by Harold Love to describe the distribution of a piece of writing through manual copying and personal networks rather than through printing for public sale. (See Billings, Ivic)

**Scriptorium**
A workshop or other appropriately equipped space where multiple scribes or copyists (usually professionals) produced manuscripts in quantity, often under supervision. (See Walkling)

**Secretary**
A style of handwriting, developed from a specialized court hand, and in widespread use in sixteenth and seventeenth century England; Or, a person whose profession it is to produce handwritten documents, possibly within a family but also designating some of the highest functionaries of the state. (See Billings, Clifton, Ivic, Laroche, Stamer)

**Sententiae**
The plural of a Latin term meaning 'sentences' and generally designating maxims, proverbs or aphorisms (see "Commonplace Book" above). (See Powell and McElroy)

**Sheet**
See "leaf." (Ivic)

**Stemma**
The genealogy of multiple transcriptions of a literary work (See Crawford and Quinn, Justice)

**Transcription**
A manuscript copy of a given work. (See Crawford and Quinn, Crawford and Quinn)

**Vellum**
The skin of a young calf, specially treated for use as a writing surface, or to form the cover of a book or manuscript. By the early modern period, paper had become common, but vellum remained an expensive alternative for special uses. (See Ivic, Powell and McElroy, Rusnak)

**Verso**
The back or reverse of a page, leaf, or sheet of paper, vellum, or other surface designed for writing. (See Walkling)

SEE ALSO:

Peter Beal forthcoming

Joan M. Reitz's Online Dictionary for Library and Information Science ODLIS
Resources for Manuscript Research at the Folger Shakespeare Library

Finding Manuscripts at the Folger

Classification of Manuscripts

Early Modern Paleography: Useful Sources

Manuscript Finding Aids
http://titania.folger.edu/findingaids/

A list of English Reformation MSS drawn from the NEH Institute on "Redefining the Sacred"
http://www.folger.edu/html/folger_institute/sacred/manuscript.html

Online Resources via Hamnet
http://shakespeare.folger.edu/other/digital.htm#fwr

Folger Shakespeare Library Manuscripts
http://www.folger.edu/collslideshow.cfm?collectionid=79&cid=384

Trevelyon Conservation Project
http://www.folger.edu/template.cfm?cid=1138

Word & Image: The Trevelyon Miscellany of 1608:

Exhibition: The Pen's Excellency:
http://www.folger.edu/template.cfm?cid=1861

Exhibition: Letter Writing in Renaissance England
http://www.folger.edu/template.cfm?cid=1595
Electronic Resources

Online Paleography Tutorials

*English Handwriting, 1500–1700: an Online Course*
www.english.cam.ac.uk/ceres/ehoc/
Faculty of English, University of Cambridge

Medieval and Early Modern Paleography Online Seminar Series
paleo.anglo-norman.org/empfram.html
David Postles, University of Leicester

*Palaeography: Reading Old Handwriting 1500–1800, a Practical Online Tutorial*
www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/palaeography/ [see especially the game!]
National Archives, Kew (formerly the Public Record Office)

"Literary Manuscript Analysis." Gabriel Heaton, Centre for the Study of the Renaissance, University of Warwick [not a tutorial, but provides useful links and general terminology for describing letter forms]
www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/ren/publications/lima/

General Links

http://www.crrs.ca/library/webresources/webresources.htm#renauth
A comprehensive list of links compiled by the Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies at the University of Toronto

http://www.luminarium.org
A site devoted to the work of and works about writers in early modern England
NB: This page automatically loads and plays a music file, so mute the computer if you are at a public computer terminal.

http://www.english.cam.ac.uk/wroth/startp.htm
Resources on Lady Mary Wroth

http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/default.htm
The National Archives site (formerly the Public Record Office)

http://dewey.library.upenn.edu/sceti/flash.cfm?CFID=6642336&CFTOKEN=25697380
Link to the homepage of the Schoenberg Center for Electronic Text and Image

http://www.netserf.org/
Provides links to resources for the study of the Middle Ages

http://www.georgetown.edu/labyrinth/subjects/mss/mss.html
Provides links to online medieval manuscripts and digital projects

http://www.kb.nl/kb/manuscripts/
Illuminated MSS from the National Library of the Netherlands

http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/themes/englishlit/geoffchaucer.html
Two online editions of Caxton’s Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales

http://www.loc.gov/coll/nucmc/
National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections
"The Emperor of China His Letter to Queen Elizabeth" (1600)

Timothy Billings
Middlebury College

When Queen Elizabeth dispatched Benjamin Wood to China in 1596 in command of a small merchant fleet with a letter in Latin addressed to the Emperor of China, she may well have wondered whether she would be able to understand the reply. Considering that there was apparently no one in England at the time who could read an official Chinese document, her only hope would have been to rely on one of the Jesuit missionaries resident in China both to interpret her letter and to translate the response—someone like the famous Italian Jesuit Matteo Ricci who had founded the mission there. As unlikely as that scenario might sound, whoever wrote the response copied here probably had just such a story in mind when he or she chose to write it in Italian, thus lending an air of comical plausibility to the sophisticated jest.

This letter—which was most certainly not written by the emperor of China—appears in Folger MS V.a. 321, an English letterbook; collecting letters in letterbooks was an extremely common practice in this period, and a great many examples survive. This letterbook is particularly important both for its fine script and extremely good condition as well as containing several unique copies of letters to and from such notable figures as Elizabeth I, Robert Cecil, Ben Jonson, George Chapman, and William Strachey, among others. It also contains variants of letters known to be of general interest (such as those related to the Essex affair) currently in scribal publication. Of the 140 letters in the letterbook, all but two are in English and copied in a professional English secretary hand. This is the only letter in Italian, and it is written in an italic hand.

In his critical edition of this letterbook, A. R. Braunmuller concluded that the Italian letter must be a forgery on the grounds that Benjamin Wood never made it to China. Historians have traced the little English fleet on their way to Canton as their ships dwindled from three, to two, to one, and then evidently disappeared off the coast of modern-day Myanmar, still a great distance even from reaching the South China Sea. Yet there is ample evidence within the letter itself that points to the same conclusion—such much so that the letter appears to be an obvious forgery: a sort of literary joke that circulated in the letter-writing and letter-copying culture of the period somewhat the way a fake email might circulate today pretending to be from a president or a prime minister about some silly or scandalous matter. (Insert your favorite names.)

Nothing about the form of the letter conforms to Chinese practice, from the titles and the dating formulas to the diction and the figures of speech: the author seems not even to know the current ruling dynasty in China, let alone the reign name and reign year of the Ming Wanli Emperor Shenzong. Rather, the whole composition smacks of having been conceived as an amusement on the model of an English letter and then rendered into Italian. Moreover, it would have had a topical appeal since the queen's original Latin letter to the Chinese emperor appeared that very year in the third volume of Richard Hakluyt's *The Principal Navigations...of the English nation* (London, 1598–1600). Along with an English translation of the letter, Hakluyt included a headnote remarking that there had yet been no news from Benjamin Wood and his company, and that they "may be arriued vpon some part of the coast of China, and may there be stayed by the said Emperour, or perhaps may haue some treacherie wrought against them by the Portugales of Macao, or the Spaniards of the Philippinas."

The most pointed jest in the letter is the subtle implication that a Jesuit like Ricci would have had to translate, to his own disadvantage, the phrase describing the queen as "the most chaste among all the Gentlemen [Signori] who follow Jesus, as uniquely chosen from the most powerful of the Christian law." (Braunmuller suggests that the appearance in the letterbook of another letter known to be a Jesuit forgery may indicate Catholic sympathies, but this letter at least seems to turn on a queen-flattering, Jesuit-mocking conceit.) The punchline of the letter is its date, set apart at the end and emphasized with underlining. Long before Archbishop Ussher’s famous calculation, it was well known to any Elizabethan who ever glanced at an almanac that the world was not quite 6,000 years old, as had already been established by the early Church fathers. (See, for example, the first page of the Trevelyon Miscellany in the Folger collection, which copies a page from Edward Pond's almanac of about the same time, giving the age of the world as 5,570 years.) The Chinese emperor, however, dates his letter with an absurd formula: "the Year of the Creation of the World / 25,000." (See the notes below for a passage in Hakluyt that tells of a Chinese tale of a 90,000-year cycle of creation.) Considering how outrageous this must have sounded to Europeans, and how controversial the Chinese historical chronicles would soon prove to be in challenging the accepted biblical chronology, this ending may have been punchline enough to carry the whole jest.

Another possibility is that the letter was never intended as a self-contained entertainment for general circulation, but rather as a very specific amusement addressed to a particular person. The letter refers to
an accompanying but unnamed gift. If that gift had Chinese associations, such as porcelain or silk, it
could explain the whole conceit of the letter. The receiver would presumably know the sender by the
messenger, whom the author of the letter explicitly requests be sent back. After having served its initial
function, the letter may then have been circulated for the amusement of others. Indeed, although we can
be sure that the emperor did not send this letter, we cannot be sure that the queen did not receive it, for
the letter makes most sense as a clever composition attached to a gift sent to Elizabeth herself. Until the
author of the playful letter is positively identified, it will be impossible for us to know whether certain
otherwise conventional phrases—such as praise for the queen's person and sincere wishes for her good
health—may not also be private sentiments expressed to the ailing Elizabeth from a witty courtier like
John Harington, or whether they are simply part of a fictional exchange between monarchs concocted for
sport to embellish a gift between friends.

Primary Texts:

John Florio, A Worlde of Wordes, Or Most copious, and exact Dictionarie in Italian and English. London,
1598.

Richard Hakluyt. The principal navigations, voiages, traffiques and discoueries of the English nation, 3

Juan González de Mendoza, The Historie of the great and mightie kingdome of China, trans. Richard
Parke. London, 1588.

Transcription, translation, and other textual notes

Suggested Reading:


Stewart, Alan and Heather Wolfe, Letterwriting in Renaissance England, The Folger Shakespeare
John Donne’s “To His Mistress Going to Bed” As an Open Source

Garth Bond
Lawrence University

John Donne (1572–1631) printed almost none of his poetry during his lifetime, choosing instead to circulate it in manuscript. Even after the posthumous publication of his Poems in 1633, some of his poetry remained unavailable in print. In fact, Donne's famous elegy "To His Mistress Going to Bed" was first printed in a 1654 anthology and was not included in Donne's works until the 1669 edition. The poem was nonetheless quite popular. It survives in over 70 known manuscript copies, though none is in Donne's hand. (There is only one surviving holograph of the roughly 200 poems which Donne wrote.) "To His Mistress Going to Bed" is an excellent illustration of what Arthur Marotti has termed the "social textuality" of manuscript circulation. This term describes the willingness of many amateur scribes and compilers to consciously reshape or reframe the poems they copied.

Scribes and compilers felt free to provide their own answers to questions about the nature of the texts they copied and collected. Is the poem a general reflection on a commonly shared experience? Is it a poetic record of an event in the life of its author, (in the case of Donne, the now famous Dean of St. Paul's)? Is it a work of imagination created by an artist and to be admired primarily as an expression of his craft? The ways in which a particular scribe answered these questions can be gleaned from the kinds of collections in which a scribe placed a poem and from the identifying information—a title, indication of authorship or of the context which produced the poem—included or omitted in a copy. The various manuscript versions reveal more intimately than can a printed edition the range of ways in which the poem was used and understood by readers.

A range of scribal strategies is illustrated in the eight copies of "To His Mistress Going to Bed" at the Folger Shakespeare Library. Three of these manuscripts are in bound verse miscellanies compiled by their owners during the 1630s, and each reflects something of that scribe's habits of collection and interest in the poem.

The compiler of V.a.262 provided his poetic miscellany with the title "Divers Sonnetts & Poems compiled by certaine gentil Clerks and Ryme-Wrightes," which was revised from a still visible first title, "Certaine Sonnets and Divers Works of gentil Clerks." There is a lack of any attribution of authorship here even though three earlier poems in the manuscript are correctly attributed to "Dr. Donne."

The compiler of V.a.103 divided his poetic miscellany with various running heads: "Epitaphs - Laudatory," "Epitaphs - Satirical and Merry," "Love Sonnets," "Panegyricks," "Satyres," "Miscellenea," and a one-poem unit labeled "An Elegie." The running heads seem to have been entered before the poems were copied below them, making V.a.103 a commonplace book.

The compiler of V.a.125 includes "To His Mistress" amongst a group of poems written by Donne. It is preceded by a fragmentary copy of "The Will," lines 32–36 of which appear at the top of the page, and followed by "Love's Diet" and "The Perfume," titled "To his Mrs." by this compiler.

Click on the thumbnail images to get a printable PDF version of each manuscript version of "To His Mistress." Print out these different scribal copies so
that you can make a close comparison of these texts with one another and with a modern, printed edition of the poem.

Consider how the paratextual identifying information included in (or omitted from) each copy of the poem changes the way we understand it. How do the different titles alter our reading of the poem? What are we to make of the presence or lack of attribution to a particular author? What about the kind of collection in which the poem is included? Brief descriptions of each collection are provided above. Do the different hands (or writing styles) of the scribe suggest anything about their attitudes toward the poem?

In addition to these paratextual elements, pay close attention to the internal textual differences from manuscript to manuscript (your modern edition of the poem should be especially helpful here). How often do these scribal copies differ from one another? How often do they differ from your modern edition? (If you are having trouble, you might focus in on the first four and the last four lines, each of which should reveal interesting differences.) How do they differ in terms of their use of punctuation? Of spelling?

