

Archive Reports

Lindsey Albracht, Christina Quintana, Seth Graves, Lucas Cocoran, Austin Bailey, Iris Cushing, Leilani Dowell, Catherine Sara Engh, Sarah Hildebrand, Jennifer Polish, Erin Glass, Elissa Myers, Michael Druffel, Chelsea Wall, and Kate Eickmeyer

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## Introduction to Doctoral Studies in English (ENGL 70000) | Fall 2014 | Archive Visit Reports Shelley and His Circle at the NYPL

By: Chelsea Wall

In the interest of full disclosure (and because I was probably the only one of us who had such an encounter), my experience with the New York Public Library archives began with a rather strange email exchange with one of the curators, whom I suppose should probably remain nameless. I filled out a request form to access the archives of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, to which this (slightly touchy) curator responded with a lecture on the vagueness of my assignment as well as a semantics lesson on the uses of “archive” vs. “archives.” This semantics lesson turned out to be incorrect, as I learned in a further email from said curator, however if anyone is interested in its nature, the singular form of “archives” is, in fact, “archives.”

Semantic quibbling aside, upon filling out the form, I received response rather quickly from multiple sources, though I was directed by the curator of the Berg Collection to consult the archives of Shelley and his circle, rather than the Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley archives, as vastly more of her papers are contained within the Pforzheimer Collection. The curator of that collection further requested that I consult the volumes of *Shelley and His Circle* before looking at the holdings of the archives, as many of the manuscripts are already published there, and I could potentially find them more useful than looking at the originals.

This brings me to draw upon a point that Sarah made in her posted assignment on her experience in the archives of the NYPL – it seems that access to manuscripts is quite guarded, and the filtration system to keep out the “riff raff,” so to speak, is rather extensive. While I fully understand the necessity of protecting two hundred year old documents, I remain discomfited by the privileging of access to and production of information and knowledge being restricted to those in higher-level education. The fact that I was asked to provide a reference in order to visit the archives speaks volumes to this point. As was pointed out in class, the creation of knowledge isn’t restricted to the institutions of academia, though we seem to have established a monopoly on primary sources and documents. I worry about what this privileging and micromanaging of access is doing to the production of knowledge through alternative avenues by denying access to primary documents to “amateur enthusiasts,” as if someone without a college education couldn’t use these sources in an appropriate manner.

Therefore, my search for information began in the second floor research area, where I, again like Sarah, was struck by the level of touristic noise and hullabaloo from the first floor below. Despite the nature of the library space as uncondusive to quiet study and reflection, I did indeed find the volumes that I was instructed to look through quite informative. I focused on Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley’s correspondences rather than any manuscripts, in the interest of finding any reference to her neuroses regarding her failed pregnancies and determining their influence on the genesis of *Frankenstein*, which is rife with creation anxieties and motherless figures, intertwining life forces and death forces that are correspondent with Shelley’s lived experience. While I found nothing of this nature, after rifling through the 8 or so volumes of *Shelley and His*



*Circle*, I decided to take a look at the letters written by Mary Wollestonecraft (Mary Shelley's mother) to her childhood friend Jane Arden, written from 1773-1783. While they didn't prove pertinent to any of my current work, I found it quite interesting to be privy to a private childhood squabble between Wollestonecraft and Arden, as if I was hearing a piece of juicy gossip some 225 years after the fact.

Though I didn't find what I was looking for (though maybe I am an inadequate researcher), I was thankful to have some small experience with the daunting processes of archival research, and this assignment was effective in mediating my reluctance to engage with such processes. I refrained from taking pictures as I got the sense from our presentation on the archives at the NYPL some weeks ago that picture-taking is frowned upon, at least within this particular institution. However, I look forward to conducting research more pertinent to my work in other archives as well!



## Visit to Berg to See Twain Collections

By: Michael Druffel

### The Chase—First Day

My first grad school trip to the archives ended in defeat. I had made an appointment to visit the Berg Collection at NYPL to investigate material on Mark Twain. Because I hope to produce a paper on how the material of publishing influenced Twain's literary content in *Huck Finn* I had hoped to see Twain's letters to his publishers, as well as letters to the illustrator, EW Kemble, and any relevant material the archivists could suggest. While corresponding with one of the helpful, friendly, and knowledgeable archivists I had been warned that some of the Twain material was out for digitization (a process I heartily support). Optimistically I reasoned that it would still be a good experience to learn about a) the Berg Collection in general, b) whatever material was in house, and c) new search terms to use in my further research that might come from working with the archivists or the Berg's indexes. Besides, a visit to NYPL would barely be out of my way.

Points a and c were fulfilled wonderfully, and I'd like to touch on them in a minute. However, when I arrived at the Berg I learned that I had been *way* too optimistic about the material that remained. The Berg had sent pretty much all the Clemens manuscripts, letters, and notes to be digitized. If it was produced during Twain's life time, it wasn't at the Collection. The material was due back, according to one archivist, in September (2014), but likely wouldn't be expected until February (2015) at the earliest. This certainly got me thinking that if I were writing a book, a serious, for-tenure book, then it would probably be a good idea to call around to different archives while I'm still coming up with the topic for the book to learn what is or isn't available. Deciding on a topic and finding that material is out for at least 1/2 year (and that's only how long the material was overdue for) could damn a project. I'd be curious to hear if anyone has stories of this happening before, or if I'm playing Chicken Little w/r/t the deleterious impact of lacking archival access. Either way, it's a lesson at least for seminar papers, which obviously can't afford 1/2 year of archival absence (if that was conceived of as being important to the project).

However, the trip was not wholly unprofitable. I have my NYPL Berg Collection reader's card. I know how to submit call slips to call up books in the Berg. And I introduced myself to the Berg's friendly and helpful staff. But I also did gain some more search terms and knowledge for my paper on Twain. While the material produced during Twain's life was almost wholly absent from the Berg, the collection had some rare books on Twain that helped me. Two in particular were Arthur Vogelback's 1939 PhD thesis *The Reception of Huckleberry Finn in America* and a collection of *Century* magazines from the 19th century reprinted in a bound volume. While Vogelback's thesis was old, it was thoroughly researched. He had combed newspapers from the 19th century to offer a wide variety of perspectives on *Huck*. He made the interesting point that journals, magazines, and papers from Concord were the most critical of *HF* and were some of the first to call for its ban. Vogelback argued this was because Mark Twain had said some less than flattering words about the Sage of Concord. (Apparently, in a [speech](#) Twain called Emerson "bogus.") Vogelback's book also alerted me to a truly strange incident involving *Huck* in which an artist had drawn an erection or penis (the



[image](#) is really so crude that it's hard to tell what the thing is, or even if it is an innocent mistake and the imaginative viewer projects the phallic meaning onto it) on Uncle Silas in one of *HF*'s many pictures. When the offending image was detected the books hither to sold were recalled and reprinting was further delayed.

