

Teaching Early Modern Women's Work with the Counterarchive

This workshop will develop pedagogical strategies for incorporating archival materials that emphasize early modern women's work in order to confront canonical narratives about the literary tradition and history of science. To that end, we will brainstorm syllabi, activities, and assignments with the goal of curating and using a counterarchive to complicate these narratives with our undergraduate students. Participants in the workshop will share an activity, assignment, website, text, or object that they have taught or would like to teach for discussion, and are invited to upload their materials to a [Google Drive folder](#) prior to the meeting; during the workshop, we will collaborate to compile resources that encourage our students' agency as learners and participants in creating knowledge about women's roles in the early modern period.

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Workshop Description

This workshop will develop pedagogical strategies for teaching early modern women's work, preserved in various digital and physical archives, as evidence of their literary and scientific interventions. To that end, we will brainstorm syllabi, activities, and assignments with the goal of curating a counterarchive that pushes against the constraints of the canonical narratives framing the literary tradition and the history of science. By creating a counterarchive to use with students, we follow Natasha Korda's call to turn to archival materials hitherto dismissed by critics as essential avenues for feminist inquiry. These materials can be incorporated into the undergraduate classroom to complicate the value assigned to genres that are

often gendered. Therefore, we will explore how texts like prefatory materials, letters, life writing, receipts, conduct manuals, or account books can expand discussions of early modern science and literature, and how our students' projects can contribute to an ongoing project to cultivate a counterarchive.

As a group, we will emphasize our roles as instructors who make choices about how our course design represents early modern women as a result of the texts included on the syllabus and the assignments and classroom activities. Participants in the workshop will upload a classroom activity, end-of-term assignment, text, manuscript, or object that they have taught or would like to teach to a shared Google Drive folder prior to the meeting. We will discuss the how the pedagogical materials integrated into the counterarchive 1) facilitate collaboration between educators and 2) empower students to be co-collaborators in the study of early modern women's literary and material history. Our goal is to consider the digital resources available to instructors in terms of the power we and our students have to bring women's experiences to the public's attention through literary and historical research. Then, we will examine how educators can edit and adapt materials shared in the counterarchive and record their experiences to facilitate future course designs for undergraduate students.

Together we will compile resources that invite our students' agency as learners and researchers. Prior to the workshop, participants will read an excerpt from Natasha Korda's "Shakespeare's Laundry" and review examples of counterarchive texts and lesson plans. They will then come to the workshop with an idea, text, or potential resource, which they are invited to upload in a shared Google Drive folder prior to the conference. The workshop organizers will present their examples of counterarchive materials and assignments (15 minutes). We will then ask participants to gloss their contribution, and how their materials have been--or could be--incorporated in literature, language, or history classrooms (20-30 minutes). In the remaining time, the group will discuss specific strategies for how this interdisciplinary approach can be adapted to their classrooms, and will collaborate to design lessons or activities that will bring women's work to the fore of literary and historical discussions. If time permits, we will do one of the proposed assignments and imagine its usefulness in the classroom (45 minutes). To conclude our workshop, the co-organizers will identify the major concerns of the discussion, and briefly summarize some of the strategies and potential approaches for developing and teaching a counterarchive in the undergraduate classroom, and will make the notes from our discussion available to participants (5 minutes).

Key Questions

- What archival materials can be incorporated in the undergraduate classroom to make women's literacies visible and integral to the study of early modern history and literature? What are some strategies for incorporating these materials in assignment designs, lesson plans, or syllabi?
- How can we work within course requirements to incorporate texts and assignments in the syllabus and activities into lesson plans to emphasize the necessity of a counterarchive?

- How might student projects contribute to curating a counterarchive? What are strategies for navigating constraints of the undergraduate classroom and/or technology accessibility?
- Who participates in the dissemination of the counterarchive? How can we make a “living” resource where fellow instructors can adopt, adapt, and upload documents?
- What are the possibilities from turning to digital archives to recover materials that feature conversation and interaction between male and female authors?
- How can our classrooms shape public history? What are the possibilities for incorporating student work in public-facing spaces, and how might the curation of a counterarchive lend itself to public humanities initiatives? How can digital curation or rare books exhibitions be avenues for public outreach?