**Suggested Reading:**


Sequence and Design in Wroth's *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*

Garth Bond  
Lawrence University

Mary Wroth (1587–1651) was one of the most productive female poets in the first half of the seventeenth century. Her prose romance *Urania* was printed in 1621 with all the outward marks of status and achievement. Lyric poems appear scattered throughout *Urania* and, after the romance itself, Wroth also included a sonnet sequence entitled *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*. An earlier version of this sonnet sequence also exists in a carefully arranged and formatted manuscript written entirely in her own hand. Although the printed version contains Wroth's later revisions of individual poems and a reorganization of the sequence as a whole, there are significant aspects of the manuscript formatting that cannot be recreated in print. A comparison of the layout of Wroth's poetry in manuscript and print reveals the greater flexibility of manuscript and demonstrates how the choice of medium can limit or empower authors' decisions about how to present their work to readers.

"Formatting" and "layout" are broad, modern terms encompassing the ways in which all of the component parts of a text are arranged, as well as the ways those components are placed spatially on the page. Formatting includes decisions about how to indicate visually logical sections of a work (individual poems, larger subsections of poems within the overall collection, etc.), and other general design questions: what style of font should be used, how much text will fit on each page, how wide will the margins be? Another important consideration of formatting and layout is the use of what Gérard Genette has termed the "paratext," by which he means the elements of a physical text that are designed to facilitate the use of a text (such as a table of contents, page numbers or running heads, for instance) or increase its attractiveness (illustrations or decorative borders) but which are not considered to be part of the text itself.

In the early modern era, print encouraged homogeneity of layout because of the greater ease and cost-effectiveness of setting up typeface in easily repeatable formulas. This conformity could also help readers to internalize the formulas and thus increase comprehension. Because conformity offers no special advantages of economy or ease in manuscript production, however, the medium could be said to encourage authors to experiment with more subtle variations of formatting in guiding a reader's response to a text. The manuscript and print versions of *Wroth's Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* provide an excellent example of the respective formatting tendencies/conventions/possibilities of manuscript and print.

Here we provide links to multi-page PDF reproductions of two versions of *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*: one from Wroth's manuscript; the other from the 1621 printing, so that you can compare how the sonnet sequence is presented in manuscript and print. The latter pages of each feature a "corona," a series of sonnets linked by the repetition of the last line of each sonnet as the first line of the next (the last line of the final sonnet repeats the first line of the initial sonnet, forming the "circle" of the corona or crown). Print each PDF so that you can carefully examine them and compare them.

Pay special attention to Wroth's layout of the sonnets on the page, and to the paratextual elements like titles, chapter and/or page numbers, table of contents or indexes, and even catchwords, those words in the bottom righthand corner of the page which match up with the first word on the following page.

How does Wroth manipulate the layout and the paratext included in the manuscript in order to create a sense of a carefully arranged and organized sequence rather than a random assortment of unrelated poems? How many different elements of the manuscript's format contribute to this sense of order and organization?

Also, pay attention to Wroth's use of punctuation. In particular, what do you make of Wroth's use of the segno—the symbol that looks a bit like a slanted "$"? Does the way that Wroth uses it seem like she has a specific meaning for the symbol, or is it merely a decorative device?
Now looking at the sonnet sequence, pay careful attention to the layout and paratextual elements of the sequence. What portions of the layout and paratext remain the same in this sub-section of the manuscript? What elements, on the other hand, are different? In particular, how does Wroth use the segno in this section of the sonnet sequence? (Hint: Make sure to look at the final page of the section when answering this question.) What do these changes in formatting suggest about Wroth’s understanding of the corona? How might they alter your understanding of the corona’s relationship to the rest of the sonnet sequence?

By comparison with the flexibility and variety of formatting in the manuscript sequence, the printed text of *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* proves relatively stiff and uniform. Notice how little difference there is between the two portions of the printed text in comparison to the manuscript version. How does this uniformity of layout change the way you perceive the corona and its relationship to the other poems in the collection?

More generally, how does the formatting of poems in the printed text differ from the formatting in the manuscript? Which aspects of its layout and paratext seem similar to the opening section of the manuscript, and which seem similar to the manuscript corona? Which elements of layout and paratext are unique to the printed text, and which elements of the manuscript are abandoned in print?

Once you have identified the differences, try to think about how the transition from manuscript to print might help to explain these changes. Would the elements unique to the print version be more difficult to recreate in a handwritten document? Conversely, would the elements unique to the manuscript be difficult to recreate in the process of printing, or seem out of place in a printed book?

**Suggested Reading:**


A Seventeenth-Century Prophecy of Merlin

Nicole Clifton
Northern Illinois University

Among the Folger's manuscripts are several copies of "Merlin's Prophecy," an early seventeenth-century poem concerning James I (and VI of Scotland). One of these appears on the title page of a printed copy of James' own works; one is on a single sheet in the hand of George More, John Donne's father-in-law; another is in a book of mainly parliamentary and political documents, written in a variety of hands from 1550 to 1650. There, one page begins with the rhymed "Merlin's Prophecy," written as continuous prose, followed by four more prose prophecies in the same hand; marginal notes to two of these indicate that they were written "by me, Thomas Gee."

These three versions are illustrated here. George More's, in a current italic hand; Thomas Gee's, in a small, tidy secretary hand and that from the title page of James I's works, probably in the hand of Jean L'Oiseau de Tourval, the owner of the volume in 1626. Here I transcribe More's version.

Marlens prophesie

A prince out of the North shall come
King borne, king Babe his brest vppon
A Lyon rampant strange to see
and C. J. S. Jcleped hee
Born in a countrey rude and strong
yet he couragious wise and holy.
At best of strength, his fortunes best
he shall receaue and then hym rest
Couch as a Lion in his den
and lie in peace so long as men
shall wonder and all christendom
thinsk the tyme long, both all and some
at last he calles a parliament
and breaks it of in discontent
and then shall shortly roused be
by enemies beyonde the sea
But when in wrath he draws his sword
wo that the sleeping Lion stird
for ere he shettath the same againe
he puttes his foes to mickle payne
the valiant actes he then shall doe
Great Alexanders fame out goe
great passeth seas, and fame doth wynne
till many princes ioyne w[i][th] hym
and choose hym for their gouernor
and croune hym Westerne Emperor
Under the Tudor rulers, Arthurian legend, including Merlin, took on an important role in unifying a nation recovering from civil wars. The Tudors claimed descent from the ancient British kings, and Henry VIII named his oldest son Arthur to recall the famed sovereign. Writers such as Spenser retold or re-used the old stories in newly self-conscious, literary ways, in contrast to the older chronicles and romances. In the seventeenth century, however, the literary popularity of Arthur lapsed, not to recover until the nineteenth century took a new (and often nationalist) interest in the Middle Ages. The Puritans took a dim view of frivolous, old romances suffused with papistry; the Restoration found inspiration elsewhere; the Enlightenment, again, frowned on time-wasting fantasies about the legendary past.

Although high literary culture generally disdained Arthur and Merlin through these centuries, their popularity survived in more modest places. A series of almanacs with titles referring to Merlin appears at least through the eighteenth century; such printed books often became diaries or anthologies of sorts, in which owners noted quotations, kept accounts, or entered other material they wished to retain. And prophecies also kept the name of Merlin alive. In at least some cases, these prophecies remain in manuscript because their inscriber feared the consequences of publication. In his manuscript *Tract on the Succession to the Crown*, written in 1602, Sir John Harington says, "I write to my dearest freind, and am afraid that my study walles may accuse me. But . . . as long as I do not printe nor publishe it I break no lawe, for I have redd and double redd the Statute . . ." (39).

Among the information that Harington considers is a prophecy translated from Welsh (he gives the original as well as a translation), which he characterizes as "elder than my great grandfather. . . . 1, a babe crownd in his cradle; 2, markt with a lyon in his skyn; 3, shall recover againe the crosse; 4, shall make the ile of Brutus whole and unparted; 5, and to growe hence forward better and better" (120). The first two elements of Harington's prophecy, though unrhymed, correspond precisely to the beginning of the verse "Merlin's Prophecy"; the other three might be read into it by a sympathetic reader.

As advisor to King Arthur, Merlin has long figured prominently in Arthurian legends. Welsh legends tell of a bard with the gift of prophecy who lived in the sixth century. Nennius, in the ninth century, includes the story of a fatherless boy with magical powers outstripping those of King Vortigern's magicians. Geoffrey of Monmouth, in the twelfth century, associates this story with Merlin and adds the details of his begetting by a demon on a human woman, thus explaining his prophetic and other powers. Writers since the twelfth century have accepted and elaborated on Geoffrey's version, which he claimed to have based on a Welsh book. No phrases in Geoffrey precisely match those of the seventeenth century rhymed prophecy, arguing against a direct connection, but the riddling language of each shows continuity in the genre of prophecy.

**Suggested Readings:**


The new source for study of Chaucer's critical reception is the recent publication of *Chaucer's Fame in England, STC Chauceriana 1475–1640* by Jackson Campbell Boswell and Sylvia Wallace Holton. The volume joins Caroline Spurgeon's precedent and landmark compilation of *Five Hundred Years of Chaucer Criticism and Allusion 1357–1900* and Derek Brewer's *Chaucer: The Critical Heritage* as an indispensable tool for accessing the history of reader-responses to Chaucer. Perusal of these encyclopedias is always fascinating and informative. One can follow the critical reception of Chaucer by his most famous and influential readers. But these compendia have limitations. They record only "official" reference to Chaucer. And so, citations of what Caxton himself had to say about Chaucer in his 1477 edition of *The Canterbury Tales* will be recorded, but not the handwritten, marginal notations of the same text's later, less well-known readers.

Manuscripts and early print editions often contain inscriptions by which readers recorded their ownership and their personal and sometimes peculiar reading experiences. There has been a good deal of recent critical interest in *scribal* and editorial practice as an interpretive gesture. Glosses, inserted titles (often alternative), and authorial attributions (often erroneous) may not have been part of the source transcription or impression, but they nevertheless influence the dispositions of each text's future readers. Even the simple insertion of handwritten indicators (brackets, underlining, pointers such as *manicules*, and the like) suggest habits of highlighted re-reading. But by far the most provocative type of marginalia are those rarer handwritten comments that preserve the articulation of an (often anonymous) individual's reading experience.

One such resonant comment is preserved in a 1550 reprinting (HH52/25) of one of the earliest printed editions of *The Werkes of Geffray Chaucer* (STC 5074). At the bottom of a page of *The Legend of Good Women* (fol. ccxr), a reader has inscribed a verse apostrophe to Chaucer, which has been partially cropped by the binder (a not uncommon fate for marginalia). The hand is approximately datable to the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century:

```
Chauser If I may nowe by your leaue
a little speake my mynde
It is most true and euer was
as I farre as I can finde

Cleopatra [xx xxx xxxxxx]
[entire line cropped]

In such a cause as heare befor
alredy you haue discust
but by your leaue she was then held
She could not haue hir lust

By Hir Brother . . . Iulius Caesar
[entire line cropped]
```

The book has been cropped, damaging the text in the name of physical improvement. That action suggests a subsequent owner's assessment of marginalia as itself property damage. So, with some words lost, it is difficult to conclude exactly what the reader wishes to say to Chaucer. But he or she seems to be objecting to Chaucer's proposition that Cleopatra may be presented as a truly "good" woman in *The Legend of Good Women*. As it is difficult to determine how serious Chaucer himself was being in *The Legend of Good Women*, it is likewise difficult to decide how serious the reader's objection may be. But the act of inscription itself, directly addressing the author, suggests the reader's dynamic impression of the poet's presence; reading remains an imaginary dialogue.

In the right margin of the same page is another note, probably in the same hand:

```
Tis playe was playde at Oxforde town.
```
as fare as I remember

Like the first handwritten note, this one has been cropped so that the subsequent line or lines are no longer extant. As is often the case with marginal notes, such a memento may have no direct reference to the immediate text. But it may. Is it conceivable that the reader listened to a performance of the Legend? Could "play" here mean interlude? Does it suggest, at the very least, that the reader attended an event when the text was performed publicly (that is "read to" an audience) rather than "read" in the more modern, silent, solitary definition of reading.

On the final page of this copy of Chaucer’s works is another comment in a different hand, giving directions about the lending of the book:

xxi
Eliz

M[emoran]d[um] On the xth Day of June ^I John Gyndler^ delyueryd this booke to my Brother Will[i]m Curteys /to be redelyveryd ageberne when so euer hit be requyred after one half year next after the delyuery date hereof

The 21st year of the reign of Elizabeth fell between 17 November 1578 and 16 November 1579, thus dating this entry to 10 June 1579. These readers have not yet been acknowledged by the formal histories of the reception of Chaucer. But their marginal comments provide compelling testimony of the active and indeed interactive nature of reading.

Suggested Reading:


Poetic Authority in Manuscript and Print: The Case of Milton's Paradise Lost and Dryden's The State of Innocence and Fall of Man

Lara Dodds
Mississippi State University

In his notes for his life of John Milton (1608–74), John Aubrey (1626–97) described an encounter between two literary giants of the late seventeenth century: "Jo: Drydenn Esq. Poet Laureate, who very much admires him & went to him to have leave to putt his Paradise-lost into a Drama in Rhyrne: Mr. Milton received him civilly, & told him he would give him leave to tagge his Verse" (Darbishire 7). The result of this meeting was John Dryden's (1631–1700) rhymed play, The State of Innocence and Fall of Man, an "opera" that was never performed, but was entered in the Stationers' Register in April 1674 and first published in quarto in 1677. Dryden's decision to "tag" Milton's verses, whether an act of translation, homage, or overgoing, poses an interesting case study in the meanings of authorship, influence, and imitation for seventeenth-century literature. Two manuscripts at the Folger shed light on these issues.

Shortly after the first publication of Paradise Lost, Milton composed an explanation for why the poem rhymes not" (Milton 51). This polemic provides an important context for Dryden's appropriation of Milton's epic. In his fierce defense of blank verse Milton contrasted the "true musical delight" of his own verse with the preference by "some famous modern poets," (including Dryden, perhaps) for rhymed couplets. These rhymes, Milton suggested, proved the poet's slavish devotion to "custom," and offered nothing to the poet but " vexation, hindrance, and constraint." Milton's own poetics represented, by contrast, "an example set, the first in English, of ancient liberty recovered to heroic poem from the troublesome and modern bondage of rhyming" (Milton 54–5). As Milton's comments make clear, the decision not to rhyme was more than an aesthetic one. For Milton, verse form was intimately connected to the poem's central concern with liberty. Therefore Dryden's rhymed couplets in The State of Innocence stood for literary values opposed to Milton's, as well as contrary cultural and political values.