Overall, Vogelback's thesis pointed to a struggle between Twain and the papers who were quick to mock the illustration boner, call for censorship of *Huck*, and deride the subscription model Twain used. The rift between Twain and some papers has many causes (the aforementioned Emerson slight), but one of them seems to be advertising money. Some newspapers seemed to think Twain didn't pay enough for ads and were ready to take his work to task as a result. Even though I didn't see any primary documents, it was helpful to learn how the relationship between press and author shapes the perception of the book.

The other interesting book I found was the *Century* volume. One of issues inclosed had the famous feud chapter from *HF* printed as a kind of teaser for the rest of the book. While it didn't shine anything new on the process, it gave me a good idea of how Twain did use magazines for advertisement. The excerpt included five of EW Kemble's illustrations as well, which shows, I think, that a big reason for buying books in the 19th century was the art that came with them. (Twain's letters to his publishers, which I found in an edited volume by Hamlin Hill confirm this.)

While the trip wasn't a rousing success, I think there were points I could take away. However, since I didn't get to handle any primary documents, I made a second trip to another archive: NYU's.

## The Chase—Second Day

Feeling like it would be good to handle primary documents, instead of the still helpful books I found in NYPL, I used ArchiveGrid to find another archive nearby. This time I located one that held two letters from William James. Since I am in a class on Pragmatism, I thought it could be useful to check it out. This archive was at NYU, and having applied for a MaRLi, but yet to redeem it at NYU it was a good experience to get there, get the card, and visit the archive.

The WJ material was scant. There were two letters written in sloppy handwriting asking for copies of his book to sent to people. They were in the Helena Born collection, a single box for material created (donated?) by Helena Born, who is, as far as I can tell, an American socialist. I must admit that the visit did nothing to further my project, but it was not w/o merit.

Perhaps the most useful thing I learned was that NYU seems to have great socialist, Marxist, and labor material. These are all topics that interest me, so I'm sure I'll be back to the archives sooner than later. I'd also recommend to anyone else dealing with labor to check them out: NYU's Tamimant Library in particular, which is in the Bobst main library building (10th floor) by Washington Park.

But the most fun I had in the library was finding a watermark. I attended after hearing Steve Jones talk so I was feeling for lines and watermarks in the paper. One of the WJ letters had a mark visible when held to the light that read: "Royal Scot Linen / WB Clark & Co / Boston." It was a lot of fun to see it there and know



how it got there.

While neither archival visit furnished me with a perfect document, I think that it was good to get more info for my Twain paper, and fun to see Steve Jones's facts in action. However, I decided against visiting a third archive to find a really great primary document. Two was enough for this project I thought.



## The Morgan Reading Room & James Gillray's Satirical Prints

By: Catherina Sara Engh

Two Fridays ago, I visited the Morgan reading room where I looked at two oversized books of satirical prints drawn by the English caricature artist James Gillray. The experience was excellent, the librarians were helpful and getting into the reading room was as easy as could be expected. I was asked to stow my things—everything but a laptop, my iphone and a few papers—in a locker. I washed my hands and gave my driver's license to a librarian to photocopy. Inside the reading room, someone had already pulled the two books that I requested and a librarian set one of them up for me on a stand.

The first book that I looked through was approximately two by four feet—very cumbersome—and consisted of 307 pages with Gillray prints pasted into the books' pages. I stood to look at the prints and used a weight to hold the pages in place. The second book was much lighter, with fewer pages.

In her book *The Golden Age of Caricature*, Diana Donald argues that caricatures don't fit neatly into the categories of high or low art. In the drawings, allegorical content is mixed with impolite subject matter. At the Morgan, for instance, I saw a print of the Queen of England on a Toilet titled 'Patience on a Monument'—a line from Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. The mixture of high and low formal qualities and the cross-class audience—in the 1790s and today—makes the status of caricatures on the art market complex. Seeing so many prints pasted into the pages of this book, I couldn't help but think that whoever put the collection together did not consider these etchings very valuable. (The collection I saw was given to the Morgan by Gordon N. Ray, who acquired them in 1815, but it's unclear who owned them before him.)

The visit was, as I had hoped, productive to my research and thinking. I'm working on a paper that focuses on representations of English women in the 1790s world of fashion. Before the visit, I made a list of all the caricatures that I hoped to see and I left having seen seven of ten. It was great to get photos of details that I won't find in a Google image search.



As I looked for the prints that I knew I wanted to see, I came across several that will help me prove my argument. This print –‘The Introduction’–pictures Frederick, the Prince regent, (in 1791) presenting his wife Charlotte to King George III and Queen Sophia. Charlotte’s apron is overflowing with gold coins. Behind her is an unfortunate depiction of an orientalized Prussian man who stands guarding more of her money. I’ll have to see if I can find a good account of Charlotte and the dowry she brought into her marriage with the Prince. The laugh here is at the expense of the crown. The Prince was notoriously in debt to the crown and this marriage must have been a mercenary one. In my paper, I want to talk about how Gillray links marriage to the market and social spectacle to financial speculation. So, for my purposes, the print is great—it depicts marriage as a transaction. The King and Queen value Charlotte for the money that she brings to the marriage, regardless of where it came from.

The other great find was a series called ‘Progress of the Toilet’ which includes ‘The Stays’ ‘The Wig’ and ‘Dress Completed.’ In these drawings, a woman stands dressing before a mirror—a common enough setting for a Gillray print. But on the wall is a framed image depicting the time of day—morning, noon and evening in respective prints. Gillray exaggerates to comic proportions the time it takes this woman to get dressed, even with the help of a servant. In *Catharine, or the Bower*, Jane Austen uses a similar comic technique—she exaggerates a rakish character’s dressing time to indicate his foppishness and to suggest to her reader that he’s not morally serious.

It was great to see the prints as they were originally sized. I noticed details like the pictures of morning, noon and night in the ‘Progress of the Toilet’ series that I probably wouldn’t otherwise have noticed. The size of the prints made the intricacies of Gillray’s line and shading techniques more apparent and impressive. When people write about caricature prints, they usually discuss ‘supercharged features’ and, indeed, I noticed that the monstrous proportions of facial features instantly indicate who to laugh at or, more strongly, disdain. The



queen, wherever she is pictured (see 'The Introduction'), appears monstrous. I also noticed a lot of tavern drawings and admired up close the compositional arrangement of these overcrowded, busy scenes .