Reading:

Korda, Natasha. “Shakespeare’s Laundry: Feminist Futures in the Archive.” *Rethinking Feminism in early modern studies: gender, race, and sexuality*. Edited by Ania Loomba and Melissa E. Sanchez. New York: Routledge, 2016.

We ask that participants read Korda’s chapter for a working definition of a counterarchive (19 pages), but the primary preparation will be to bring a lesson plan, archival object, digital resource, syllabus, or themed course for discussion. Workshop attendees are invited to view examples and to upload their contribution to a shared Google drive folder (<http://bit.ly/2jWWxDm>) prior to the conference.

Suggested readings and resources:

Example assignment ideas, available here: <http://bit.ly/2jWWxDm>.

Chapter 5

Shakespeare's Laundry: Feminist Futures in the Archive

Natasha Korda

[W]e know that the discovery of Shakespeare's laundry bills would not be of much use to us; but we must always reserve final judgment as to the futility of the research which has discovered them, in the possibility that some genius will appear who will know of a use to which to put them.

T. S. Eliot, "The Function of Criticism" (1923)¹

I have not discovered Shakespeare's laundry bills, but am intrigued by the attention they have received in Shakespeare scholarship for well over a century. A commonplace of nineteenth-century literary criticism, historiography, and biography, the "washing-bills of great men," was first used in relation to Shakespeare by Sir Leslie Stephen, founding editor of the *Dictionary of National Biography*, when in 1877 he complained of scholars "gaping for every scrap of knowledge about the petty details" of great men's lives, including even their "washing-bills," and reserved particular scorn for those who would search out "similar information about Shakespeare."² In the view of Stephen and his contemporaries, the desire to "know all about his [Shakespeare's] washing-bills" marked a critical turn "downward towards trifle," rather than "upwards to the ideal," a reduction of the sublimely poetic to the ridiculously prosaic.³ By the early twentieth century, the trope had become

Special thanks are due to Pamela Allen Brown, Julie Crawford, Mario di Gangi, Matthew Garrett, Will Fisher, Ania Loomba, Bella Mirabella, Melissa Sanchez, Nancy Sellek, and Henry Turner for providing helpful comments on an earlier version of this essay.

1 In *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, ed. Frank Kermode (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975), 68–76; 75.

2 "Heroes and Valets," *Cornhill Magazine* 35, no. 205 (January–June, 1877), 49–51. F. W. Bateson discusses the trope as a "reductio ad absurdum of external evidence pursued for its own sake" in "Shakespeare's Laundry Bills: The Rationale of External Evidence," in *Approaches to Shakespeare*, ed. Norman Rabkin (New York, Toronto, London: McGraw-Hill, 1964), 290.

3 Thomas Sinclair, *The Mount: Speech from Its English Heights* (London: Trübner & Co., 1878), 5–6. In 1889, William Barry complained of critics who "transmute the finest inspiration [of poetry] to prose" by "smother[ing] the immortal [poet] in his . . . washing-bills" in "The Keepers of Literature," *The Living Age*, 7th series, vol. 5 (1889): 311–21; 315. Sir Edward Hamley mocked those who "look for poetry in . . . the bard's weekly washing-bills" in *Shakespeare's Funeral and Other Papers* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1889), 128. See also Leslie Stephen, "The Browning Letters," *The National Review* 33 (1899): 401–15; 413.

sufficiently familiar that one Shakespeare critic simply referred to “the washing-bill method of research.”⁴