For readers of Paradise Lost, Dryden's State of Innocence is at best a trivialization—reducing the scope of epic to the scenes of a play—and at worst a betrayal of Milton's achievement in Paradise Lost. Praise of Milton's authorship at the expense of Dryden's began with Andrew Marvell's contemptuous reference to Dryden in the commendatory verses to the second edition of Paradise Lost (1674):

Well mightst thou scorn thy readers to allure
With tinkling rhyme, of thy own sense secure;
While the town-Bayes writes all the while and spells,
And like a pack-horse tires without his bells:
Their fancies like our bushy-points appear,
The poets lag them, we for fashion wear.
I too transported by the mode offend,
And while I meant to praise thee must commend.
Thy verse created like thy theme sublime,
In number, weight, and measure, needs not rhyme.
(Milton 54)

Critical judgment has typically sided with Marvell: Paradise Lost achieved a sublimity incompatible with Dryden's "jingling sounds of like endings" (Milton 54).

As Stephen Zwicker has warned, however, the obvious superiority of Milton's epic is not so obvious if we view these texts through the eyes of the poet's contemporaries rather than our own retrospective sense of their relative significance. Material evidence suggests that the reception and circulation of Dryden's play was not at all hindered by its derivative relationship to Milton's epic. There seems to have been a wide readership for this opera in both manuscript and print. Between 1677 and 1700 there were nine print quarto editions of the play. In the preface to the first edition, Dryden explained that he was forced to publish this unperformed opera in his own defense because of the "many hundred Copies of it being dispers'd abroad without my knowledge or consent: so that every one gathering new faults, it became at length a Libel against me" (Dryden 86). Dryden's claim about the extent of manuscript circulation cannot be proven or disproven. However, there are seven extant manuscript transcriptions of the play, more than of any other dramatic text by this author.

The first printed edition has been identified by Dryden's editors as authoritative because it incorporates the author's latest revisions. There, Dryden framed the text of the play with elaborate paratextual materials. These materials were arranged so as to assert Dryden's poetic and cultural authority over and against Milton's. The volume begins with a dedication to the Duchess of York. This dedication affiliated Dryden with a network of patronage and announced certain (high status) political and cultural allegiances. Following the dedication is a long preface, headed "The Authors Apology for Heroique
Two manuscripts from the Folger's collection raise additional questions about the complicated relationship between Milton's epic and Dryden's operatic translation. Each in its own way, these manuscripts unsettle the careful negotiations of genre, authorship, and cultural priority that dominate the paratexts of the early printed editions of the play.

The first of these is a transcription of Dryden's play on 23 folio pages (folios 76–99) in Folger MS V.b.235. This transcription was inscribed "With W Luptons kindest wishes to T J Pettigrew Esquire" (fo. 77v) and bound together with the unpublished pastoral poems of William Basse to create a composite volume of seventeenth-century manuscript poetry in folio.

This document belongs to an independent manuscript tradition that precedes the first printing of the play as demonstrated by the collation provided by Vinton A. Dearing in his edition of *The State of Innocence* (see Dryden 460–534). This manuscript has primarily been of interest to scholars because it may preserve variant readings which reveal Dryden's process of revision. The most significant such variant occurs on the first page of the manuscript. This document, like the majority of the manuscript witnesses, gives the title of the play as "The fall of Angells or Man in innocency," the same under which the play was first registered in 1674. As Marion Hamilton pointed out in her study of the manuscripts, the different titles in the manuscript and print traditions may provide evidence of Dryden's authorial choices. The later title, *The State of Innocence and Fall of Man*, is a more appropriate title as Dryden's poem (unlike Milton's) gives little attention to the fall of the angels.

For a student of the early printed editions of the opera, however, perhaps the most striking thing about V.b.235 is its lack of any indication of authorship. In contrast to Dryden's complicated negotiation of his authorship in relation to his Miltonic original, this document includes no explicit reference to either Dryden or Milton. Instead, the most prominent cues to the identity and function of the document are the conventions that mark it as a dramatic text. This document is a careful transcription by a competent scribe or scribes. The pages are ruled throughout allowing for a neat and regular presentation of the text. The wide margins on the left hand side of the page allow for the clear presentation of speech prefixes, and the scribe has prepared the stage directions to provide the illusion of scenic effects. Yet while these conventions clearly mark the document as a dramatic text, there is no indication of the specific generic designation, opera, that is signaled on the printed title page and in Dryden's preface.

Folger MS V.a. 225 is another transcription of the play that exists in a different relationship with the printed editions of Dryden's play. This manuscript is illustrated here by the first page of text. As a comparison with the first printed edition reveals, this manuscript imitates the printed tradition of the text in both its size and its layout. Unlike V.a. 235, which uses clearly defined margins and white space to delineate the speech prefixes, this document follows the printed text in presenting the speech prefixes within the main text block. Without the distinctions of font size and type allowed by printed typography, this document is less legible than either the printed text or the independent manuscript tradition. For instance, the manuscript scribe has imitated the horizontal rules that separate the scenic description from the dialogue, but has not followed the contrast between italic and roman type that marks this distinction in print.

Dryden's editor, Dearing, has determined by collation that the exemplar for V.a.225 was the ninth printed quarto text, a pirated quarto that was falsely dated 1684, but actually printed in 1695. This late witness to the manuscript circulation of this play therefore raises difficult questions about the relationship between manuscript and print in the circulation and reception of dramatic manuscripts. Why might a scribe have chosen to copy a text widely available in nine printed editions? Though this scribe does not appear to be as experienced as the writer of V.b. 235, the use of two colors of ink on the first page does indicate that the document was prepared for a student of the early printed editions of the opera, however, perhaps the most striking thing about V.b.235 is its lack of any indication of authorship. In contrast to Dryden's complicated negotiation of his authorship in relation to his Miltonic original, this document includes no explicit reference to either Dryden or Milton. Instead, the most prominent cues to the identity and function of the document are the conventions that mark it as a dramatic text. This document is a careful transcription by a competent scribe or scribes. The pages are ruled throughout allowing for a neat and regular presentation of the text. The wide margins on the left hand side of the page allow for the clear presentation of speech prefixes, and the scribe has prepared the stage directions to provide the illusion of scenic effects. Yet while these conventions clearly mark the document as a dramatic text, there is no indication of the specific generic designation, opera, that is signaled on the printed title page and in Dryden's preface.

Folger MS V.a. 225 is another transcription of the play that exists in a different relationship with the printed editions of Dryden's play. This manuscript is illustrated here by the first page of text. As a comparison with the first printed edition reveals, this manuscript imitates the printed tradition of the text in both its size and its layout. Unlike V.a. 235, which uses clearly defined margins and white space to delineate the speech prefixes, this document follows the printed text in presenting the speech prefixes within the main text block. Without the distinctions of font size and type allowed by printed typography, this document is less legible than either the printed text or the independent manuscript tradition. For instance, the manuscript scribe has imitated the horizontal rules that separate the scenic description from the dialogue, but has not followed the contrast between italic and roman type that marks this distinction in print.

Dryden's editor, Dearing, has determined by collation that the exemplar for V.a.225 was the ninth printed quarto text, a pirated quarto that was falsely dated 1684, but actually printed in 1695. This late witness to the manuscript circulation of this play therefore raises difficult questions about the relationship between manuscript and print in the circulation and reception of dramatic manuscripts. Why might a scribe have chosen to copy a text widely available in nine printed editions? Though this scribe does not appear to be as experienced as the writer of V.b. 235, the use of two colors of ink on the first page does indicate that the document was prepared for
with some care. On the other hand, the curious title of this document, "The Sate of Innocence or the Fall of Man," is such an obvious error that we must presume a defect of some kind in the scribe's exemplar or perhaps a lack of interest or knowledge of the text. Furthermore, though this manuscript is largely a faithful transcription of the ninth printed edition of the text, it omits the extensive prefatory material shared by all printed editions and contains no explicit attribution of authorship. As in V.b. 235 neither Dryden nor Milton is named as an authority in the document. Looking at this manuscript today, we cannot be sure if any of Dryden's attempts to situate his play—within networks of patronage, within aesthetic controversies about rhyme and blank verse, within debates about the true nature of heroic poetry and the history of English literature—were successful. Certainly they don't appear to have been relevant to the writer of this manuscript. Though there was likely no need for manuscript circulation at this late date in the textual history of The State of Innocence, this document nevertheless represents an extensive investment of time and labor that suggests it was valued not only for the text it contained, but for the artifact it is and, perhaps, the scribal practices that produced it.

**Suggested Reading:**


Ben Jonson and Manuscript Culture

Christopher Ivic
State University of New York at Potsdam

If John Donne eschewed print culture, Ben Jonson (1572–1637), however ambivalently, embraced it. Jonson's masterful manipulation of print as a cultural agent, culminating in his monumental folio edition of *The Workes of Beniamin Jonson* (1616), which issued Jonson's plays, poems, and masques, played no small part in his magisterial authorial self-fashioning—Jonson was, after all, Britain's first unofficial poet laureate since John Skelton.

Jonson was by no means a stranger to manuscript culture and its various coteries, however. Indeed, Jonson's poetic identity owes as much to the handwritten worlds of early modern Britain as it does to the printing press. Donne was, undoubtedly, the leading manuscript poet of the period. Jonson, perhaps unlike any other poet, flourished in both modes of literary production. Certainly Jonson's poetic career invites consideration of the ways in which print and manuscript forms intersected and overlapped in the period.

Two of Jonson's poems evince, in real and imagined ways, a poet at work in print and manuscript cultures: Folio, XXIII, "To John Donne," and Epigram XCIV, "To Lucy, Countess of Bedford, with Mr Donne's Satires." Both are printed in the 1616 *Workes*. These poems represent themselves as coterie texts—that is, as the products of a select and exclusive literary or social circle—and in doing so, they foreground Jonson's connections to a literary and social elite. "Epigram XXIII," addressed to Donne, is sustained by its sense of intimacy (poet to poet) that, perhaps, effects a leveling of social distinctions, especially as Jonson positions himself as judge of Donne's manuscript verse, most of which was not printed until 1633. A similar sense of intimacy, and a similar sense of positioning, pervades "Epigram XCIV," as Jonson deferentially presents his (and Donne's) patron, Lucy, Countess of Bedford (who had a close relationship with Donne), with a copy of his poem along with a manuscript collection of Donne's satires (despite the fact that Donne did not need any mediation with Bedford). Jonson's poem bears witness to the circulative nature of manuscript poetry precisely by imagining itself as an object in a private network of exchange. By representing himself as a reader of Donne's manuscript poems who is in the position of handing Donne's handwritten satires to the Countess, Jonson reveals himself as a signal participant in the elite culture of manuscript poetry. These two poems were included in the 1616 *Workes*, and that inclusion reveals the ways Jonson drew upon the social and literary conditions of manuscript culture and then parlayed the status thus derived into a public authorial identity fashioned in the forum of print publication.

At the same time, however, Jonson's work continued to circulate in manuscript. The following examples from Folger manuscripts provide a sense of the material production, circulation, and reception of Jonson's poems; moreover, they illustrate the complexities and challenges that a vibrant manuscript culture presents to received narratives of authorship, textuality, and literary history, especially narratives that take modern edited texts as their source for study.

Folger MS V.b.43 is a folio-sized verse miscellany written in a neat secretary hand, which is consistent throughout, and which displays little of the italic creep so evident in much of the handwriting in this period (c. 1630). In this miscellany, Jonson's "Vpon an houre glasse:" appears on the same page as Donne's "The Anagram" (Elegy 2) (untitled in this manuscript). Many extant manuscript copies of Jonson's "Houre-glasse" poem exist, including an autograph copy, dated January 19, 1619, which was written out for presentation to William Drummond of Hawthornden (Scottish Record Office, MS GD18/4312; Beal 237). This poem was eventually printed in 1640 in the second folio of Jonson's *Works*. A comparison of the autograph copy, the printed copy, and this Folger manuscript copy reveals numerous variants—probably the most significant feature of manuscript poetry—in even such a brief poem.

In MS V.b.43, "Vpon an houre glasse" reads:

Doe but consider this small dust
that runneth in the glasse
by Autumnes mov'd

would you beleive that it the body ere
was

of one that lov'd

who in his M[ist][r][i]'s flame playing like
a Fly

burnt to Cinders by her eye,

Yes and in death as life unblest
to have it expres

Even ashes of lovers finde no rest.
In the 1640 edition, the poem appears as follows:

The Hour-Glass
Do but consider this small dust
Here running in the glass,
By atoms moved:
Could you believe that this
The body [ever] was
Of one that loved?
And in his mistress' flame, playing like a fly,
Turned to cinders by her eye?
Yes; and in death, as life, unblest,
To have't expressed,
Even ashes of lovers find no rest.