Finally, I saw a number of dreamscapes—drawings of Tom Paine or the Prince Regent asleep in a bed, surrounded by dream imagery. In his essay 'The Cartoonist's Arsenal,' E.H. Gombrich applies Freud's theories of compression and displacement to his readings of caricature prints. Before this trip, I was a little skeptical of Gombrich's Freudian approach. But seeing the many dream scenes included in the book of collected prints, I was convinced that the Freudian approach is a good one and that Gillray's kind of comedy expresses a thorough knowledge of human psychology.



## my visit to the Kroch archives at Cornell University

By: LeiLani Dowell

Hi all,

So, as I mentioned in class today, I visited the archives at the Kroch Library at Cornell University on Nov. 26. After sending an email informing the library that I would be in town and interested in making a visit there (I'm looking back at the email now; I had told them I was interested in looking at specific papers, rather than our generic assignment, and that I was a Ph.D. student at the GC), I received an enthusiastic response with links to the collection guide and the online registration system.

Getting to the actual archives involved interacting with three different staff people, all of whom were very friendly (the woman at the registration desk perhaps a little more friendly than I would have liked; she held me hostage in a lengthy and perhaps inappropriate discussion about the PBS show "Finding Your Roots" after inquiring about my name and my heritage). At the front desk, a young man instructed me and my partner to leave all our belongings, except for a laptop or tablet and our IDs, in a locker, then directed me to the registration desk. There I had the long-winded conversation with the staffer while she took my photo and looked up my reservation of the materials I wanted to look at. My partner, who is at Cornell, was also either required or encouraged to register, I can't remember which. Finally, we were sent to the reading room, where another staffer had already secured the box I had requested and handed it over to me.

The reading room was a comfortable, well-lit place, stocked with green paper (I found it funny that they kept telling me I could take notes on the "green paper," as if other colors of paper were forbidden) and pencils.

I had decided to look at the papers of Brian McNaught, who did work around combatting homophobia in the 1990s. Among other things, McNaught produced training materials on homosexuality. Along with a lots of videotapes, a flyer announcing a lecture, a reference guide to the video and film reels, and a letter from an official at the USDA asking for some of McNaught's materials, there were also random bits of nostalgia, such as the pinup I mentioned in class from Honcho magazine, an album cover for "Jungle Drums – Wild Dreams" (not sure which is the band name and which is the album title) featuring a white man and a Black man embracing over a bongo drum, etc.

I mentioned in class that I found McNaught's usage of the "gay liberation" trope in his otherwise mainstream work to be interesting. Something else I'd like to mention is that the lecture flyer is for an event entitled "Homophobia: What's Its Cause? Can It Be Cured?" I'm currently working on a project that looks at the ways that the terminology of "homophobia" and "transphobia" pathologizes and individualizes attacks on LGBTQ peoples, avoiding discursive treatments and understandings of the systematic and deeply structural nature of heteronormativity and heterosexism. So I found it immensely intriguing that here was an event to discuss whether homophobia could be "cured." I might make another trip to the archives to see if I can find any footage of this event in the future.



So, all in all, this was a (mostly) pleasant experience and I'm really glad I got the opportunity to get my feet wet in the archives.

Best,  
LeiLani



## poet's house archive



tactile poetry!

By: Erin Glass

For our archive assignment, I decided to go to the Poet's House nestled inside the bottom two floors of a riverfront building in Battery Park. The website describes the Poet's House as a national archive, but perhaps Wikipedia's description of Poet's House as a "literary center" is a bit more fitting, as the archives themselves seem to play only a small role in actual use of the space. Though their collection includes 60,000 books, chapbooks and literary journals, visitors typically come for one of their readings or other poetry-related events rather than to peruse their shelves. Or at least so it seems. Personally, my first few visits to the Poet's House were entirely event related. And now that I finally had a chance to check out their holdings — along with co-explorer Seth — I had the distinct sense we were treading a sort of forgotten frontier. The window side tables were full of lapped students, perhaps some even enjoyed poetry in addition to sunlit work spaces, but once near the actual heart of the archive, the population dropped.



Such is often the case with libraries, archives, so no criticism here. The sunlit windows, the free wifi, the poetry readings and classes, are all equally important organs for the vitality of such a literary center. It was one of the events, in fact, that made me so eager to explore their actual collection. No other institution in my experience, save perhaps for the university itself, has so successfully drawn my interest and activity to its bibliographic holdings through events.

Let me explain. A year or two ago, I attended a talk about the history of the chapbook at the Poet's House that was held in conjunction with The Center for the Humanities annual [Chapbook Festival](#). Now just in case anyone here isn't exactly sure what a chapbook is, let us briefly recollect. Wikipedia nicely describes the chapbook's contemporary form as:



chapbook shelves

...publications of up to about 40 pages, usually poetry bound with some form of saddle stitch, though many are perfect bound, folded, or wrapped. These publications range from low-cost productions to finely produced, hand-made editions that may sell to collectors for hundreds of dollars...The genre has been revitalized in the past 40 years by the widespread availability of first mimeograph technology, then low-cost copy centers and digital printing, and by the cultural revolutions spurred by both zines and poetry slams, the latter generating hundreds upon hundreds of self-published chapbooks that are used to fund tours.

The chapbook is the folk press, a means of distributing one's texts outside the pearly gates of conventional publishing. It is perhaps the most important — and unruly! — form of underground poetry movements in 20th century United States. One need not have the approval of an editor or the capital of a printing press, but only the gumption to turn available resources into the means of transmission. And so a survey of chapbooks of the past sixty years brings forth all sorts of shapes, materials and styles that defy traditional expectations of a published book. Without a standardized means of production, the chapbook's form depended largely on its creator's imagination.



fringe and uber-fringe publications live happily together.

