

**What to Do with a Discovery in the Archive:
Hester Pulter's Manuscript and Other Found Objects**

Workshop organizers: Wendy Wall (Northwestern University), Leah Knight (Brock University)
Workshop for the Shakespeare Association of America, New Orleans, March 24, 2016

"How may the unknown be framed, interpreted, and shared?"
Workshop description, *SAA Bulletin*, June 2015

Background: We asked workshop participants to explore how to "frame" texts, objects, or images—including variant ways of editing, digitizing, anthologizing, contextualizing, and curating—by turning to the test case of Hester Pulter's newly discovered manuscript. We see this as an exciting moment, when Pulter has not yet been "framed" within a canon. The aim, since the formation of our group in the Fall, has been to experiment with how new material invites us to rethink assumptions about reading practices, editorial theory, authorship, women's writing, canonization, digital tools, intellectual paradigms, genre, and/or manuscript studies.

Instructions for workshop members: With selections from Pulter's manuscript as our "core" readings, members developed a variety of practical ways of thinking and working with Pulter's works and other finds. They responded to a variety of experimental prompts devised by the organizers:

1. Edit or contextualize a selection of Pulter's work in two different ways. What knotty problems are foregrounded by the results?
 - **Fran Dolan** (UC Davis) contextualized Emblem 40 2 ways + handout on the blazon.
 - **Lena Cowen Orlin** (Georgetown U) edited a passage from *The Second Part of The Unfortunate Florinda*.
2. Put the poems in two different kinds of courses, pairing the poems with appropriate primary and secondary readings. What will or won't be learned about them, within such structures?
 - **Elizabeth Kolkovich** (Ohio State University) presented syllabi for courses on "Early Modern Women Writers" and "The Body in British Literature."
 - **Laura DeFurio** (U of Alabama) presented a syllabus for "In and Out of the Archive: Early Modern Women in Manuscript and Print."
3. Insert the poems in two different extant or imaginary anthologies. What canon(s) could be formed around Pulter?
 - **Nicole Jacobs** (California Polytechnic State U) anthologized Emblems 37 and 53 in two texts: *The Human and the Nonhuman Being in Early Modern England* and *Seventeenth-Century English Polemic and Literature*.
 - **Stephanie Pietros** (Mount Saint Mary College) put Poem 41 in the *Norton Anthology of English Literature* and the "Jane" poems (9, 10, 11) in an anthology on early modern child loss.
4. Imagine two ways to give Pulter an internet presence (or give it to her!).
 - **Johanna Schmitz** (So Illinois U Edwardsville) created a Wordpress blog and Facebook page for Pulter.
 - **Janet Starner** (Wilkes U) visualized data from two corpora in several ways using Voyant with selected poems on religious themes v. selected emblems.
5. Present Pulter in two different ways to a broad audience.
 - **Lara Dodds** (Mississippi State U) wrote a piece for *Salon* or *Slate* ("Space may Produce New Worlds") and "How You Can Tell You're in a Hester Pulter poem" (in imitation of "How to Tell You're in a Novel" from *The Toast*).
 - **Georgianna Ziegler** (Folger Shakespeare Library) created a LUNA curation of visual images to accompany Emblem 40 and a database demonstration for ways to contextualize Poem 30 "The Center."

Heidi Bayman Hackel (UC Riverside) offered responses to all experiments.

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Next, participants tried out each other's experiments and generated brief accounts of what it was like to interact with these experiments as a medium for Pulter's poetry. They addressed such matters as

1. Which variation on your partner's experiments did you prefer, and why?
2. Did these experiments reveal any new or surprising "finds"? If so, what kind? Did you see Pulter afresh through these lenses, or find yourself drawn to unexpected elements of her work? What view of Pulter might materialize for an audience unfamiliar with her from these projects?
3. How might you refine or add to these experiments? What would those add?
4. How might one bring these experiments forward into the world, to a broader public?
5. How might these experiments be valuable in working with other archival "finds"?

One week before the meeting, the organizers asked everyone to review:

- (a) the canon of poems the organizers had suggested, specifically those workshop members chose to foreground in experiments (e.g., 10, 11, 30, Emblem 40).
- (b) all of the experiments, with an eye to what discourses and frameworks emerged around Pulter's works (and those that did not);
- (c) their own proposals, with thought about how to revise them in light of feedback or things learned from other experiments.

At the meeting, the plan is first to brainstorm responses the following questions, to reflect on the range of work already "shopped":

1. Drawing on Lena's excellent phrase, "Pulter in relation": What writers and genres do these experiments suggest we can productively place Pulter's work in conversation with? If you add Pulter's works to the mix, how does it revise an existing conversation or debate? And, in turn, how did a particular experiment help you think anew about Pulter's work?
2. What ways of reading Pulter's work might be in conflict with other frameworks/contexts? Develop an example by drawing from two experiments.
3. What themes and discourses from Pulter's work (or treatments of it) surfaced in these experiments?

In the remaining time, we will turn to the issue of how our experiments might serve as the scaffolding for further work in/with the archive:

1. How might we or others carry the thinking from this workshop forward in our research in/with the archive?
2. How might we carry the thinking from this workshop forward in our teaching (in and beyond the classroom)?
3. What skills were taught or learned in conjunction with this material: either by us, in developing and responding to experiments, or potentially by others, as these types of experiments enter the world?

If time permits, we hope to test ways of reading a poem, such as 58 ("For I no liberty expect to see").

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