How do we account for these textual variants? The Folger manuscript copy may be an instance of what Walter Ong, describing the vibrancy of manuscript culture, calls "participatory poetics" (274–9): manuscript readers who became manuscript writers were free to alter poems as they recorded them. But who recorded this poem? The autograph poem housed in the Scottish Record Office is a clear example of what Harold Love, in his delineation of three main modes of scribal publication, terms "author publication" (47). Is the Folger manuscript copy an instance of one of the two other modes: "entrepreneurial publication" or "user publication"? According to Love, entrepreneurial publication, the product of a scribe, is "usually written in a clear, regularly formed hand with consistent page numbering and catchwords on every page": user publication, the product of an individual who desires to possess the text, is "written in a rapid, untidy hand." However, Love warns these distinctions are not easily maintained: "not all personal copies are so written, and some private transcribers matched the professionals for the care and beauty of their script" (46). The "clear, regularly formed hand" of Folger MS V.b.43 could be that of a private transcriber. What about the placement of this poem? Does the fact that a scribe has placed Jonson's verse alongside the period's most popular manuscript poet call attention to Jonson's success? Or is it worth noting that Donne's untitled poem is ascribed to "Dr: Donne" (as the poem above Jonson's is attributed to "Mr. Raynolds"), while "Vpon an houre glasse:" is unattributed? Early modern manuscripts provide us with invaluable evidence, to be sure; however, this evidence is far from stable or coherent and often provides more questions than answers.

Another remarkable instance of the intersection of print and scribal culture exists in the form of Folger MS V.a.219, a mid seventeenth-century verse miscellany bound in limp vellum. If anything, this manuscript reveals the heterogeneity of verse miscellanies. On f. 33r, we find the heading "Ben: Johnson his poems," over four poems in whole or (mainly) parts. Note that only the third entry has a title. The first selection contains lines 13 through 16 of Epigram XCIV, "To Lucy, Countess of Bedford, with Mr Donne's Satires." The second selection contains lines 25 through 36 of Epigram XCV, "To Sir Henry Savile." The third selection is the whole of Epigram LXIII, "To Robert, Earl of Salisbury." And the fourth selection is a couplet from Epigram XCVII, "On the New Motion."

To what extent does this verse miscellany give us a sense of the conditions under which the scribe is working? It is tempting to conclude that the scribe was given access to fragments of Jonson's poem. However, this compilation was put together well after the publication of Jonson's Workes; moreover, the fact that the first two entries follow the Workes' placement of the "Savile" poem immediately after the "Lucy" poem may suggest that the scribe is copying from the printed text—a common phenomenon in the period. Perhaps we are witness here to a self-selecting scribe, one who copies only what he or she feels is worthy of copying. To classify this manuscript as a commonplace book would be inaccurate, though this example suggests that verse miscellanies were by no means always given over to recording poems in their entirety. While the numbering in the left margin—"1," "2," etc.—may be a way of demarcating the poems, what impact does it have on the reception of Jonson's work?

If print culture provides evidence of authors' attitudes to their books and the public, then manuscript culture allows us to glimpse scribes and readers' attitudes toward authors. What can we gauge about the attitude of the scribe of Folger MS V.a.219 toward the author of the poems? Perhaps the heading "Ben: Johnson his poems" suggests that the scribe privileges or respects the author. In his entry on Benjamin Jonson in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Ian Donaldson notes that "Jonson was to be the poet's own favoured spelling in all surviving examples of his autograph, and in his published work from 1604 onwards. 'Ben' was the version of his forename by which he would be universally known." In fact, in many of the printed books that Jonson owned, he has left us the signature "Ben: Jonson" on the title page. Can this "Ben:" (even without the author's preferred "Jonson") be viewed as a sign of the influence Jonson's own poetic self-crowning played in the manuscript reception of his poetry?

As mentioned earlier, Jonson's Epigram XCIV, "To Lucy, Countess of Bedford, with Mr Donne's Satires" is remarkable for its imagining of the dynamics of coterie circulation. MS V.a.219's first Jonson entry includes only the final four lines of this poem, altered lines at that: an alteration that, it seems, works to make the entry appear self-contained.

They, though few
Bee of the best: and 'mongst those, best are you.
Lucy, you brightnesse of our sphare, who are
The Muses Euening, as their Morning starre.
With no reference to Donne's satires, the sense of the poem's real or imagined coterie setting, and therefore its social significance, is lost. "Transmission," Peter Beal reminds us, was "subject to the common process of manuscript culture whereby texts were liable to be copied, and sometimes adapted, to suit the tastes, standards and requirements of compilers and readers, rather than out of any sense of reverence for the sanctity of the author's original" (2002: 124). This scribe's recording of the poems of "Ben: Johnson" serves as a wonderful example of the period's eclectic transmission practices.

In his Index to English Literary Manuscripts, Beal notes that "[t]here are numerous copies of Jonson's poems in miscellanies and other MS sources. Those texts often represent early versions which circulated in MS before being revised for publication" (235). Both of the above examples bear some relation to printed texts, though not as early drafts. Other examples of Jonson's verse that circulated in manuscript were never printed in his lifetime. Three poems on Inigo Jones, the principal stage-designer of Jacobean court masques provide a fine example. Jones and Jonson had a vexed relationship, one that came to a head when Jonson published a masque, Love's Triumph Through Callipolis, with his name as author before that of Jonson's as designer. The strains of this struggle are evident in Jonson's attacks on Jones in his three poems, which, though never printed, were clearly "published."

That the Folger Shakespeare Library contains three complete sets of the Inigo Jones poems—Folger MS X.d.245 (a-b), Folger MS V.a.96, ff.90v-94v, and Folger MS V.a 322, pp.11-15—suggests that these poems were scribally published. Perhaps the most intriguing of these three texts is Folger MS X.d.245 (a-b), which contains two bifolium sheets, with the following three poems written in a neat secretary hand with traces of italic: "An Epigram upon Inego Iones to a freind." signed Ben: Jonson (/ f.1); "To Inego Marquess would bee." signed Ben: Johnson" (f.1r-v); "An Expostulacion with Inego Iones." signed Ben: Jonson (f.1v-3). A close look at the various folds of the paper suggests that these poems could have been delivered by letter, for the folds are consistent with the size of letter folds in the period. To whom these letters are addressed and from whom they come is unclear. If these poems were enclosures in a letter, what might that suggest about the circulation of these poems? Why might these poems in particular—these attacks on Inigo Jones—circulate in letter form? Would the letter be one way to circulate poems within a coterie? Arthur Marotti has suggested that the circulation of poems in loose sheets and booklets probably preceded the circulation of poems in verse miscellanies. Might this be an early composition, the source for the other Folger copies which are contained in verse miscellanies?

Folger MS V.a.96 preserves a less visually appealing copy of these same poems. In this octavo-sized book, the poems are copied out in italic with ample spacing. Notice that the poem "To Inigo Marques would bee A Corrollarie." looks much more like prose than verse. Because the scribe is working on ruled sheets, he or she has been forced to make the poem fit into this confined space. So what we see here is an instance of the way in which the material vehicle onto which the poem is being inscribed impacts the form. Note, too, the very first line of the poem: "B:ke-cause thou hear'et st the mightie king of Spaine." The other two Folger manuscript copies of this poem begin "But cause thou..."; modern printed editions of this poem also print the "But cause" opening that may seem awkward to us. What do you think the scribe has done in this particular instance?

This emendation provides another example of the liberty many scribes took in this period. Should we not only accept but also prefer some of these scribes's emendations?

Suggested Reading:


The Circulation of Poetry in the Eighteenth Century: The Case of Charles Plumptre’s Manuscript Volume

George Justice
University of Missouri-Columbia

On September 7, 1728 Charles Plumptre (1712–1779) began a manuscript miscellany book of poetry, *A Collection of Poems by Several Hands* ( Folger MS M.a.104). Plumptre was from a notable Nottingham family and, in the course of his life, would become an eminent cleric in the Church of England. The teen-aged Plumptre, following convention, signed and dated on the first front end leaf what could have been a blank book purchased for the purpose, and he carefully set out a title page that imitated printed title pages of the day. The front pastedown bears the bookplate of John Plumptre, identified by the Folger catalog as the author’s older brother. The recto of the first leaf after the endleaves, hinged onto the title-page, contains sample addresses—“Dear Cousin,” “Dear Sir”—and other scribblings, while the verso contains what may be sample poetic meters, or calculations, written in ruled vertical lines. The volume includes pages numbered to 131, with 118 pages of these containing verse. The rest of the book remains blank. From the classical epigrams Plumptre appended to its conventional title, we can see that he envisaged his book as a personal repository of contemporary poetry. Much of what Plumptre carefully copies is light verse of the kind that might appeal to a schoolboy: bawdy rhymes addressing randy mistresses or defiant proclamations that there is more to school than studying.

But Plumptre also records poems by some of the great poets of the day, including Alexander Pope (1688–1744). For instance, on pages 32 and 33, he copied out Pope’s satiric lines “On Mr. Addison,” a set of verses with a vexed and complicated relationship with manuscript and print modes of production and distribution. Analysis of the history of these lines, their various forms, and ultimate print publication in final form seven years later can shed light on the interpenetration of print and manuscript in the early eighteenth century and on the ways in which a successful author like Pope could attempt to manipulate these media in his own cultural and economic interest. At the same time, manuscript publication, so less easily controlled than print, could subvert the author’s original aims. Publishers used manuscript verse for their own profit, and readers continued to copy out verses by hand even when printed versions were available.

Joseph Addison (1672–1719) was best known as the author, with Richard Steele, of the periodical essay, *The Spectator*. Pope’s lines attacking him eventually were incorporated in expanded form in his *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, which was first printed in January 1735. Pope apparently composed the first version of these lines in 1715 and showed them in manuscript to Joseph Addison in order to deter his former mentor from patronizing a rival translation of Homer being prepared by Thomas Tickell (1685–1740). Indeed, Addison may have been the prime mover behind his friend Tickell’s edition. After being shown Pope’s verses, Addison stopped supporting Tickell, and Pope’s own translation of the *Iliad* (published 1715–1720) became a great critical and popular success.

Addison died in 1719. Some critics, in the eighteenth century and later, have accused Pope of mean-spiritedness for continuing to circulate these lines. Norman Ault exonerates Pope through constructing a plausible timeline for circulation of the lines before Addison’s death. An unattributed version reached print as early as 1722, in the *St. James’s Journal* (a short-lived weekly periodical). An anonymous contributor calling himself “Dorimant” wrote to the editor from Button’s Coffeehouse contributing a manuscript of the poem that had apparently been circulating hand to hand. Button’s was, in fact, the site of Addison’s “little senate” and the butt of some of Pope’s satire, but Dorimant reports that “The following Lines have been in good Reputation here, and are now submitted to Publick Censure.”

There were subsequent unauthorized publications of Pope’s verses on Addison in printed miscellanies produced by “the Unspeakable” Edmund Curll (d. 1747), a London bookseller with whom Pope had
quarreled for years. One of Curll's collections of verse included Pope's lines with the title "Verses Occasioned by Mr. Tickell's Translation of the First Iliad of Homer." The first authorized edition of the poem was published as "Fragment of a Satire" in Volume 3 of the Pope-Swift Miscellanies of 1727, but by this time, the lines on Addison had been altered and expanded.

Plumptre's version of the lines closely approximates the early version of manuscript circulation, as far as can be determined from comparison with the St. James's Journal and Curll's Court Poems (1726). However, Plumptre did not apparently take his copy from one of Curll's editions: this can be inferred from Plumptre's gloss on these lines, which were omitted from the versions later published with Pope's authorization:

Who when two *wits on Rival* Themes Contest,  
Approves of Each, But likes the worst the Best.

Apparently without access to Curll's title, which refers to the topical occasion for the verses, Plumptre annotated these lines with "*Sewel's Garth's Metamorphoses*" (George Sewell, bap. 1687–1726; Samuel Garth, 1660/1661–1719). With this note, Plumptre suggested that Pope was making cultural commentary on rival translations of Ovid rather than writing personal invective to shut down cultural debate. Of course Plumptre was wrong. Whether justified or not, Pope could be mean-spirited.

Plumptre probably copied his version of the lines from a source dependent upon the version in the St. James's Journal or from manuscript sources. Plumptre's version differs from the earliest surviving manuscript of the poem, a copy owned by the xxth earl of Oxford and in the Welbeck collection. It is very similar to the version published in the St. James's Journal, but the title, the attribution to Pope, and the erroneous note on the source of the satire suggest that Plumptre was working either from an annotated copy of the printed version or a manuscript version incorporating title, attribution, and erroneous gloss.

Pope's lines are a literary descendant of the manuscript libels popular in the seventeenth century. The verses had an immediate social function (shutting down Addison's patronage of a rival) and geographic reference. Coffeehouses like Button's, which functioned as sites for reading, writing, and conversation, became crucial sites in the formation of what Habermas calls the "public sphere." A letter from Pope to Addison's friend James Craggs in July, 1715, complained that Button's was no longer the non-partisan space it had been, and blamed Addison for its metamorphosis into a playground for factional partisanship. Dorimant's note in the St. James's Journal, however, suggested a version of Habermasian disinterestedness in which common readers could participate in public events.

In Curll's volume, Pope's lines on Addison are followed by an "Answer to the Foregoing Verses. Presented to the Countess of Warwick." Curll hoped to profit from his theft of Pope's verse and also to humiliate the poet. Pope's own publication of an expanded set of verses in 1727 fits into a general pattern: writing in manuscript—such as his letters and his famous Rape of the Lock—would be circulated in manuscript, published without his approval (but, in some cases, with his crafty complicity), and then published again in corrected, explicitly authorized fashion. Alexander Pope, often thought to be one of the first authorial heroes of "print culture," built his career upon manipulation of the conventions of manuscript circulation of verse. Plumptre's admiring copy of the poem signals the preeminence of Alexander Pope not only in the literary marketplace, but in the overlapping, but not identical, world of manuscript. It also demonstrates that comparison of manuscripts (and manuscripts with various printed sources) does more than create stemma in service of producing a copy text. Indeed, the complicated history of these lines—and Plumptre's innocent recording of one version of them—illuminates a complex literary world involving multiple writers, the publishing world, and readers dispersed throughout the isle of Great Britain.

