

## Advice for SAA Workshop Leaders

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(leaders of “What to Do with a Discovery in the Archive:  
Hester Pulter’s Manuscript and Other Found Objects,” SAA 2016)

Neither of us had attended or led a workshop at SAA before, so of necessity we winged it—and felt very liberated by the chance to do so! Our topic loaned itself to a free flow of exploratory activities, since we were interested in the variety of things scholars did, or could do, with a relatively new archival “find.”

We wanted to keep the emphasis on *doing*, both in the months leading up to the March meeting and at the meeting itself; I think we were more successful in the former than the latter, if only because we also came to feel we needed, at the meeting, to find ways to address the diversity of contributions made in the previous months. There simply seemed no way to boil them down to a single activity to undertake at SAA; instead, just as a seminar involves discussing papers generated in advance, our workshop saw us discuss the activities and artifacts generated in the months leading up to it and how we might proceed with them in future.

Still, from the get-go we aimed to make things “hands-on” by in encouraging workshopers to get messy with the case study, Pulter’s manuscript poetry—adopted as our exemplar of a relatively new and thus unstudied text rich with potential. The guiding question motivating the workshop was how we (scholars) can, should, or simply do “produce” or “frame” such items for the world.

Initially, we encouraged workshop members to bring into the conversation their own engagements with *other* archival finds; in the end, though, Pulter provided more than enough of a focal point. In fact, we could perhaps have fruitfully narrowed the focus still further by selecting even fewer poems as our workshop’s provisional “canon” than we did. In part because neither leader and few workshopers were very familiar with Pulter’s work, we chose only a dozen or so relatively short lyrics to subject to the “experiments” we asked members to design, exchange, and “try out.” Working with fewer poems might have increased the intersections between experiments, but it would have limited our appreciation of the range of discourses Pulter engaged with. There are always trade-offs.

We made clear participants early on that they wouldn’t write *papers*. Instead, we asked which ways of treating Pulter’s poetry they preferred: working up a couple of anthologies around one or two poems; editing them in variant ways; digitizing them; treating them op.-eds. or other popular forms—and so on. Based on their preferences we paired workshopers, so that two were undertaking each kind of experiment, but in their own unique ways. After devising their pairs of experiments, they exchanged them so their partners could “try out” what had been produced and respond (in writing) to it. We asked each workshop member to produce *two* variations of one experiment (so, two different kinds of syllabus featuring Pulter, or two different forms of web presence for her work) in order to encourage reflection on what different ways of framing the same text brought to the fore or hid.

As with SAA seminars, keeping on top of deadlines was one major challenge with the workshop. This challenge was perhaps ratcheted up because the assigned activities were less familiar—by design!—than writing a research paper. Using something like Wordpress earlier



At the workshop itself and in the months leading up to it, the organizers (Leah Knight and Wendy Wall) will aim primarily to facilitate your development of ideas in response to this topic. For this reason, we'd enjoy hearing your initial thoughts on how you hope to engage in our discussion. A sentence or two will do: what led you to this workshop? Did you have a "find" strongly in mind, or were you hoping to learn more about Pulter, or about ways to represent the new and unknown? Do you have a practical idea for teaching or editing that you want to put on trial here? Are you wondering about what challenges scholars and teachers face in working with new materials in the archive? The earlier we learn how our interests intersect, the better we can support those intersections.

To make our readings and responses to each other's work manageable, we have devised a list (attached) of a dozen or so poems from Pulter's manuscript that we ask you to take as some of our "core" readings. We invite each of you to add (if you wish to do so) one or two additional poems to comprise a "provisional canon" for the workshop. Many of us (including the workshop leaders!) are not very familiar with Pulter's work; we need not have a comprehensive grasp of her writings in order to make the kind of headway we hope to make. She is, in fact, a case study that we expect to generate broad questions about our research and teaching. We have also attached a short list of secondary readings that we hope will spark your thinking and our discussions along the way.

Since this is a workshop instead of a seminar, we do not require traditional papers for discussion in New Orleans. Instead, we ask you to try out some practical ways of thinking and working with Pulter's works and other finds. We see this as an exciting moment, when Pulter has not yet been "framed" within a canon.