The ubiquity of washing-bills within the Victorian cultural imaginary should hardly surprise us, given its occurrence during the “heyday” of the newly industrialized laundry trade.⁵ The gender of the workforce that comprised this trade, however, which was at the time 99 percent female,⁶ might prompt us to ponder the stakes of casting archival research as feminized drudgery. The recurrence of the laundry trope is of more than merely antiquarian interest, for it concerns the construction of the “merely antiquarian” itself as a gendered category against which modern Shakespeare scholarship was and continues to be defined: references to laundry have recently resurfaced in several important critiques of what is variously termed the “new antiquarianism,” the “new new historicism,” or the “new materialism.” Marjorie Garber thus titles an essay criticizing the “historical correctness” characteristic of some scholarship in this vein “Shakespeare’s Laundry List.”⁷ Jonathan Gil Harris, in a critique focused on the anthology *Renaissance Culture and the Everyday* (1999), mentions buck baskets (and other products of female labor analyzed in the collection) as symptomatic of its “positivist underbelly”:

For many of the current crop of new new historians, the early modern object, even when most alien or unfamiliar, seems to provide reassuringly safe ground upon which to acquire a more or less unmediated access to the real. Buck baskets, embroidered books of psalms, and tortured pigs destined for the dining table thus become signifiers of a new plenitude, of the world of Renaissance material culture.⁸

The new antiquarianism is from this perspective anything but new; rather, it is a positivist throwback to a pretheoretical past defined by archival rummaging through the laundry

⁴ Anon., “Shakespeare’s Personality,” *The Academy and Literature* 79 (October 15, 1910): 367–68; 367.

⁵ The number of laundry workers had risen to a high of over 200,000. Patricia E. Malcolmson, “Laundresses and the Laundry Trade in Victorian England,” *Victorian Studies* 24, no. 4 (1981): 439–62; 441.

⁶ L. Wyatt Papworth and Dorothy M. Zimmern, *The Occupations of Women: According to the Census for England and Wales, 1911* (London: Women’s Industrial Council, 1914), Table 5, 23; see also 440.

⁷ See Marjorie Garber, “Shakespeare’s Laundry List,” in Garber, *Profiling Shakespeare* (New York and London: Routledge, 2008), 195–213; originally published under the title “Historical Correctness” in Garber, *Quotation Marks* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

⁸ Jonathan Gil Harris, “The New New Historicism’s *Wunderkammer* of Objects,” *European Journal of English Studies* 4, no. 2 (2000): 111–23; 114; see also Harris, *Untimely Matter in the Time of Shakespeare* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 1. Harris’s critique reworks a passage found in the introduction to our coedited collection of essays, where we argue that *Renaissance Culture and the Everyday* “takes as its starting point de Certeau’s dictum that everyday practices and their objects transform rather than simply reproduce social structures and cultural systems. Through detailed descriptions of objects such as buck-baskets and embroidered psalmbooks, the volume’s essays seek to show that early modern materials are not simply static things, but points of intersection for myriad relations of property and power.” Jonathan Gil Harris and Natasha Korda, “Introduction: Towards a Materialist Account of Stage Properties,” in *Staged Properties in Early Modern English Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 16.

baskets of history in search of arcane facts and trivial artifacts. This critique begs the question of what we are to make of the feminist framework within which much of the scholarship being described as newly or “merely” antiquarian is being done. The abovementioned essays in *Renaissance Culture and the Everyday*, for example, are centrally concerned with the “everyday making of women,” focusing on the “gender and status specificity of buck-washing and other laundry work” (Helgerson), “the everyday occupation of needlework” and its role in “gender construction, patriarchy, and domestic ideology” (Orlin), and the extent to which “the everyday tends to place upfront particular kinds of subjects: the common person, the marginalized, women,” and as such, is “indebted to feminists” (Fumerton).⁹

In this essay, I want to suggest that feminist scholars’ enduring attachments to hands-on work with archival materials should neither be construed as a “backlash” against theory,¹⁰ nor as “redolent of the logic of fetishism”¹¹ (or even worse, as “tchotchke criticism”¹²), but that to grasp the theoretical stakes of such scholarship, we must reconceive our archive of theory to make room for its descriptive richness and affective as well as political investments. I do so in the interest of elaborating how the attentiveness of such work to the minute details, textures, and contingencies of the archive may inform as much as they are informed by the totalizing truths of theory, including feminist theories of “anachronism” (Garber) and the “untimely” (Harris).¹³ At stake in this inquiry is what Derrida terms the “promise” of the archive (why we archive, what counts as an “archive,” what we do with archives, and the future of archives),¹⁴ as well as the promise of theory (why we theorize, what counts as “theory,” what we do with theory, and the future of theory), and how we conceive of the relationship between the archive and theory. As the phrase “archive of theory” suggests, this relationship need not be construed as antithetical, or as a fight for precedence or prestige: theory need not be positioned as ante- or antiarchival,