Suggested Reading:


The Circulation of Poetry in the Eighteenth Century: The Case of Charles Plumptre's Manuscript Volume

George Justice
University of Missouri-Columbia

On September 7, 1728 Charles Plumptre (1712–1779) began a manuscript miscellany book of poetry, A Collection of Poems by Several Hands (Folger MS M.a.104). Plumptre was from a notable Nottingham family and, in the course of his life, would become an eminent cleric in the Church of England. The teen-aged Plumptre, following convention, signed and dated on the first front end leaf what could have been a blank book purchased for the purpose, and he carefully set out a title page that imitated printed title pages of the day. The front pastedown bears the bookplate of John Plumptre, identified by the Folger catalog as the author's older brother. The recto of the first leaf after the endleaves, hinged onto the title-page, contains sample addresses—"Dear Cousin," "Dear Sir"— and other scribblings, while the verso contains what may be sample poetic meters, or calculations, written in ruled vertical lines. The volume includes pages numbered to 131, with 118 pages of these containing verse. The rest of the book remains blank. From the classical epigrams Plumptre appended to its conventional title, we can see that he envisaged his book as a personal repository of contemporary poetry. Much of what Plumptre carefully copies is light verse of the kind that might appeal to a schoolboy: bawdy rhymes addressing randy mistresses or defiant proclamations that there is more to school than studying.

But Plumptre also records poems by some of the great poets of the day, including Alexander Pope (1688–1744). For instance, on pages 32 and 33, he copied out Pope's satiric lines "On Mr. Addison," a set of verses with a vexed and complicated relationship with manuscript and print modes of production and distribution. Analysis of the history of these lines, their various forms, and ultimate print publication in final form seven years later can shed light on the interpenetration of print and manuscript in the early eighteenth century and on the ways in which a successful author like Pope could attempt to manipulate these media in his own cultural and economic interest. At the same time, manuscript publication, so less easily controlled than print, could subvert the author's original aims. Publishers used manuscript verse for their own profit, and readers continued to copy out verses by hand even when printed versions were available.

Joseph Addison (1672–1719) was best known as the author, with Richard Steele, of the periodical essay, The Spectator. Pope's lines attacking him eventually were incorporated in expanded form in his Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot, which was first printed in January 1735. Pope apparently composed the first version of these lines in 1715 and showed them in manuscript to Joseph Addison in order to deter his former mentor from patronizing a rival translation of Homer being prepared by Thomas Tickell (1685–1740). Indeed, Addison may have been the prime mover behind his friend Tickell's edition. After being shown Pope's verses, Addison stopped supporting Tickell, and Pope's own translation of the Iliad (published 1715–1720) became a great critical and popular success.

Addison died in 1719. Some critics, in the eighteenth century and later, have accused Pope of mean-spiritedness for continuing to circulate these lines. Norman Ault exonerates Pope through constructing a plausible timeline for circulation of the lines before Addison's death. An unattributed version reached Joseph Addison in order to deter his former mentor from patronizing a rival translation of Homer being prepared by Thomas Tickell (1685–1740). Indeed, Addison may have been the prime mover behind his friend Tickell's edition. After being shown Pope's verses, Addison stopped supporting Tickell, and Pope's own translation of the Iliad (published 1715–1720) became a great critical and popular success.

Addison died in 1719. Some critics, in the eighteenth century and later, have accused Pope of mean-spiritedness for continuing to circulate these lines. Norman Ault exonerates Pope through constructing a plausible timeline for circulation of the lines before Addison's death. An unattributed version reached Pope as early as 1722, in the St. James's Journal (a short-lived weekly periodical). An anonymous contributor calling himself "Dorimant" wrote to the editor from Button's Coffeehouse contributing a manuscript of the poem that had apparently been circulating hand to hand. Button's was, in fact, the site of Addison's "little senate" and the butt of some of Pope's satire, but Dorimant reports that "The following Lines have been in good Reputation here, and are now submitted to Publick Censure."

There were subsequent unauthorized publications of Pope's verses on Addison in printed miscellanies produced by "the Unspeakable" Edmund Curll (d. 1747), a London bookseller with whom Pope had
quarreled for years. One of Curll's collections of verse included Pope's lines with the title "Verses Occasioned by Mr. Tickell's Translation of the First Iliad of Homer." The first authorized edition of the poem was published as "Fragment of a Satire" in Volume 3 of the Pope-Swift Miscellanies of 1727, but by this time, the lines on Addison had been altered and expanded.

Plumptre's version of the lines closely approximates the early version of manuscript circulation, as far as can be determined from comparison with the St. James's Journal and Curll's Court Poems (1726). However, Plumptre did not apparently take his copy from one of Curll's editions: this can be inferred from Plumptre's gloss on these lines, which were omitted from the versions later published with Pope's authorization:

Who when two *wits on Rival* Themes Contest,
Approves of Each, But likes the worst the Best.

Apparently without access to Curl's title, which refers to the topical occasion for the verses, Plumptre annotated these lines with "Sewel's Garth's Metamorphoses" (George Sewell, bap. 1687–1726; Samuel Garth, 1660/1661–1719). With this note, Plumptre suggested that Pope was making cultural commentary on rival translations of Ovid rather than writing personal invective to shut down cultural debate. Of course Plumptre was wrong. Whether justified or not, Pope could be mean-spirited.

Plumptre probably copied his version of the lines from a source dependent upon the version in the St. James's Journal or from manuscript sources. Plumptre's version differs from the earliest surviving manuscript of the poem, a copy owned by the xxth earl of Oxford and in the Welbeck collection. It is very similar to the version published in the St. James's Journal, but the title, the attribution to Pope, and the erroneous note on the source of the satire suggest that Plumptre was working either from an annotated copy of the printed version or a manuscript version incorporating title, attribution, and erroneous gloss.

Pope's lines are a literary descendant of the manuscript libels popular in the seventeenth century. The verses had an immediate social function (shutting down Addison's patronage of a rival) and geographic reference. Coffeehouses like Button's, which functioned as sites for reading, writing, and conversation, became crucial sites in the formation of what Habermas calls the "public sphere." A letter from Pope to Addison's friend James Craggs in July, 1715, complained that Button's was no longer the non-partisan space it had been, and blamed Addison for its metamorphosis into a playground for factional partisanship. Dominant's note in the St. James's Journal, however, suggested a version of Habermasian disinterestedness in which common readers could participate in public events.

In Curll's volume, Pope's lines on Addison are followed by an "Answer to the Foregoing Verses. Presented to the Countess of Warwick." Curl hoped to profit from his theft of Pope's verse and also to humiliate the poet. Pope's own publication of an expanded set of verses in 1727 fits into a general pattern: writing in manuscript—such as his letters and his famous Rape of the Lock—would be circulated in manuscript, published without his approval (but, in some cases, with his crafty complicity), and then published again in corrected, explicitly authorized fashion. Alexander Pope, often thought to be one of the first authorial heroes of "print culture," built his career upon manipulation of the conventions of manuscript circulation of verse. Plumptre's admiring copy of the poem signals the preeminence of Alexander Pope not only in the literary marketplace, but in the overlapping, but not identical, world of manuscripts. It also demonstrates that comparison of manuscripts (and manuscripts with various printed sources) does more than create stemma in service of producing a copy text. Indeed, the complicated history of these lines—and Plumptre's innocent recording of one version of them—illuminates a complex literary world involving multiple writers, the publishing world, and readers dispersed throughout the isle of Great Britain.

Suggested Reading:
Gendering Hands, Gendering Business: A Letter from Elizabeth Bagot

Rebecca Laroche
University of Colorado, Colorado Springs

An initial glance at its transcription suggests that this letter is an unremarkable missive from a woman, Elizabeth Bagot, writing from her home, Bromley Bagot, to her husband Walter, who is away in London taking care of business matters. There are, however, several things we can learn from this seemingly ordinary piece of correspondence, things that are available to us only through such pieces of manuscript culture. In particular, especially when considering Elizabeth Bagot's manuscript presence elsewhere, this letter gives us key insights into the gendering of handwriting and of domestic spaces in early modern England.

The original manuscript reveals the presence of four hands within this one everyday artifact. Hand A, a secretary hand, composes the body of the letter, the closing, and the address. Hand B, an italic hand, comprises the signature. While the signature presumably belongs to Elizabeth Bagot herself, the secretary hand could very well belong to a household secretary or amanuensis, given the relative wealth of the Bagot family. While we cannot wholly assume that Hand A was written by a man, the typical household secretary was usually male, as both fictional and non-fictional accounts tell us. Certainly, it is not unheard of that a woman could be capable of the more difficult secretary hand, but the more steady confidence in penstroke of the body of the letter versus the hesitancy in the signature suggest that the two hands correspond with two separate writers.

However, the presence of yet two more hands confounds an easy, binary gendering of the secretary and italic hands. Hand C is secretary; Hand D is italic; they probably both belong to the same person, Walter Bagot. A comparison with other correspondence in secretary hand by Walter Bagot shows he has written the words including "Richard," and "To my" at the bottom of the page (Hand C). At the same time, the italic "C's" of "Cuoma" and "Come" are comparable to the italic C's in a letter Bagot received from his son Lewes and annotated, "Lewes his last Le[tt]e[rs]," in the same hand (Folger MS L.a.67).

Walter Bagot's writings on the bottom half of the letter also raise questions about the uses being made of this one piece of paper (and the time frame of its multiple writings). The address "To my" and the intimate nature of the crossed out passage perhaps suggest that Walter intended to respond to his wife on the same sheet, possibly through the same bearer. If so, that he does so in italic rather than the secretary hand he uses in most of his correspondence suggests that Elizabeth Bagot was more comfortable with reading italic writing. Or was it rather that Walter's writings came first? Did Elizabeth use a scrap of paper, possibly an aborted address leaf, for her letter?

The letter also reveals the seeming separation of spaces occupied by the husband and wife. Most notably, the letter depicts a purportedly rare foray of the wife into her husband's study. The study held certain writings of both legal and financial import, all of which, if found, would be rich examples from manuscript culture: the fines having to do with lawsuit agreements, a feoffment with a tenant contract, and certain writings of both legal and financial import, all of which, if found, would be rich examples from manuscript culture.

The letter also reveals the seeming separation of spaces occupied by the husband and wife. Most notably, the letter depicts a purportedly rare foray of the wife into her husband's study. The study held certain writings of both legal and financial import, all of which, if found, would be rich examples from manuscript culture: the fines having to do with lawsuit agreements, a feoffment with a tenant contract, and certain writings of both legal and financial import, all of which, if found, would be rich examples from manuscript culture.

The letter also reveals the seeming separation of spaces occupied by the husband and wife. Most notably, the letter depicts a purportedly rare foray of the wife into her husband's study. The study held certain writings of both legal and financial import, all of which, if found, would be rich examples from manuscript culture: the fines having to do with lawsuit agreements, a feoffment with a tenant contract, and certain writings of both legal and financial import, all of which, if found, would be rich examples from manuscript culture.

While the letter reflects Elizabeth Bagot's actions and business in her husband's stead, the corresponding signature "Elizabeth: Bagot" found in a folio volume at Yale's Medical Historical Library declares a "space" that is definitively her own. The inscription can be found on the title page of Henry Lyte's translation of Rembert Doden's A Niewe Herball, or Historie of Plantes (1578), a treatise on herbs and their medicinal uses. Dozens of extant medicinal receipt books (many held at the Folger) from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries bear witness to women's medical practice in the period. As with Elizabeth Bagot's own A Niewe Herball, many women's signatures found in herbal and health manuals from the period similarly point to that practice. I would argue, however, that, unlike the receipt books that cite both male and female sources, women's inscriptions on male authoritative texts such as the large folio at Yale, show women's claim to knowledge that is otherwise inscribed in these volumes as belonging mainly to men. In a sense, she has entered another man's study and found what she needed there.

Suggested Reading:


After the encounter with his father’s ghost, Hamlet swears to forget all trivial subjects that once occupied him, to clear space in the “table of [his] memory” for the more important matter of revenging King Hamlet’s murder. As the first step in this process, Hamlet reaches for his “tables” to make a written record of Claudius’s hypocrisy. What are these “tables,” and what might the clearing of space within them suggest to an Elizabethan audience?

Hamlet’s “tables” probably refer to blank, erasable leaves of paper. Also known as “writing-tables” or “table-books,” this kind of writing technology developed out of the wax tablets of antiquity and the Middle Ages, on which a writer composed a draft before recording the composition more permanently elsewhere. Even when paper became more widely available, it was still expensive, and erasable tablets remained an economical alternative. In the Renaissance, writing tables were produced by specially coating paper or the skin of an ass so that the words could be easily erased with a little moisture. Such reusable leaves were often bound together with almanacs, annual calendars that included practical information about currencies and local fairs. Several examples of this technology can now be found in the Folger and the British Library.

In the lines above, Hamlet uses his writing tables as a temporary memory aid. Having entered material into similar erasable tables, his contemporaries might later have reorganized and reentered the same material into a second, bound volume, very much like Folger MS V.a.381. This manuscript dates from around the time of Hamlet's first production, and is an octavo, small enough to fit into a back pocket. Still in its original binding, the book retains evidence of two missing ties and of ornamentation such as imitation gilt and stamps on the front and back covers. The 100-odd leaves of Folger V.a.381 reflect the busy minds of its several owners; they are filled with sententiae, short poetry, historical anecdotes, topical advice, and quotations from and commentary on other authors in five or six languages. This kind of material—including the "saws" to which Hamlet refers—is often referred to under the general category of "commonplace wisdom." Such wisdom was so prized in the period that one of Queen Elizabeth's advisors, Sir Nicholas Bacon, decorated the walls of his house with commonplaces, and another, Sir Henry Sidney, advised his son (the young poet Philip), to commit "wise sentences" to his memory whenever he heard them. Young Philip apparently took his father's words to heart, for when, years later, he set out to defend poetry against its detractors, he pointedly enlisted the authority of precepts. The "consideration of mens manners," he writes, is the "supreme knowledge," and the poet can "best breed" this art by combining the philosopher's "precept" with the historians "example," thereby becoming a "right popular Philosopher."