But back to the talk. The speakers articulated some of the historical roots of the chapbooks in early modern Europe, and then described some of the genre's major transformations in the past century. For example, tools and organizations that in many ways made chapbook publishing a far more accessible, sustainable, and influential endeavor also contributed to the homogenization of the form. Prior to the Xerox machine, chapbook makers essentially had to individually determine the materials, forms and style of the chapbook, which enforced, so to speak, diversity within the genre. Additionally, one speaker linked the establishment of the National Endowment for the Arts in 1965 — which did important work cultivating some of these chapbook endeavors into shinier, more professional, more public forms — with the waning of a DIY, rough-edged culture of chapbook makers. While no one was arguing that the Xerox machine or the NEA were not much welcome resources for fringe cultural producers, the speakers quite effectively demonstrated how diversity, reach, and sustainability of cultural production are all dramatically influenced by available resources, and not always in the way we expect. When the talk ended we were left to explore a curated selection of chapbooks from the fifties and sixties that highlighted the dramatic range of creativity in publishers that worked with minimal resources and support. Somehow, I walked away that night thinking that the curated display just represented the tip of the iceberg. I was flooded with visions of combing through the past century of our nation's folk publications. How on earth, I wondered, would they even catalog such an oddball, odd-shaped, uncategorizable set of items. Oh, I'd return, all right.



chapbook shelf close up.

But when I did return — a few Fridays ago — making my way past the first shelf of this year's published books of poetry, past the shelves devoted to international poetry, past the books of criticism, journals, memoirs, dictionaries, past, really, the entire printed discourse related to English poetry, all the way to the very back to its chapbook collection, I realized my imagination had perhaps run away from me. Here, in about two aisles, lies the Poet's House chapbook collection. Unruly, surprising, impressive, yes — one might find hand decorated, stapled, glitter explosive works snugly sharing shelf space with more official works by the likes of Louise Gluck — but hardly the National Library of Chapbooks that I had somehow been expecting. I browsed through the mildly alphabetized materials, losing interest as it seemed most were produced in the last ten years, and all off an Epson printer. Where, then, I wondered, did the nation's history of chapbooks exist?



## Open Admission and the CCNY Archives

By: Lindsey Albracht

*As hundreds of students waited for the Basic Writing sections to open so they could register for courses they had been told they must take, a fist fight broke out between two students, knocking a Basic Writing table over and pinning me under the table with their weight as they fought their way across the overturned table toward the blackboards. Prof. Norment grabbed one of the students, Prof. Keating the other. Prof. Norment has a split lip from a punch in the mouth. I have badly bruised thighs and am recuperating from symptoms of internal bleeding. Computer cards were strewn everywhere; it took an hour to put them back in order (“An Open Letter to Alice Chandler, Provost” City College of New York, 1977).*

This is a passage from a letter that I found in the Mina P. Shaughnessy box at the City College library archive. It was an open letter, but it was addressed to Provost Alice Chandler from Kathy O. Roe, an Administrative Assistant, and it describes a remarkably tense scene from registration day in the fall of 1977 at City College. Although, Roe claims, the Dean of the college of Humanities had “informed [her] in writing of the projected shortage of sections in Basic Writing — twenty-six, to be exact,” Provost Chandler had neglected to open enough sections to accommodate all of the students who needed to take a Basic Writing course in order to advance. For these students, this would have meant that they would have needed to wait *an entire year* to enroll in any classes at City College.

For the seminar paper that I’m currently writing about classroom space, I’ve been doing a bit of research about the 1968 and 1969 protests by the Black and Puerto Rican student organizations that built on the national, city-wide, and campus activism throughout the 1960s and that led, ultimately, to the enactment of Open Admissions. For those of you who don’t already know, Open Admissions was a CUNY-wide policy that began in 1970 and ended in 1999, and it guaranteed all New York City high school graduates a place at one of the CUNY campuses (which was a tuition-free system until 1976). In this era at CUNY, remedial student services expanded dramatically. And Mina Shaughnessy, who is credited with significantly advancing the sub-field of basic (or remedial) writing, was the director of the pre-baccalaureate English program, SEEK, at this time. She also wrote an influential book called [\*Errors and Expectations\*](#), which, [while other scholars have since quite rightly critiqued it](#) for its singular focus on surface-level error and for its lack of focus on the political nature of language, was still perhaps the first resource of its kind to “legitimize” basic writing as a serious subject that was “worthy” of academic inquiry. It was her personal letters, correspondence between various people involved with basic writing and the remedial program, and other random ephemera that I went to the City College archive to investigate.

I saw a lot of compelling artifacts — both in this box and in the box concerning the ESL program which I also explored. But the letter that I mentioned was particularly impactful. It made the struggle of Open Admissions completely vivid to me: much more so than reading about the protests, which I’ve mostly encountered through sanitized New York Times news coverage, Wikipedia entries, and brief paragraphs or footnotes in books about protests in New York City. I’m perhaps particularly attuned to the way that a mundane



administrative choice to not open enough classes (despite knowledge of the necessity to do so) sends a clear, silent, political message to students about the priorities of a department, of a school, and of a system of education because I spent some time as a school administrator, and the trickiness of how and when to allocate our institutional resources were sometimes mine to make. But even from an administrator's side of the desk, I've come to realize that these banal little details constitute an unbelievably resolute institutional epistemology that is so hard to dismantle. We can't fix your problem because we don't have the resources, and we don't have the resources because we (probably) decided that your problem wasn't really that important to us.

This letter also resonated because it was about violence, and because we're engaged in national conversations about this topic in the wake of the Ferguson decision. So, I read this letter and thought about how some faculty, administrators, city officials, and students openly and vocally resented Open Admissions because of the worry that increasing educational access would "devalue" the worth of their own education (a theme that was continually revisited as justification to end Open Admissions in 1999). I read it and considered that, just the year before, for the first time in CUNY's history, students had been asked to shoulder the burden of tuition. I read it with the knowledge from previous research that the strain on facilities and resources within the total CUNY system as a result of a lack of appropriate allocation of funding during Open Admissions was causing overcrowded classes to be held in hallways and cafeterias. I read it and thought about the students who were offered admission to CCNY through Open Admissions and who had fought their way through a public education system that had been ravaged by segregation, a lack of monetary support, and overcrowding. Those students *graduated from high school anyway*, and then they wanted to pursue an education badly enough to accept all of these unfavorable conditions, and then they showed up, and then they were told that they had to wait for another year. I'm not saying that any of this was solely CUNY's fault, and I understand that the city was experiencing a financial crisis that had greatly impacted funding, and I've been that administrator who had to make a tough choice to cut a class. I'm also not saying that punching a professor in the mouth — a person who probably had nothing to do with the decision to close the class — was the right call. But we always find the funding for other things that we deem necessary, right? So, I read this letter, and I felt empathy for Kathy O. Roe and Alice Chandler, and I felt empathy for the students, and I felt utter and total and consuming frustration.