Below are some options we've devised; we ask you first to pick two poems from our list (or two you'd like to add to it) and two of the experimental ideas below to try out in relation to those poems:

1. Edit them two different ways. (Some readings on the list are designed to foreground the knotty problems involved in editing.)
2. Put the poems in two different kinds of courses, on (for instance) poetry, women's writing, literature and science, religion and literature, or early modern literature. Pair the poems with appropriate primary and secondary readings.
3. Locate the poems as part of two one-day conferences, with mock panels, speakers, and paper titles, and related events.
4. Insert the poems in two different extant or imaginary anthologies. What canon(s) could be formed around Pulter?
5. Imagine two ways to give Pulter an internet presence (or give it to her!). This might include an edition with visual links, podcasts, film clips, source lists, timelines, or even a fictional Pulter blog — what she was reading?

6. Present Pulter two different ways to a broad audience: at a hypothetical public library event, for instance.
7. Write two different Op. Ed. pieces about Pulter.
8. Develop your own way to interact with/manipulate/position Pulter's poetry. We're interested in approaches that reflect your interests.

Shortly before actual workshop, we will offer you the (optional) opportunity to describe to the group something that you've seen in the archive that puzzles you. This does not have to be something that has never been interpreted before, and you don't need a developed argument about this object. We invite questions, puzzles, hypotheses (and stories of dead-ends!). We will reserve time in New Orleans to see if and how the experiments we've done with Pulter open the door to thinking about how to treat your "finds."

Our schedule will be as follows:

By Oct. 15: Respond by email stating the nature of your interest in this workshop. (Bear in mind that we might like to share these statements with the group.)

By November 1: Rank your top three preferred experiments from the list above (describing any you devise for #8), along with your preferred poems. We will aim to accommodate preferences.

By November 15: The organizers will confirm which two experiments you will conduct.

By January 10: Submit to the organizers your two "thought experiments," which will involve the content for syllabi, conference panels, editions, anthologies, blogs, and so on. Feel free to offer instructions for how others in the workshop might "interact" with your experiments.

By January 20: The organizers will assign members to "try out" two other participants' experiments (by imagining themselves as readers, conference goers, and so on).

By February 20: Send to the organizers your responses (no more than 500 words each) to the two experiments you have tried out. We will compile these to share with all members. Our main discussion in New Orleans will center on the issues that arise as different people "tried" out each other's creations. What different experiences did people have? How did the readings flag issues around canonicity, editing, interpretation, and/or institutional politics?

OPTIONAL: By March 15: You are invited to send to the organizer an archival "find" of your own, along with one or two questions/challenges that this object raises. We will compile a list to circulate before the conference. This is optional; you may instead concentrate simply on Pulter's manuscript.

March 23 to 26: We will meet in New Orleans for our two-hour workshop. Stay tuned for the date, time, and location. As we approach the meeting, we will be in touch with more details on organizing principles and guiding questions for our discussion and other activities.



Pulter's. You might indicate which variation you preferred, or identify any surprises and revelations, or suggest refinements, for instance.

By March 15: Expect the organizers to suggest questions and issues to shape our conversation at the workshop in New Orleans. By this date, we will also have made available all of the experiments to all participants so that you can see our collective work on Pulter (as in a seminar where all papers are distributed). Please prepare and bring to our workshop your own reflections on the experiments undertaken by others, as well as some "next steps" you would like to see for (a) Pulter's work or (b) the broader matter of what to do with a discovery in the archive.

We also hope people might share their own archival "finds" for people to see before the workshop, along with particular questions and challenges they raise; if you're interested in this optional aspect of the workshop, please contact the organizers so we can make arrangements.

That's the long-term schedule; more immediately, please find your name below beneath a description of the type of experiment you will design. In assigning you to a given experiment, we have tried to abide by stated preferences while generating a range of kinds of work for discussion in New Orleans.

In each numbered experiment below, we propose a different and very general answer to the workshop's guiding question: what to do with a discovery in the archive?

1. Edit it. Edit one longer or two shorter poems in two different ways; the texts may both be Pulter's or may involve Pulter and another writer. Preface your edition with a brief document explaining why you chose the poems you did, why you treated them as you did (what theories of editing are used in the variants), where you would have them appear (for what audience and in what type of collection), and other related matters.

- Orlin
- Brayman Hackel
- Rochester

2. Teach it. Place one or two poems by Pulter in two different kinds of courses and/or assignments for undergraduate or graduate students. These might be on (for instance) poetry, women's writing, literature and science, religion and literature, or early modern literature. Supply syllabi with reading lists (primary and secondary) and/or detailed instructions for assignment(s).

- Kolkovich
- DeFurio
- Dolan

3. Anthologize it. Insert one or two poems by Pulter in two different extant or imaginary anthologies. Provide the table of contents (or the relevant portion thereof) and a headnote for Pulter or a section of the introductory essay accounting for her place within the contents of each anthology.