The Folger catalogue identifies V.a.381 as a "commonplace book" compiled roughly between 1600 and 1650. Commonplace books were a product of the humanist educational program—the so-called "new learning" that revolutionized the schools, the universities, and the literature of the period. They encouraged the absorption and application of wisdom acquired through reading or conversation. Categorizing was integral to this process, and can easily be seen in marginal labels (such as "Ambition," "Jealousie," or "Discording brothers") on page 11 of V.a. 381 The same categories are also carefully indexed at the back of the manuscript.

Despite all of the care that was taken in organizing this manuscript, we know very little about the compilers. One has recorded two days on the first leaf: August 6, 1614, which he notes was one week after his thirty-first birthday, and June 1626, when he was 43 years of age. He did not record his name beside these dates, or anywhere else among the surviving leaves of the volume. Perhaps these dates were merely personal notations with a purpose that we can no longer recover (the first leaves of early modern manuscripts were often used as scratch paper). Or, perhaps the owners of the manuscripts were...
all familiar to one another as friends or multiple generations of the same family, in which case no names were necessary. Even without biographical information about its owners, however, the book itself—meticulously organized, embellished with ties and ornamentation—suggests that it was sometimes a valued companion to rising gentlemen.

The pages of Folger MS V.a. 381 clearly illustrate how fatherly advice could work with humanist pedagogy to transmit proverbial wisdom and to mold the characters of young men. The Folger volume contains the “10 Precepts” (or commandments) that Queen Elizabeth’s treasurer, William Cecil, lord Burghley, wrote to his son Robert around 1584. Beginning with a direct address to his “Sonne Roberte” on page 12, the precepts continue for the next nine pages. The popularity of parental advice literature and the prominence of Cecil himself ensured that his “10 Precepts” circulated widely in manuscript; they first reached print in 1617, several years after one anonymous scribe copied them into this book. The “Precepts” fit well with the commonplaces that appear on the pages beside them, for they are concerned with “men's manners” and expressed pithily so as not to “confound” his son’s memory. He instructs Robert to follow his advice “next unto Moyses Tables” (page 12), but, unlike the Ten Commandments, his precepts offer pragmatic suggestions for political and social advancement. The seventh of these, beginning “Be sure to keep some great man thy friend, but trouble him not for trifles” (page 18) has little in common with “thou shalt not kill.” But the fifth, which advises Robert to “Neither borrow money of a neighbor or a friend” (page 17), strongly evokes the directions that Polonius gave to his own son Laertes early in Hamlet. "Neither a borrower nor a lender be" (1.3.75). In the past, critics have speculated about the possibility that Polonius is a send up of Cecil. (See Bennett, below.) Wedged beside snippets of poetry, history, and proverbial wisdom in a commonplace book, Cecil’s “Ten Precepts” became available and reusable for any English son, part of a personalized reference guide to appropriate behavior. Folger MS V.a.381 thus gives us a surviving example of how young men were expected to educate and fashion themselves into figures of social importance—like Cecil or Polonius.

Suggested Reading:


Pastoral writing, idealizing of country life, was very popular throughout the English Renaissance. In his *Arte of English Poesie* (1589), George Puttenham noted the genre's pretense to simplicity, as pastoral poets "under the vaile of homely persons and in rude speeches . . . insinuate and glance at great matters." Verse written in the persons of shepherds hopelessly pursuing "nymphs" appeared in a variety of printed books, including translations from Italian poets like Tasso, collections of songs, and dramas such as Shakespeare's *As You Like It*.

The first great English pastoral is Edmund Spenser's *The Shepheardes Calender* (1579). It is presented as a narrative in twelve monthly eclogues that explore the trials of love, the nature of poetry, and religious themes. January and December tell of Colin Clout, a shepherd boy who suffers for loving Rosalinde. *The Shepheardes Calender* was a landmark publication in English literary history, and the Folger Library has an especially rare copy of the first edition, with the final quire in an early uncorrected state.

But pastoral verse also continued to circulate widely in manuscript after Spenser's work reached print. Many handwritten pastorals, for various reasons, never found their way into print, or were never intended for it. Three examples drawn from the Folger manuscript collection display painstaking and refined composition, physical as well as poetical. Such rustic verse should not be dismissed as merely derivative or formulaic.

Several translations of Spenser's work into Latin survive. One, entitled "Kalendarium Pastorale, seu Spenceri Pastor, Romano indutus centenculo," is attributed to Theodore Bathurst, and it reveals the circular nature of poetic imitation. Spenser himself was imitating classical authors who wrote in Greek and Latin. This translation back into Latin finally reached print in the 1653 edition of Spenser's poems. A manuscript copy of this work by an unknown scribe survives at the Folger (MS.J.a.2). The only indication of an early owner or participant in the creation of this manuscript book is the name "Fra: Corbett" written on an endpaper. It is bound with a group of academic plays in a miscellany made in Cambridge, England in the early 1600s. The copy exemplifies a work in progress, and perhaps the process of university scholarship, as well. The page is ruled in anticipation of marginalia. The marginal notes in Latin appear in at least two inks, but the hand seems identical to that of the scribe who painstakingly recorded the poem. The January eclogue takes up two neatly copied pages. It has all the qualities of a fair copy, replete with ample marginal space for glossing.

Another bound manuscript volume at the Folger also includes pastoral verse in a poetic miscellany. Folger MS V.a.161 may be the work of Richard Barnfield, an obscure poet of the 1590s, whose name appears on page 17 of the slim volume. It appears in italic at the end of a dedicatory poem written in a secretary hand titled "To the right Wor[shipfu]ll Sir John Spenser Knighte Alderman of the honnorable City of London and lorde treasurer of Lady Petunia." Barnfield's *The Affectionate Shepheard: Containing The Complaint of Daphnis for the Love of Ganymede* was published in 1594, and gave rise to objections by the poem's dedicatee, Lady Penelope Rich, and her lover, Charles Blount, that Barnfield had used them as models for Queen Guendolena and Ganymede, two characters in the first part. By contrast, V.a.161 is a more private, personal pastiche of songs, a snippet of Ovid, a playful conceit, a poem by Ben Jonson, and even a bawdy lyric.
A lustie nutt browne wenche scant woorth [th]e naminge
gent downe a stAYER bearinge a candle flaming:
A swagering gallant comming her t’encounter
att first approache coragiously would mount her:
She strongly made resistaunce and did sweare
she would burne him by that candle she did beare:
Hee blew [th]e candle out to breake hir vowe
she kept her promise still; immagine how.
Ffinis.  
(p.22)

The delicate paper book of eighteen leaves is bound in a vellum leaf from an
illuminated Latin Psalter. Barnfield’s penmanship and authorship cannot be
confirmed as not a single confirmed autograph survives (his will is endorsed by his
monogram). At least one critic is convinced Barnfield had nothing at all to do with
the manuscript or its contents, although the poems have been printed in several
editions of his collected works. Manuscripts such as V.a.161 force us to deal with
the slippery and fascinating process of attributing authorship.

A third pastoral in manuscript at the Folger also bears signs
of polish and presentation, with an elaborately decorated title
page that mimics some of the conventions of print publication.
William Basse’s collected pastorals are bound into Folger MS
V.b.235. In this case, the binding is the work of a much later
collector, presumably interested in early works of literature,
for the same volume also contains a manuscript copy of a play by John Dryden.

Unlike the other two pastoral verse examples, Basse’s Pastoral appears intended
to be a single autonomous composition. The characteristics of a published book,
including a date of publication and an imprint colophon, have led some to
speculate that this manuscript was prepared for a printer. An ink sketch of two
shepherds which precedes the first “Eglogue” is evocative of the woodcuts that
appeared in early editions of Spenser’s pastoral masterpiece and also seems an
attempt to position the work to find its place in literary history.

Suggested Reading:
“Let them Complately Learn”: Manuscript Clues About Early Modern Women's Educational Practices

Emily Bowles Smith
Georgia Perimeter College

During the early modern period, formal schooling was reserved for boys. Humanist pedagogy was disseminated through printed texts and by tutors to boys. Girls rarely had access to an institutional education, although some women had exceptional educations. Mary Evelyn, Lucy Hutchinson, Anna Maria van Schurman, Bathshea Makin, and Catherine Trotter were all trained to some degree in languages, arts, or sciences, and their literary productions—circulated in manuscript or in print—provide striking examples of the profound effects of that education. But the polished and public texts of women who received privileged educations only tell us part of the story of women's education. Women's manuscript exercise books, notebooks, receipt books, and other domestic papers give us access to the interests and writing practices of ordinary women. Oftentimes these manuscripts combine academic and practical subjects in ways that surprise modern readers.

Women did learn to write, despite the arguments against teaching them, such as those articulated by Richard Mulcaster (the first headmaster of England's largest grammar school). Often, penmanship was learned together with mathematics rather than with reading, as it is today. Many printed manuals combine the teaching of arithmetic with the development of a fluid italic handwriting style. The many published guides included several by Edward Cocker, such as *Penn volans or The young mans accomplishment being the quintessence of those curious arts writing & arithmetick* (1661), *The Tutor to Writing and Arithmetick* (1664), and, with Edmund Wingate, *The clarks tutor for arithmetick and writing* (1671).

None of these printed manuals explicitly indicates that it would have anticipated a female readership; probably they did not. Such educational materials would have been largely restricted to a male audience. Yet Sarah Cole's arithmetic exercise book, Folger MS V.b. 292, comprises some drawings identical to those engraved in Cocker's *The Tutor to Writing and Arithmetick*. In light of this connection to a printed antecedent, it is useful to consider the nature and composition of such a book. A manuscript exercise book is best defined as a subcategory of the copy book. The exercise book is the production of a student, probably working from a template provided by an instructor, and reflects the assiduous attention of a young scholar interested in producing a beautiful volume as well as in providing correct answers to problems within the text. Authorship can only be thought of as collaborative: the instructor's template aggregates designs, problems, definitions, and perhaps poems from a wide range of print and manuscript sources.

Sarah Cole dates and titles her exercise book (Folger MS V.b.292) on an ornate page decorated with cherubim. The page reads:

SARAH COLE
Her Book
Scholler to Elizabeth
Beane Mrs in the Art
of Writing. Anno 1685

Mary Serjant, another of Elizabeth Beane's pupils, similarly named Beane as her mistress in "the Art of Writing and Arithmetick" in an exercise book held by the Beinecke Library (Osborn Shelves MS Fb.98). In her exercise book, Cole has worked through a variety of arithmetical problems. Far from scratched exercises, the pages of her book have been illustrated and given ornate headings. Each heading introduces either a list of definitions, moral distiches, word problems, numerical tables, or equations.

Word problems occupy much of Cole's exercise book, and they center on household operations like bartering. Clearly her arithmetical education was designed to prepare her to become a good helpmeet for her eventual husband, for it seems to hinge on domestic functionality. The range of skills that Cole was assigned to master suggests that she was preparing to manage a fairly large, well-to-do household.

Cole's calculations were done in conjunction with elaborate handwriting and drawing exercises. The
heads to each page and the mnemonic devices that Cole has reproduced throughout the book seem as important for their format as for their content, and the final product beautifully displays Cole’s acquisition of skills in both arithmetic and calligraphy. Although the text is an exercise book, its elaborate presentation and its fine binding suggest that the product was intended for a readership beyond her instructor. Perhaps Cole wanted to be able to share her successfully completed exercises with her family and maybe a small circle of friends? Cole must have invested much time practicing her writing and her arithmetic before setting down the drawings, definitions, and problems in this book. Two pages of calligraphic drawing and an ornately decorated title page precede Cole’s sequence of illumination and illustration that provides a constant visual context for her arithmetical exercises. In nearly two hundred pages of drawings, calculations, and compositions, there are no apparent cross-outs, smudges, or erasures.

The intermeshing of calligraphy and arithmetic is illustrated, for instance, on folio 5. On this page, as on all of the pages of the exercise book, Cole has meticulously divided the space and assigned specific functions to each part of the page. Although the page contains no actual sums, she has laid it out in such a way as to allocate room for definitions, mnemonics, and the morals of mathematics:

Arithmetick the Art of Computation
By Numbers which brings many Consolation.
Those who True Reckonings from false Discern
Arithmetick Let Them Compleately Learn.
By This the Merchant and the man of Treade
By Ignorance or Skill are marr’d or made
Yet in this Art Thersne none thats so accute
As all Its Excellencies To Compute

The poems interspersed throughout Cole’s exercise book do not appear to come from a standard arithmetic book, a possible indication that Beane wrote this and other poems for Cole to copy. When looking at her exercise book, we can potentially locate traces of literary agency among a small community of female writers comprising Beane, the probable poet and teacher, and Cole, the student, calligrapher, and problem solver.

On the final page of her exercise book, Cole has illustrated the centrality of writing on folio 199, the final page of the exercise book to contain actual computations. The page has been neatly divided into five segments of unequal size. On the bottom right-hand corner of the page, Cole has drawn a hand engaged in the process of writing with a quill. She has sketched the disembodied hand beginning with the top of its shoulder. The elaborate flourishes of her design evoke an ornate costume, beginning with a puffed sleeve that narrows and then reopens a bit to form a fabulous cuff from which the writing hand emerges. Cole has managed to create a hand that merges with the quill. One finger can be distinguished alongside it but the other is simultaneously finger and quill: the fingernail rests on top of the dark quill but then transforms into the same sort of loops that she has used to indicate the feather. Remarkably Cole has drawn a pen engaged in impossible labor. The loops, contiguously extending from this box into the box above it, appear far too high to be the work of this fictive arm. In fact, the doodles are more than twice the size of the arm, and they also resemble the doodles scattered on other sections of the page including those that comprise the hair, head, and upper body of a figure that looks roughly proportionate to the arm. At the end of her book, Cole seems to be acknowledging—and accessing—the power of the pen.