I'm glad to have had the opportunity to visit the archive since, before this project, I wasn't sure how archival work might be a part of my own research and, now, I anticipate that it will. Finding these little fragments made a big difference in the way I understood this bit of institutional history.



## Columbia Rare Books and Manuscripts

By: Lucas Corcoran

I spent each Friday last semester commuting to D.C. and back. I was fortunate enough to have taken part in the Folger Institute's Introduction to Bibliography course, in which we covered everything from chain lines to the division of labor within early modern print shops. Perhaps, at the time, the fatigue from the bus ride tinged my view of bibliography, for the course began to feel at times more like library science than literary criticism or intellectual history. Indeed, many times during the discussion sessions for the Folger course, I wondered out loud what work analytical bibliography could do for literary study. Who cares where the watermark is in the 1623 folio? Why do I need to schlep to a rare books room when I can get a good facsimile on EEBO?

Now freed from the cramped seats of Megabus and the traffic on I95, I clearly see the importance of analytical bibliography for my research. I account for this shift by positing two main causes for it: i) My research interests have tacked away from early modern books written in English, and ii) I have come to appreciate the fact that a large number of early modern books are moldering in libraries, with no scholarly editions ever produced for them. Scholars such as Jonathan Hope have brought point (ii) to the fore. With continued use of text mining directing many new advances in literary study, we are beginning to reckon with data sets that include editions of texts far outside the cannon. Who were the people who wrote these books? Who printed them? One of the advantages of the macro-analysis that Hope advocates is that it directs our attention to hitherto uncharted territory of rare book collections.

All this was in my mind as I made my way up to the Columbia Rare Book and Manuscript Library. I had already visited Columbia's library, when I took Professor Carroll's Introduction to Renaissance Studies course, last spring. Then, we had the pleasure of looking at editions of Erasmus, Jonson and, much to my delight, a 1623 folio. So, by now, I am well versed in the procedures of entering and exiting a rare books room. When I got to the desk, I dutifully divested myself of pens, removed my laptop from its sleeve, waited patiently for the librarian, and spoke with a hushed politeness.

I requested my book; I have learned from experience to moderate my appetite in the rare book room. In the past, it feels as if my eyes were bigger than my stomach: peeling off paper request slips in furies of excitement. The book that I asked for was 16<sup>th</sup> century Greek grammar textbook. I find the volume keenly interesting, for few Greek grammars were printed in London in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and scholars have renewed their attention to the status of Greek reception in the English Renaissance. I, too, was excited to see how students tackled the often-befuddling intricacies of Greek, having just spent my summer suffering through an intensive course.

Every time that I am lucky enough to handle an early modern book, the book as artifact still astounds. It still astounds me that I am allowed to thumb through pages that are nearly half a millennia old. The shock of the historical object forces me to consider the reality of history: the Renaissance is not an abstract category, but



existed in the same way that we exist—full of bodies, objects, relationships, failures and aspirations. The book itself, it seems, is due for a renaissance. In the era of big data, and with renewed emphasis on the materiality of history, the return to the archive appears to be the logical next step; simply getting the extant historical recorded digitized feels like the work of a generation.



## NYPL Archives: The Bryant-Godwin Papers

By: Sarah Hildebrand

I visited the New York Public Library's archive of the Bryant-Godwin Papers. This collection is fairly expansive – 25 boxes worth of material including letters, diaries, manuscript drafts, notes, newspaper clippings, financial/legal records, and photographs. As many of you probably know, the NYPL has strict procedures for working with its materials, so I requested to look only at box 20, which contains William Cullen Bryant's notebook and notes on agriculture and gardening. William Cullen Bryant was a 19<sup>th</sup> century poet and editor of the New York Evening Post; he also played a role in the creation of Central Park. I was interested to see how his observations of and interaction with the natural world may have informed his writing process and affected the production of meaning in his poetry, much of which would fall under the category of nature poems.

While in some aspects the NYPL has become a most horrid tourist trap (I'm always disappointed by its initial loudness and the presence of gift shops on the first floor), it also works surprisingly hard to keep the riff raff out of the archives. The building itself is a bit difficult to navigate if you're actually looking for information rather than photo-ops. Few tourists would simply happen to stumble upon, let alone into, the Manuscripts and Archives Division, which is not only located at the end of an off-shooting hallway, away from the main corridor, but requires you to buzz in and wait to be escorted inside. This certainly says something about the privilege of, and access to, education/information. Something about checking all my items at the ground floor, minus a clear plastic bag and laptop, made me feel a bit like a felon, despite the conspicuous nature of my "breaking in" to the library.

Once arriving inside the Archives Division (and after signing-in several more times) I was presented with the box of items I had requested. I was instructed to only remove one folder from the box at a time and to keep everything in order (even though there didn't appear to be much order to begin with). Inside the folders were William Cullen Bryant's to-do lists of gardening chores – planting, transplanting, propagating. Various lists of plant species within his garden, as well as fastidious detailing of their locations. Several lists of "flowers in bloom" at Roslyn (his estate) on particular dates in October, sporadically throughout the years 1866-1877, as well as comments on that year's weather. Next were various newspaper clippings on agriculture – mulching, pruning, cultivating, manuring, protecting against cuculio (a type of invasive insect), setting fence posts. It became clear that Bryant spent copious amounts of time both observing the outside world and actively laboring in it. Based on the plethora of newspaper clippings (an entire journal pasted with clippings, alongside a stack of free-floating articles), he was certainly interested in the natural world from a scientific perspective, as well as an aesthetic one.

While I didn't stumble upon anything particularly relevant to my own projects, it was interesting to handle some 150-year-old documents and see what we have/haven't learned about tree and plant care in that time. While some of the clippings were almost comically inaccurate (a combination of poor pruning cuts based on ill-researched newspaper articles probably led to the increased rate of tree disease and insect outbreaks he



discovered at his estate) others were alarmingly informed. It is no wonder that Bryant constantly struggled to maintain his garden, and was careful to take his own copious notes about its progress. He was likely aware that a lot of his agricultural practices were somewhat experimental, and thus endeavored to document the outcomes and learn as much from his own experience as from what he read in the papers – knowledge that certainly came to inform his poetry.