- Pietros
- Jacobs





1. Which variation on your partner's experiments did you prefer, and why?
2. Did these experiments reveal any new or surprising "finds" of their own – and 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 refinements add?
4. Pragmatically speaking, what might be the best way to bring one or both of these experiments forward into the world, to a broader public of some kind?
5. How might these experiments be valuable in working with other archival "finds" (perhaps specifying one of your own)?

We realize 500 words does not allow for very close engagement with all of these questions, but hope you will plan to expand on your notes when we meet in person.

Below you will find the partnerships we have formed. Don't be shy about (and don't delay!) introducing yourself to your partner by email and supplying your experimental materials to her electronically. Email addresses should be found in the "Cc:" line above; if not, let us know. Please copy us (Wendy and Leah) on your initial correspondence and replies to one another, so we can rest assured that a connection has been made.

Partners and basic instructions:

1. Lara Dodds and Georgianna Ziegler: Please examine each other's experiments in teaching diverse publics about Pulter, matters to do with her manuscript, and items like it.
2. Janet Starner and Johanna Schmitz: Please examine each other's blogs and other digitalia (Facebook page and Voyant-based text analysis).
3. Laura DeFurio and Elizabeth Kolkovich: Please examine each other's syllabi and pedagogical approach to all things Pulteresque.
4. Stephanie Pietros and Nicole Jacobs: Please examine each other's anthologies and the logic thereof.
5. Lena Cowen Orlin and Fran Dolan: Please examine each other's variants on editing and contextualizing Pulter.

Heidi Brayman Hackel will act as a pre-meeting respondent: by mid-March, she will provide us all with a summation of the experience of trying out all of the experiments. Her response will give us all a purchase on how Pulter is materializing into view collectively.



your responses to the questions below (but no obligation to do so); if you do, bring 14 copies for our group.

Before we meet, everyone please review:

- (a) the canon of poems we suggested, specifically those they people chose to foreground in experiments (e.g., 10, 11, 30, Emblem 40). If time permits, we will test ways of reading a shorter poem, such as #58 "For I no liberty expect to see";
- (b) all of the experiments, with an eye to what discourses and frameworks emerged around Pulter's works (and those that did not);
- (c) your own proposals, with thought about how you might revise them in light of feedback or things learned from other experiments.

Initially in our meeting, we'd like to brainstorm the following 3 questions. We hope that your answers will help to show 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 remainder of our two hours, we will turn to the issue of how our experiments might serve as the scaffolding for doing further work in/with the archive:

1. How might you carry the thinking from this workshop forward in your research in/with the archive? Cite from someone's experiment a method, process, or starting point that you might extend.
2. How might you carry the thinking from this workshop forward in your teaching (in and beyond the classroom)? Recast an example from someone's experiment in terms of how you might make use of it in a public and pedagogical context.
3. What skills were taught or learned in conjunction with this material: either by you, in developing and responding to experiments, or potentially by others, as these types of experiments enter the world?

We hope you will enjoy adjourning with us to afterward to the annual SAA reception, from 6:00 to 8:00 PM (which will close with a Jazz Funeral for Shakespeare!).



5. Imagine two ways to give Pulter an internet presence (or give it to her!).
  - Johanna Schmitz – created a wordpress blog and a facebook page for Pulter
  - Janet Starner – visualized data from two corpora in several ways using Voyant – selected poems on religious themes v. selected emblems
6. Present Pulter in two different ways to a broad audience.
  - Lara Dodds -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-created a LUNA curation of visual images to accompany Emblem 40 and a database demonstration for ways to contextualize Poem 30 “The Center”

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. What might be the best way to bring one or both of these experiments forward into the world, to a broader public?
5. How might these experiments be valuable in working with other archival “finds” (perhaps specifying one of your own)?

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 shorter poem, such as 58 ("For I no liberty expect to see").

*With thanks to our seminar members:* Heidi Brayman Hackel (UC Riverside), Laura DeFurio (University of Alabama), Lara A. Dodds (Mississippi State University), Fran Dolan (University of California, Davis), Nicole A. Jacobs (California Polytechnic State University), Elizabeth Zeman Kolkovich (The Ohio State University), Lena Cowen Orlin (Georgetown University), Stephanie Pietros (Mount Saint Mary College), Johanna Schmitz (So Illinois University Edwardsville), Janet Wright Starner (Wilkes University), Georgianna Ziegler (Folger Shakespeare Library)

*Workshop organizers:* Wendy Wall (Northwestern University), Leah Knight (Brock University)