Cole’s exercise book possesses many traits we would associate with a formal education. It was carefully and neatly compiled; it recognizes an instructor by name and title; and it holds a record of completed, revised assignments. Early modern women’s educations did not always occur in such a neat, programmatic, or even pedagogical format, though. Sometimes women acquired and expressed their knowledge in non-pedagogic texts like receipt books. For an early modern woman, a receipt book usually comprised recipes alongside (as is so often the case in the messy world of domestic papers) poems, letters, autobiographies, and other documents. The books provided ample space for creativity and adaptation; even when women received their receipt books already divided into sections for cookery and medicinal recipes, they could flip the books upside down, add new categories, skip pages, and otherwise refashion the books to accommodate their needs and impulses, both on practical and creative levels.

Constance Hall’s receipt book, Folger MS V.a.20, demonstrates a less systematic assemblage of graphic skills than we have seen in Cole’s exercise book, but the receipt book seems similarly to have functioned as a pedagogic tool of sorts. Hall seems to have acquired handwriting lessons along with recipes from the many nameless contributors who have written out recipes in her book. The title page of Hall’s book has been carefully ruled and elaborately decorated to read:

Constance
Hall
Her Booke
of Receipts Anno
Domini ~ 1672
This is a book with an overtly expressed purpose: for Hall to collect recipes. More subtly, though, the book provides Hall with a space to practice her own calligraphic script and drawing. Without the adroit technical mastery so clearly evident in Cole’s work, the text nevertheless reveals the complex workings of a woman’s mind in the act of incorporating knowledge acquired through books or from teachers into her everyday experiences.

Multiple hands appear throughout Hall’s receipt book, probably indicating that she asked others to contribute recipes to the book. The unsigned contributors for Hall’s book must have fostered a community of knowledge sharing, much as Elizabeth Beane did by providing her students with poems and problems to copy onto beautiful pages in their flourishing calligraphic hands. In Hall’s receipt book, though, it is difficult to distinguish when new writers enter the discourse and when variant handwriting styles reflect Hall’s own handwriting exercises. Some of the receipts have been copied in cursive italic hands that range from careful and fluent to sloppy, which suggests that multiple scribes added their contributions to the collection. Other receipts, however, have been written out in self-consciously artistic lettering as in the receipt for “Aqua Mirabilis” on folio 11 or in the carefully ruled section of medicinal receipts. Subtle designs, line breaks, and flourishes showcase an author or a group of authors exploring the possibility of bringing one form of knowledge to bear on another.

Hall’s book of receipts beautifully displays the ways in which writing could serve as a participatory and practical act for early modern women. Of the group of individuals whose hands appear in MS V.a.20, many seem as interested in adding a degree of presentational beauty to the book as in providing usable culinary and medicinal knowledge.

Cole’s arithmetic exercise book and Hall’s receipt book offer evidence of two slightly different ways in which women found connections between their day-to-day existences, their education, and their writings: Produced outside of the formal domain of institutional education, these documents suggest the vital interactions between pedagogical practices and domestic functionality in women’s education. By looking at women’s exercise books and receipt books like these, we can reconstruct some of the ways in which women incorporated educational practices into their lives—and ways in which, through the practices taught to them, women could adapt educational practices in order to assemble their own modes of self-expression.

Suggested Reading:

Primary


Hall, Constance. Receipt book (1672), held by the Folger Shakespeare Library (MS V.a.20).


Serjant, Mary. *Arithmetic exercise book* (1688), held by the Beinecke Library (Osborn Shelves MS fb.98).


Secondary


Teaching Reading and Writing

Janet Wright Starner
Wilkes University

Today we think of reading and writing primarily as silent, and private, mental activities. Literate individuals generally sit alone with books or computers as they consume and produce texts. The teachers who introduce us to those skills are concerned primarily with our levels of comprehension because literacy is critical to success, even survival, in the twenty-first century. We depend on words to understand our world, and we use texts to manipulate it. In striking contrast, evidence from the most popular reading primer from the seventeenth century makes it clear that reading in the early modern period was conceptualized as an aid to speaking, and that functional literacy included the regular consumption of handwritten as well as printed texts. Reading was a communal, collaborative, and aural/oral activity that required individuals to move between the handwritten and the printed worlds, as well as between oral and textual media.

The English Schoole-Master, by Edmund Coote, was first published in 1597, and it educated budding readers and their teachers for over one hundred forty years. Remarkably, although it appeared in over sixty-four printings, the contents of the text changed very little. This primer's longevity may perhaps be explained by the fact that it was both slim and affordable. But if Coote's book was small, his agenda was ambitious: “I professe to teach thee that art utterly ignorant, to Reade perfectly, to Write truely, and with premium on pronunciation.

Moreover, Coote knew that readers' attempts at "perfect" and verbally "distinct" reading would require more than just word recognition. They would also need to understand the symbols that cropped up in texts they read. What we now call punctuation he called "points," and these marks functioned differently for early modern readers than they do for us. They did not necessarily mark off grammatical units, nor did they provide visual cues to guide understanding as they do for modern readers. Instead, they functioned as expressions of the length of time the tongue tarried before continuing to sound out a phrase.

I know not what can easily deceive you in writing, unless it be by imitating the barbarous speech of your country people whereof I will give you a taste... cthey commonly put (f) for (v) as feal for veal. And a nox, a nass, my naunt, thy nunkle, for an ox, an ass, mine aunt, thine uncle, etc. (1670, 27).

For Edmund Coote, reading was a process of decoding symbols, and his textbook promised to reveal the secrets of that code to everyone with the wherewithal to buy his book. The English Schoole-Master seems to have functioned as a sort of early modern users' guide to written English. By pointing out the obstacles readers might encounter in a variety of textual environments, Coote aimed to ease the path to literacy for those who might not otherwise develop reading skills: "men and women of trade, as Taylors, Weauers, Shop-keepers, Seamsters, and such other, as haue vndertaken the charge of teaching others" (1630, 2). While his egalitarian approach is noteworthy, what is even more fascinating is the window onto early modern notions of reading and writing that his text provides, notions that seem foreign to us now.

Coote's educational system framed reading as the process of deciphering sounds in order to deliver speech. Students were taught first to vocalize recognizable one-syllable units and, in subsequent chapters, they learned to build longer words out of those syllables. In Coote's world, then, reading meant translating written symbols into the more familiar spoken language. Not surprisingly, this process put a premium on pronunciation. The educated reader was enjoined to avoid "barbarous speech" because corrupt pronunciation led to incorrect spelling, which could confuse readers:

You must obserue also, that which we doe call * points or stayes in writing, as this marke (,) like to a small halfe Moon noteth a small stay; two prickes thus (:) makes a longer stay,
and one pricke thus (.) is put for a full stay as if we had ended. When a question is asked, we marke it thus (?). When some words may be left out, and yet the sentence perfect, it is noted thus ( ) as teach me (I pray you) to reade. But for the true framing of your voice in all these, you must craue the helpe of your Master. (1670, 26).

The text's multiple references to pronunciation suggest students who read aloud to learn. However, the need for vocalization does not seem to have ended once proficiency was reached. For Coote, reading was also dialogic and collaborative. Each student was expected to learn in the company of a more experienced reader, who would correct pronunciation and explain "hard words," but the lessons themselves were literally dialogic. Extensive marginal glosses provided an instructor's script, coaching him or her to teach by asking questions:

When your scholars shall learn this Chapter, let one read the questions, and another the answers. When your Scholars appose one the other, let the answerer answer without book (1670, 28).

Beyond its value to early learning, Coote's insistence on collaboration prepared accomplished readers for a textual environment that involved dialogue. Whether manuscript or print, Coote conceived a book as a conversation conducted between reader and writer. The practices and conventions of those exchanges are readily illustrated in the holdings of special collections libraries like the Folger. For instance, the Folger holdings include a copy of the first print edition of the English verse anthology, Englands Parnassus: Or The Choysest Flowers Of Our Moderne Poets, With Their Poetcall Comparisons by Robert Allott (1630) (STC 378 Copy 1). The volume has composed his own verses in response to what he has read, and then copied them into the book, effectively adding them to the collection. Examples like this seem to make it clear that such handwritten additions were considered to be legitimate amplifications of the work.

A slightly different example, that further illustrates the blending of print and manuscript, can be found in a copy of George Chapman's play, An humerous dayes myrth, wherein three handwritten pages have been added at the end of the volume to supply missing pages of the printed text. Perhaps the last pages of this copy were lost. The writer has meticulously emulated print publishing conventions by forming letters to mimic print fonts, using catchwords at the bottom of pages, and marking his first inscribed page with the signature "H" to indicate a new gathering of leaves. Marks in the text itself suggest this was an actor's working copy, so the play's final lines would be essential to his purpose. But whether the originals were lost or incompletely printed, the book owner clearly felt the supplied handwritten pages ought to duplicate the look of a printed page, not a manuscript. The precision with which the letters were copied is significant since it suggests that the hand that copied the text was experienced. While literacy rates were on the rise in the early seventeenth century—in terms of readers—the number of people who could produce handwritten text was much smaller.

Although The English School-Master offered little advice on handwriting, despite its promise to teach it, Edmund Coote clearly understood that the adept reader, whether he could write or not, would need to cope with the permeability of print and manuscript spaces. He knew that characters and symbols common to manuscripts could appear in printed books, put there by hand or by press. To prepare readers for these encoding systems, Coote described the various abbreviations and marks peculiar to handwritten texts, such as the macron, or "strike," inscribed above a letter to stand in for missing letters as well as the superscript letters in abbreviated words like "ye," "yet," and "you."

You must also know those kind of writing used in some words: as a strike over any vowel for m or n; as ma for man, co for con, like ye for the and yt for that, yu for thou, wt for what and so forth. In written hand there be [m]any other. And so a word ending in a vowel, doth lose it sometime when the next word begins with a vowel, as thintent. for the intent, which exactly would be written thus, "th'inent (1670, 27).

But the most dramatic confirmation of the persistance of reading and writing practices tied to handwriting appears in Coote's 1630 edition of his primer. In this text, as well as the one dated 1627, he provided examples of "faire Writing, whereby in euery Schoole all bad hands may be abandoned" (1630, 2). The practical graphic advice that Coote offers on page 86 is twofold: an engraved secretary alphabet, followed by an engraving of Psalm 119 in the secretary script.
according to thie woorde/
I haue acknowledged my wayes, and thou heardesth me
O teache me thie statuits
Make me to vnderstande the waye of thie commaun=
dementes and so shal I talke of y[ou]r wonderous
workes
My soule melteth awaye for very heavynes, com
forte thou me according vnto thy worde.
Take from me the waye of lying and cause thou
me to make much of thy lawe,
I haue chosen the waye of truth, and thy iudgeme=
ntes haue layde before me;
I haue sticked vnto thy testimonies, O lorde confo=
unde me not.
I will runne the waye of thy commaundements
when thou hast sett my hart at libertie./

The effort involved to produce these images in print—alphabet and poetic exemplar—was not
inconsequential. The letters would have been incised on a copper plate and then engraved, a process
different from writing on paper. The elaborate mimicry of handwriting in a printed medium and its
inclusion in these books also illustrates an important but neglected point about the relationship between
manuscript and print: that the influences moved in both directions. Moreover, Coote's popular primer
demonstrates that as late as 1630, readers needed to know how to decipher secretary hand and could
expect to encounter it on a regular basis. The secretary alphabet does not appear in the 1670 edition
(though it does in later ones). Printers still believed it necessary for students to be made aware of other
marks typically found in handwritten documents—like the macron as well as the contractions for \( y^2 \), \( y^1 \),
etc.—and so they retained that helpful instructional material.

These early modern texts provide evidence that reading and writing were as much physical as they were
cognitive enterprises. Communication depended as much, or more, on the lips and ears as it did on the
eyes and hands. Reading meant "translating into speech," an activity that required proper enunciation
and dialogue. "Writing" frequently meant "copying," and involved significant physical effort to first prepare
the materials—paper, pen, ink—and then to inscribe words in one of several hands available to the
writer. The differences between these practices and those to which modern readers are accustomed
should prompt us to question further how readers decoded and negotiated the signs and symbols they
found on the handwritten page. While dozens of pedagogical texts were available, Edmund Coote's
primer The English Schoolmaster may best illustrate the early modern conception of reading as largely
oral, collaborative, and active, and of writing as an act of deciphering that required the comprehension of
multiple codes.

Suggested Readings:


McKenzie, D.F. "Speech-Manuscript-Print" in New Directions in Textual Studies. Dave Oliphant and

Olson, David R. The World on Paper: The Conceptual and Cognitive Implications of Writing And

The interdependent relationships of manuscript creation, transmission, and retention are illustrated in five documents relating to the "Paper Office" maintained by Sir Joseph Williamson (1633–1701), Secretary of State and Keeper of the State Papers—the core of what now constitutes the indispensible "SP" class of documents in Britain's National Archives—and the Royal Library during the reign of Charles II. Williamson's position necessitated his staying well informed about current affairs, both domestic and foreign, and to this end he maintained a special office under his Chief Clerk, Henry Ball, from which manuscript "newsletters" were produced and disseminated to a wide range of well-placed recipients, often in exchange for exclusive access to whatever items of news Ball's correspondents could provide in return. One of these correspondents was Sir Richard Newdigate, 2nd Baronet, of Arbury Hall, Warwickshire. The Folger Shakespeare Library holds Newdigate's collection of 3,950 newsletters dating from 1674 to 1715.

A surviving report produced by Ball for Williamson in the Autumn of 1674, outlining "The state of yor Honors Paper Office," provides invaluable evidence that helps us to understand some of the internal workings of a late seventeenth-century scriptorium. Ball supervised a small group of scribes who diligently churned out approximately two hundred letters each week, which were sent out according to a predetermined schedule on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays (London's three "post" days), with a few additional letters posted overseas on Mondays and Fridays. About half of Ball's correspondents received one long letter per week, containing whatever nuggets of news had been collected since the previous week's letter. Other correspondents were sent shorter letters by every post, while a few received a short letter sent each Tuesday followed by a medium-length one posted on Saturday. Ball produced two detailed lists of recipients: one that was included with his report, and a second, undated list that differs in some details from the first. These lists give an idea of the considerable extent of Williamson's national and international network of information-gatherers, though they also include the names of some who, having little news to trade, were willing to pay cash for the privilege of keeping abreast of current events.