## NYPL Manuscripts and Archives

By: Christina Quintana

This past weekend I visited the NYPL Archives in order to review the records for the Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced Foreign Scholars, a New York association formed in 1933 for the purpose of employing refugee European scholars in American institutions. While the committee worked to support all scholars fleeing Nazi persecution, special attention was paid to Jewish scholars who required assistance. The records are quite extensive—over 200 boxes—and consist mainly of grant files on refugee scholars who applied for aid, along with some correspondences between the committee and other philanthropic organizations. I was interested in only one file, however: Hannah Arendt's, who submitted an application for aid in 1934. Hannah Arendt was a German-born Jewish political theorist who wrote extensively on theories of power, politics, and totalitarianism, among many other topics. For my final paper for my other course (Professor Miller's Postwar Women Writers and Intellectuals) I plan to examine Arendt's sometimes troubling notions of identity, and how she often eschews seemingly objective labels such as 'woman' or 'Jew.' Because the Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced Foreign Scholars somewhat focused on Jewish scholars in need of aid, I was interested to see how Arendt would position her Jewish background in her application.

As both Sarah and Chelsea discussed, the NYPL can sometimes resemble a crowded amusement park more than a library. After a frustrating ten minutes or so of bypassing dawdling tourists and jogging up and down flights of stairs, I finally found the Archives Division, tucked away at the end of a fairly well-hidden corridor. The archivists working that day were all extremely helpful and informative, but I do agree (again) with Chelsea and Sarah that the highly restrictive nature of the archives is somewhat problematic. While I can understand the reasoning behind the appointment-only structure of the archive (in order to ensure no one is carelessly wandering in and poking around), the need for references and proof of academic affiliation seems unnecessarily obstructive and elitist. Again, as Chelsea pointed out, the implication that only "real" scholars (i.e., those attending an institution) need to and can have access to primary materials is disquieting.

Once I had signed in, I was given my box of requested materials. As I mentioned, I was interested in only Arendt's file, which consisted of about thirty separate documents. The first dozen or so documents were fairly standard forms requesting the applicant's name, date and place of birth, marital status, employment history, etc. Several letters of recommendation were included, which were fascinating to read. Both Karl Jaspers and Martin Heidegger submitted recommendations, but unfortunately they were in German (a possibility I naively had not even considered). The other letters, written in English from various colleagues of Arendt's, all testified to her staggering intellect and warmly recommended her for financial aid. In terms of my original inquiry—that is, how does Arendt discuss or position her Jewish background on her application—I was not able to find a lot of satisfying material. On her CV, Arendt lists her field as "History of Jewish Emancipation and Assimilation" and marks her religion as "Jewish—Reformed"; otherwise, there was little to no mention of Arendt's background in any of her application material or in the correspondences between the committee and Arendt. This is most likely due to the fact that the committee's application did not require any sort of personal statement or academic essay, and therefore the majority of the file's documents were not



even authored by Arendt herself (except in the most perfunctory of ways, such as filling out generic forms).

Ultimately, Arendt was denied a grant from the committee nearly ten years after she originally submitted her application (a puzzling find for me—why did it take them so long to arrive at their decision? It seems absurdly long), but assured by the committee’s secretary that all the members held her in high esteem and would reconsider her application at a later date. Although these documents didn’t exactly address my original question, I was grateful to have had the opportunity of engaging with these texts in such a direct, tactile way. Additionally, the experience revealed to me the incredible potential of archival research in general—and that it’s not nearly as intimidating as I originally thought it would be.



## Pforzheimer Collection at the NYPL

By: Sophia Natasha Sunseri

Like Chelsea, I visited the Shelley and his Circle Archives (part of the Pforzheimer Collection) at the NYPL. My experience also bore a resemblance to Chelsea's in that I, too, encountered a somewhat agitated archivist who informed me that she wasn't frustrated with me, but with the assignment (which, in her opinion, is too vague). Regardless, I proceeded with my research, albeit somewhat tentatively.

I was initially interested in perusing some of Mary Wollstonecraft's manuscripts (and was specifically hoping to come across a working draft of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* [1792]). Some preliminary research revealed, however, that only two of Wollstonecraft's working drafts are known to have survived: the first page of her essay "On Poetry" and a book review that she wrote. Thankfully, I was able to ascertain this information beforehand, as the NYPL's online resources were quite useful. I referred to the library's archives portal

(<https://wa.gc.cuny.edu/owa/?ae=Item&t=IPM.Note&id=RgAAAADec%2fqmmQwMRauaFFPEeyqxBwCrCKyHOuKOTpLhQMMhSjpdBeuf4XH9AAACijVP6CjeSoftZudbrYoNAI1O47G7AAAJ>) as well as to their published version of the Shelley and his Circle materials (Harvard UP, 1961-, 10 vols.), accessible here: <http://catalog.nypl.org/record=b11093889~S1>. Before my visit, I emailed the aforementioned archivist and requested to see correspondence between Mary Wollstonecraft and her sister, Everina Wollstonecraft, as well as the "On Poetry" manuscript.

In Mary Wollstonecraft's letter to Everina (dated May 11-12, 1787), she discusses an ongoing monetary dispute with her brother, her experiences as a governess, a handful of French authors (especially Rousseau), and running into—and eventually snubbing—"Neptune," an elegant but snobbish man for whom she once had affection. It is Wollstonecraft's draft of "On Poetry," however, that captivates my attention most. Although only one page of the draft survives (it is speculated to have originally been 11 quarto pages long) it affords much insight into Wollstonecraft's revision process, which I find quite fascinating. Two published works are derived from this draft: an essay in the form of a letter to the editor of *The Monthly Magazine*, which was released in April of 1797 (<http://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/008920340>) and an essay published after Wollstonecraft's death in September of 1797 under a new title assigned by Godwin: *Posthumous Works of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (with Godwin noting its origins in the preface). The differences between the two published versions are quite striking. The text from *Posthumous Works* most closely resembles the manuscript version (suggesting that it was most likely composed before *The Monthly Magazine* version). In this earlier version, Wollstonecraft employs simple vernacular: compare the phrase "the dream is over" (*Posthumous Works*) with the phrase "the reverie is over" (*The Monthly Magazine*). The text in the *Monthly Magazine* is ostensibly more baroque. Juxtaposing both works with what remains of the original manuscript reveals Wollstonecraft's penchant to elaborate in her rewriting (it should be noted that Godwin did not heavily edit Wollstonecraft's writing; he mostly made minor changes to punctuation). By assessing these primary source materials, I was able to draw conclusions that I otherwise wouldn't have been



able to.