Curiously, Sir Richard Newdigate's name does not appear anywhere on either list, although the subscriptions on the surviving letters indicate that he was a direct recipient of the communications from Ball's office, and we know that he was receiving letters on a regular thrice-weekly basis at the time Ball's report was drawn up. Other beneficiaries of Ball's correspondence included Sir Richard Bulstrode (whose letters now reside at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas at Austin) and, probably beginning in 1678, Narcissus Luttrell, who appears to have digested much of the information the letters contained into the early volumes of his A Brief Historical Relation of State Affairs, a massive chronicle originally compiled for Luttrell's personal use and subsequently published in 1857. Further products of Ball's extensive letter-writing enterprise no doubt exist among manuscript newsletters in other collections, and remain to be identified and collated with the Newdigate and Bulstrode series.

 Folger MS. L.c.83 is a typical example of the newsletters that emanated from the Paper Office. Dated 19 September 1674 (a Saturday), it is a bifolium, three pages of which are filled with hastily copied news items—at the end of the third page, the copyist has turned the paper sideways in order to squeeze in two more brief notices. The final, outside page, with its written address (with flourishes), soiled creases, and wax seal retaining a torn stub of paper provides an excellent example of posting practices in late-seventeenth-century England. The letter itself gives a good idea of the mix of domestic news,
commercial and shipping information, foreign military reports, and court gossip that permeates these documents; indeed, they remain an important source of sometimes mundane day-to-day information for historians of the period. This particular letter is interesting in that it notes, on the first page, Williamson's move to a new office at Whitehall Palace, concurrent with his elevation from Under-Secretary to Secretary of State. The promotion followed Henry Bennet, Earl of Arlington's appointment as Lord Chamberlain, and Henry Coventry's consequent advancement from the junior to the senior of the two Secretarial positions. In fact, Arlington had recently been under attack in Parliament, and was only too happy to accept the ambitious Williamson's offer of £6,000 for the purchase of the secretaryship. It would seem to be in the wake of this bureaucratic shake-up that Ball's report to Williamson was prepared.

Williamson's position as keeper of the "Paper Office" also made him the official archivist of the Crown and overseer of the state's collective memory as preserved in manuscript form. In this capacity, he was responsible for maintaining government papers in good order, and was often directed to make documents available to high-ranking civil servants and authorized scholarly researchers. An extant 1682 plan entitled "The Order of the Paper office" provides a visual and textual guide to the 35 bookcases in two rooms in which these documents were held. Different "presses" were reserved for documents relating to foreign and domestic affairs, including parliamentary, ecclesiastical, military, and household records, among others; one section even housed official papers of the "Usurpation" or Commonwealth regime. Williamson, who was no longer Secretary when he drew up the report, records the system of sorting papers by subject and then bundling them, either by sub-topic or chronologically by decade. Examples of his annotations include: "Italia. . .All before 1559. as H. VIII Negotiations as his Marriage &c are rather placed in Anglia Vetera;" "Germania. . .All since 1559. with the Emperor are generally if not universally here;" and "Denmarke. Sweden. Poland. Are generally internmixed promiscuously with Germania of the same yeares, sometimes they are Bundled & yeared apart but still Lodged in this Classis."

This fascinating document, subsequently bound as item #49 in what is now known as the "State Papers, Various: State Paper Office Documents, Vol. II," provides a helpful reminder of the spatial qualities of manuscripts: modern scholars cite them in footnotes using numerical shelfmarks or call numbers, sometimes forgetting that they are not merely abstract texts, but tangible, three-dimensional objects that sit, for the most part, on a particular shelf in a particular library or archive along a particular street in a particular city, where they must be protected from loss or damage and ordered for ease of access. This applies to ephemeral documents as much as it does to important papers of state: had Sir Richard Newdigate not filed his thousands of newsletters in a drawer or a box somewhere, and had he and his descendants not chosen to retain these bulky bundles of paper rather than use them to line pie dishes or start a fire on a cold morning, we would not have the invaluable collection so carefully preserved at the Folger today.

Another document provides a telling comment on the ephemeral nature of manuscripts, even those that make up an official archive. It comes from a cover letter prefacing a lengthy report on the Paper Office prepared by the lawyer and author John Brydall, now held at the Folger, in which Brydall writes to Sir Robert Southwell in 1691 concerning the nature and contents of the Office's collection. Brydall discusses the wealth of information available to anyone wishing to explore the documents housed in the Paper Office, but concludes with the startling recommendation that

[the] place would be rendred more serviceable for the public;[ "both" for the quicker finding out of usefull papers, as <alsoe> also for the makeing of more Roome for other<es> papers of state to be layd up there in time to Come;) If all the Riff Raffe papers by a skilfull, and knowing person "were" pickt out, and used as Hereticks were in Queen Maries dayes.

Brydall's glib suggestion may cause the hair of librarians and archivists to stand on end, but it also reminds us that the survival of manuscripts is never assured, and that our vigilant attention is necessary in every case—from the seemingly unimportant personal letter or diary to the contents of great state archives—if we wish to preserve those unique documents that provide an irreplaceable record of our past.

Suggested Readings:

## Contributors

### Faculty
- **Julia Boffey**, Professor of Medieval Studies, Queen Mary University of London
- **Victoria E. Burke**, Associate Professor of English, University of Ottawa
- **Susan Cerasano**, Edgar W.B. Fairchild Professor of Literature and Director of the Medieval and Renaissance Studies Program, Colgate University
- **A.S.G Edwards**, Professor of English, University of Victoria
- **Mary Erler**, Professor of English, Fordham University
- **Margaret J. M. Ezell**, The John Paul Abbot Professor of Liberal Arts, Texas A&M University
- **Adam Fox**, Reader in Economic and Social History, University of Edinburgh
- **Lena C. Orlin**, Professor English, University of Maryland, Baltimore County
- **Alan Stewart**, Professor of English and Comparative Literature, Columbia University
- **Paul Werstine**, Professor of English, University of Western Ontario
- **Heather Wolfe**, Curator of Manuscripts, Folger Shakespeare Library
- **Henry Woudhuysen**, Professor of English and Head of Department, University College London
Contributors

Faculty

Participants

Timothy Billings, Assistant Professor of English at Middlebury College
Garth Bond, Lecturer of English at Lawrence University
Nicole Clifton, Associate Professor of English at Northern Illinois University
Donna Crawford, Associate Professor of English at Virginia State University
Lara Dodds, Assistant Professor of English at Mississippi State University
Anne R. Hawkins, Assistant Professor of English at Texas Tech University
Christopher Ivic, Assistant Professor of English at SUNY, Potsdam
George Justice, Associate Professor of English at the University of Missouri-Columbia
Rebecca Laroche, Associate Professor of English at University of Colorado at Colorado Springs
Tricia A. McElroy, Lecturer of English at the University of Michigan
Jason Powell, Visiting Assistant Professor of English at Wake Forest University
William Quinn, Professor of English at the University of Arkansas
Matthew Rusnak, Professor of English at Bucks County Community College
Emily Bowles Smith, Adjunct Instructor of English at Georgia Perimeter College
Janet Wright Starner, Assistant Professor of English at Wilkes University
Andrew Walkling, Dean's Lecturer of Art History, English, and Theatre at SUNY Binghamton

Staff
# Contributors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Staff</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Staff

### Website

- Steven W. May, Advisory Editor
- Kathleen Lynch, Principal Editor
- Heather Wolfe, Advisory Editor
- Carol Brobeck, Editor
- Virginia Millington, Editor
- Britton Haeuser, Intern

- Swim Design, Design and Development
- Julie Ainsworth, Folger Shakespeare Library Photographer

### Folger Institute Staff

- Barbara Mowat, Chair
- Kathleen Lynch, Executive Director
- Owen Williams, Program Administrator
- Carol Brobeck, Folger Shakespeare Library Fellowships Administrator;
  Folger Institute Program Liaison
- Virginia Millington, Program Assistant
- Shira Loev, Intern
Copyright and Permissions

Unless otherwise noted, all content of the website is “Copyright © The Folger Shakespeare Library ®.” All Rights Reserved. Classroom use is encouraged, as is use for personal research. Single copies may be made for personal or noncommercial uses, provided they include copyright notice.

Restrictions

You may not download text and/or images for public or commercial use without prior written permission from the Folger. You may not copy, distribute, transmit, display, perform, reproduce, publish, license, modify, rewrite, create derivative works from, transfer, or sell any material contained on the Folger website without prior written permission. Any attempt to “frame” content with advertising, promotional material, information, or other content without express prior written consent is also prohibited. None of the material contained on the Folger website (including all software, HTML code, and other code) may be reverse-engineered, disassembled, decompiled, transcribed, stored in a retrieval system, translated into any language or computer language, retransmitted in any form or by means (electronic, mechanical, photoreproduction, recordation, or otherwise), resold, or redistributed without prior written permission from the Folger.

This website is owned and operated by the Folger Shakespeare Library®, 201 East Capitol Street, SE, Washington, DC 20003–1094.

For information regarding permission to use images and/or text from the Folger collection for educational or commercial purposes, please contact us at photo@folger.edu.
A Manuscript Miscellany

A Summer 2005 Institute
Directed by Steven W. May

Sitemap

Home
Folger Institute
This website home
FSL Home

Introductions
Dr. Kathleen Lynch
Professor Steven May

Essays
"The Emperor of China His Letter to Queen Elizabeth" (1600)
John Donne's "To His Mistress Going to Bed" As an Open Source
Sequence and Design in Wroth's Pamphilia to Amphitheatrus
A Seventeenth-Century Prophecy of Merlin
The Marginalized Voices of Chaucer's Early Readers
Poetic Authority in Manuscript and Print: The Case of Milton's Paradise Lost and Dryden's The State of Innocence and Fall of Man
Ben Jonson and Manuscript Culture
The Circulation of Poetry in the Eighteenth Century: The Case of Charles Plumptre's Manuscript Volume
Gendering Hands, Gendering Business: A Letter from Elizabeth Bagot
Copying Fatherly Advice
Episodes in the Pastoral
"Let them Compleately Learn": Manuscript Clues About Early Modern Women's Educational Practices
Teaching Reading and Writing
The Royal Paper Office

Resources for Manuscript Studies
NEH Institute
Syllabus
Glossary
Folger MSS
Electronic Resources

Contributors
Faculty
Participants
Staff

Site Map

Copyright and Permissions

Images


Coote, Edmund, fl. 1597.

Courtesy of the National Archives, London. Shelfmark: SP45/21/30.
Courtesy of the National Archives, London. 
Shelfmark: SP45/21/31, f.4v-5r.

Jonson, Ben, 1573?–1637. 
[Works. Vol. 1].

The workes of Beniamin Jonson.
Imprinted at London : By Will Stansby, anno D. 1616.
STC 14751 copy 1, title page.

Poetical commonplace book, ca. 1630.
V.b.43, f. 9v.

Poetical commonplace book, ca. 1650.
V.a.219, f. 33r.

Jonson, Ben, 1572–1637.
To Inigo Marquess would be
, ca. 1631.
X.d.245, f. 1r.

A collection of poems, ca. 1640.
V.a.96, pp. 93v-94r.

Chaucer, Geoffrey, d. 1400.
The workes of Geffray Chaucer newly printed, with dyuers workes whiche were neuer in print before: as in the table more playnly dothe appere. Cum privilegio.
[London: Nicholas Hill, [1550?]].
STC 5074, f. ccx recto.

Chaucer, Geoffrey, d. 1400.
The tutor to writing and arithmetick.
[London]: Thomas Rook, 1664.
234–037q, title page.

Hall, Constance.
Cook-book, 1672.
V.a.20, page 11.

Cole, Sarah.
V.b.292, f. 199.

Cole, Sarah.
V.b.292, f. 5.

Cole, Sarah.
V.b.292, f. 5.

Cole, Sarah.
V.b.292, title page.

Collection of poems, compiled ca. 1620-1665.
40v-41r.

Wroth, Mary, Lady, ca. 1586–ca. 1640.
The Countesse of Mountgomeries Urania. London: [1621].
STC 26051, title page.

Burlington, Richard Boyle, earl of, 1612–1698.
A book of verses collected by me R. Dungarvan, ca. 1630.
V.a.125, 31v.
Burlington, Richard Boyle, earl of, 1612–1698.
*A book of verses collected by me R. Dungarvan*, ca. 1630.
V.a.125, 32r.

Wroth, Lady Mary (Sidney), fl. 1621.
*Sonnets and songs*, ca. 1625.
V.a.104, 1r–3v.

Wroth, Mary, Lady, ca. 1586–ca. 1640.
*The Countesse of Mountgomerie's Urania*. London: [1621].
STC 26051, title page.

Plumptre Charles, 1712–1779.
*A collection of poems*. [ca. 1730].
M.a.104, inner cover-flyleaf.

Bagot, Richard, d. 1597.
L.a.48.

Collection of letters, ca. 1582-ca. 1613.
V.a.321, 34v-35r.

Commonplace book, compiled ca. 1600-ca. 1652.
V.a.381, pg. 11.

Commonplace book, compiled ca. 1600-ca. 1652.
V.a.381, pp. 12-20.

Bagot, Richard, d. 1597.
L.a.48.

Collection of letters, ca. 1582-ca. 1613.
V.a.321, 34v-35r.

Commonplace book, compiled ca. 1600-ca. 1652.
V.a.381, pg. 11.

Commonplace book, compiled ca. 1600-ca. 1652.
V.a.381, pp. 12-20.