While I did not find what I originally set out to find (a manuscript of one of Wollstonecraft's better known works, like *The Vindication of the Rights of Woman*) it was interesting to observe that many of the ideas expressed in Wollstonecraft's correspondences and in her essay draft were foregrounded in earlier works with which I am familiar (for example: her conflicted relationship to Rousseau; her rejection of highly stylized writing in favour of writing that communicates direct personal experience).

In the end, I was grateful that I came across materials that were previously unknown to me. It is this serendipitous aspect of archival research that I find most appealing—the accidental stumbling upon and the unexpected turns that one's research may take as a direct result (which is one of the reasons why the archivist's insistence upon a research project with such rigidly defined parameters irked me). I am looking forward to conducting more research at other archives in the city (and hopefully elsewhere).



## The Lesbian Herstory Archives and the surprises of material culture

By: Iris Cushing

This past Monday morning I visited the [Lesbian Herstory Archives](#) in Park Slope, Brooklyn. I had been wanting to visit the LHA since encountering archive founder Joan Nestle's writing on queer New York history last summer. The LHA is staffed entirely by volunteers; Kayleigh and Celeste were both there on Monday morning to show me around the space and tell me about how it works.

Founded in 1974 by writer Joan Nestle (whom Jennifer writes about in her previous post), the LHA existed for its first 15 years in Nestle's Upper West Side apartment. With collectively-raised funds, the LHA was able to purchase a limestone building in Park Slope in 1990 to house its ever-growing holdings. The [history](#) of the space itself is fascinating. The ground floor features an extensive library of writing by and about lesbians, women, and a wide spectrum of queer discourses. The second floor contains extensive files about individual lesbians, as well as materials related to lesbian history based on region and topic. In addition to material holdings, they also have digital audio, video and photo archives. The space is full of framed photos showing lesbian activists over the years, posters, and things like jean jackets bearing loads of buttons and patches—the physical correlates of a vibrant and diverse culture.

One goal I had in visiting the LHA was to see if they had any archival film footage (in any format) of poet Eileen Myles reading her poetry in the 70s, 80s or 90s. Recently I agreed to help a filmmaker named [Catherine Pancake](#) locate footage of Myles from this time period; I had found several films online, but wanted to see if there were any undigitized films (on VHS, for example) there at the LHA. Pancake is making a documentary about four New York-based lesbian artists and writers, including Myles and Jibz Cameron, whose recent work I've reviewed for [Hyperallergic](#). Participating in Pancake's material-gathering process for her documentary seems like a good opportunity to get some insight into one of my academic areas of interest: feminist and queer literary communities in postwar America in general, and in New York in particular.

I asked Kayleigh about the possibility of vintage Myles footage at the LHA; she looked Myles' name up on the LHA's database, but all that came up were Myles' books and the biographical file on her. She told me I was welcome to look through the LHA's VHS collection and see if I could find anything there, but warned me that there the VHS collection had not been organized in any way whatsoever, so it might take a long time. She led me to the kitchen, where the VHS tapes were arranged on a shelf in the corner. There were at least 500 of them, most of them home recordings with handwritten labels. They ranged from recordings of radical women's collective meetings, to indy films, to DIY tapes of lesbian love scenes collaged together from mainstream movies. It seemed entirely likely that there *could* be Myles footage in there.

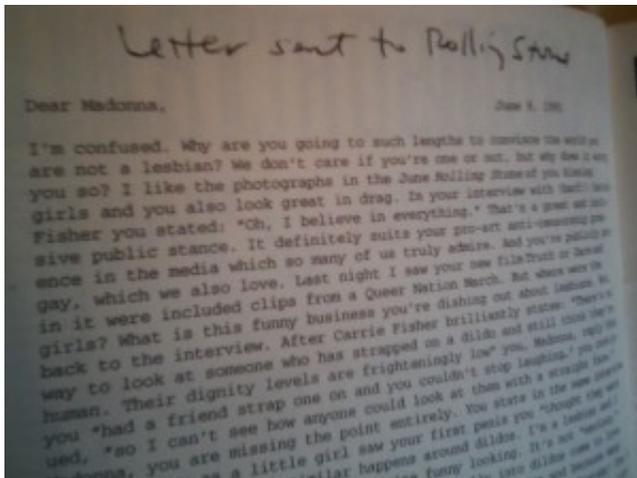
It was at this point that I looked around me and really considered the social and aesthetic nature of the LHA. The kitchen was occupied by a well-used copy machine that appeared to be at least 15 years old, a refrigerator decorated with hand-drawn fliers and rainbow magnets, and a coffee pot ringed with years'



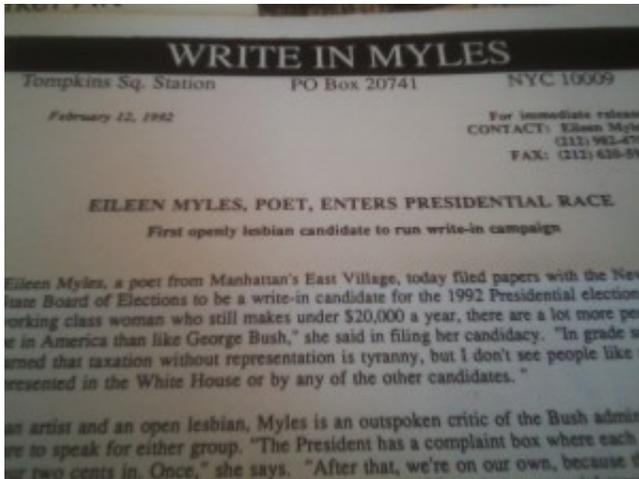
worth of drip coffee. It reminded me, quite movingly, of many of the radical community activist spaces I spent time in on the West Coast: anarchist “infoshops” and feminist bookstores, places with necessarily nonhierarchical power structures and all-donated resources and time. The phenomenon of the LHA struck me as a subject of study unto itself (as, I suppose, all archives are). I felt drawn in by the physical qualities of the space, the smells and the light, the sense of how people have moved through the rooms over the years. It felt very alive and particular, an organic hybrid of library, museum, house, cafe, and something else that I can only describe as a sort of lesbian church.

I elected not to sort through the hundreds of VHS tapes, and headed upstairs to look at the biography files. Both the files and the library are organized by the subject or author’s first name, which I imagine is an anti-patriarchal organizing scheme, although I cannot find any mention of the alphabetizing scheme on the website. The file on Eileen was thick. I plunked down at the long oak table (half-covered with boxes of unsorted papers) and began to read.

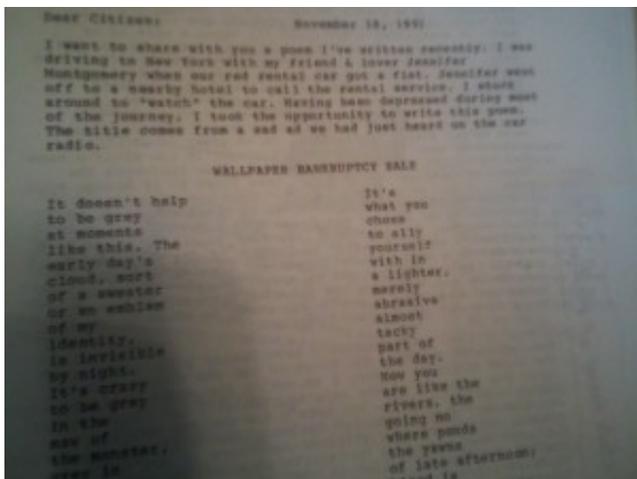
The gathering of Myles-related letters, notes, fliers and clippings in the folder felt entirely appropriate both the LHA and to Eileen Myles herself—her poetry and her way of being in the world. Casual, funny, covertly challenging of “normal” social formalities. As I leafed through about a dozen mailed postcard notices for readings, addressed to Joan Nestle and bearing 19-cent stamps, an awesome sense of *intimacy* opened up. This felt like an archive that could only exist between friends, between living people who knew each other—one whose work is gathered, one who is doing the gathering—as opposed to a preservation of documents and artifacts from the past.



I was also fascinated by the sudden immediacy of the *material* nature of literary communities as they existed “back then” (in the 80s and 90s, in this case). A poet like Myles would have to send out Xeroxed postcards to people if she was having a reading, or releasing a new book; she would have to make posters to put up in bookstores. It struck me as odd that I had literally never considered the simple material and location-based ways in which literary events were promoted—and literary communities built—before the digital age. In that way, looking at these pieces of paper did feel like making contact with the past.



The majority of the Myles file was devoted to Myles’ 1992 write-in presidential campaign, which I had always known about (she includes it in her brief bio) but never knew the details of. In the chapter on Myles in Maggie Nelson’s *Women, the New York School, and Other True Abstractions*, Myles is quoted as saying that she talked about the campaign everywhere she went as it was happening, but she did not describe the writing and material-based elements of it. I was delighted to discover that the campaign, which Myles first announced in 1991, was a real grassroots campaign, complete with weekly Xeroxed letters to her constituency, posters, buttons, brochures, and information about rallies to support Myles’ candidacy. The letters include prose paragraphs and poems, and were wonderful to read: details about Myles’ childhood in Boston, her views on housing issues and homelessness, her claim that as a marginalized and poor person, she represents “the average American” more accurately than Bill Clinton or George Bush. It was wild to encounter a *poet’s* presidential campaign materials. To me, they are documents of a singularly unique literary project, almost a piece of performance art: joking but serious, propagandizing but also entirely liberating.



Before leaving, I decided to take a quick look at the “Regional” archives, a collection of sundry lesbiana organized by states within the US and by country. I took out the file for Arizona, where I used to live. The American Southwest, in my experience, is a site of both vehement homophobia AND radical queer countercultures (and everything in between); I was curious what kind of documentation of lesbian culture I



would find in this file. There were things like brochures for women's circles in Tucson, newspapers about AIDS activism, posters for the first Gay Pride March in Phoenix. But what really blew my mind were the numerous newsletters and print ephemera about the lesbian rodeo scene in Arizona in the 80s and 90s. I had never imagined that lesbian rodeo riders existed, let alone a whole subculture devoted to promoting them and the culture (bars, dances, concerts, gatherings) surrounding them. Reading about these riders, their occupation of a historically very patriarchal space, resonated beautifully with the uncannily performative aspects of Myles' presidential campaign. I ended up looking at that stuff until the LHA had to close for the day.



These encounters with the material traces of lesbian literary and social histories were tremendously eye-opening to me. I am looking forward to returning to the LHA, perhaps with the sole intention of sorting through those VHS tapes.



## Martineau and Gaskell at the Morgan Library

By: Elissa Myers

This semester I have been helping Caroline Reitz with a project on female contributors to a periodical Dickens edited called *Household Words*. Caroline has encouraged me to follow my own interests in the work I do for her, so I have focused to a large extent on Harriet Martineau, whom I am interested in partially from a disability studies standpoint, and partially because she was just a tremendously sassy, eccentric woman who even had the guts to get into quite a public argument with Dickens in the periodical press. In looking at the letters at the Morgan Library, I was pursuing a path already taken by Iain Crawford, one of the foremost scholars on Dickens, who recently wrote an article on the two previously unpublished letters I looked at, in which he argues that the way in which many scholars focus on the argument between Dickens and Martineau obscures the fact that up until that time, they had had a very productive working relationship and a sincere friendship. As Crawford doesn't publish these letters in full in his article, I wanted to see them for myself, to ascertain whether or not I agree with him. Both letters did seem to me to be open and friendly, exactly as Crawford represented them.

I had also ordered a few letters written by Elizabeth Gaskell, another contributor to the magazine whose relationship with Dickens was complicated, to Martineau. Because the file on Elizabeth Gaskell was not terribly well-organized, they brought me the whole thing and let me look through it to find what I wanted. The letters extended my sense of the relative amity between Dickens and Martineau, as Gaskell's mention of receiving "a very liberal proposal" from Dickens to write for *All the Year Round* suggests that there were no hard feelings between Martineau and Dickens at that time. In a private letter, Gaskell would have had no reason to sugarcoat the feeling of dislike toward Dickens that she and Martineau allegedly shared. However, her mention of him is perfectly cordial, asserting his liberality, and citing the only reason she did not want to work for him to be her dislike of writing in weekly installments.

On my way to finding the two letters, however, I stumbled across something even more interesting—a picture of Elizabeth Gaskell with a "ghost," an apparition that was created by a photographic overlay, then a new procedure. My first guess is that this picture could have something to do with Gaskell's renown as a writer of ghost stories. I have not been able to find it in a google image search, or any other information about it, though, so I suspect that the picture might not be generally known in the world of Victorian studies.. I am thinking of sending around a query on Victoria-list, a listserv of which I am a part to inquire. They told me I am not supposed to publish the pictures I took in any way, but I have it for show and tell in class if you guys are interested. At any rate, my trip to the archive yielded both sound progress on my task for Caroline, and exciting, unexpected surprises. Archives make me feel like Indiana Jones!