⁹ See Richard Helgerson, “The Buck Basket, the Witch, and the Queen of the Fairies: The Women’s World of Shakespeare’s Windsor”; Lena Cowen Orlin, “Three Ways to be Invisible in the Renaissance: Sex, Reputation, and Stitchery”; and Patricia Fumerton, “Introduction: A New New Historicism” in *Renaissance Culture and the Everyday*, ed. Fumerton and Simon Hunt (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 170, 184, 199, 5. See also the volume’s essays on domestic violence, sex work, and feminist historiography by Frances E. Dolan, Ann Jensen Adams, and Stephanie H. Jed, respectively.

¹⁰ Harris, “The New New Historicism’s *Wunderkammer* of Objects,” 114; see also Harris, *Untimely Matter*, 19.

¹¹ Harris, “The New New Historicism’s *Wunderkammer* of Objects,” 115.

¹² “To the extent that it succumbs to what Harris calls the ‘allure’ of its objects without justifying its focus on them (by means, for example, of a more comprehensive theory both of objects and object-criticism), the new materialism runs the risk of being seen as tchotchke criticism, its anthologies the belated J. Crew catalogues of the early modern era.” Douglas Bruster, “The New Materialism in Early Modern Studies,” in *Shakespeare and the Question of Culture: Early Modern Literature and the Cultural Turn* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 191–205; 203.

¹³ Garber, “Shakespeare’s Laundry List,” 205–7; Harris, *Untimely Matter*, 148–68.

¹⁴ The project of reconceptualizing the archive is not simply a question of how we conserve the past, Derrida argues, but of how we constitute the future; indeed, it is perhaps the “question of the future itself, the question of a response, of a promise and of a responsibility for tomorrow.” Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 36.

any more than archives must be construed as pre- or antitheoretical.¹⁵ For to do so is to ignore the constitutive role that ephemeral archives and everyday artifacts (even laundry!) have played in feminist (as well as queer and subaltern) theoretical paradigms. Indeed, as we shall see, the “washing-bill method of research” from its very inception inspired an important feminist counterdiscourse which opposed early (male) positivists’ use of the washing-bill trope to stigmatize women’s work in counterarchives. By taking this counterdiscourse into account and including it in our archive of theory, I argue, we may better understand the future potential of the “washing-bill method of research” for feminist scholarship, and respond to Eliot’s provocation by imagining what we might do with Shakespeare’s laundry.

The “Washing-Bill Method of Research”

Once upon a time washing bills and memorandum books were below the “dignity of history.”
Now we esteem them far above acts of parliament or diplomatic memoranda.

H. G. Wells, *The Shape of Things to Come* (1933)¹⁶

The “once upon a time” to which Wells’s historian of the future refers is roughly the middle of the nineteenth century, when allusions to the “washing bills of great men” began to appear with surprising and increasing frequency as shorthand for archival evidence deemed beneath the “dignity of history.”¹⁷ According to positivist historian Frederic Harrison (1831–1923), author of *The Meaning of History* (1862) and *The New Calendar of Great Men* (1892), the modern Historian distinguished himself from the “mere antiquary” by concerning himself not with the “flotsam and jetsam” of local history or the “interminable trivialities” of the domestic sphere—which only served to “degrade History”—but rather with the “great deeds” of “Man in the Past.”¹⁸ Harrison deployed the laundry-bill trope repeatedly in his effort to differentiate modern History from its antiquarian past and to define the disciplinary

15 As Curtis Perry argues, “returning to the material traces” of the past “can offer ways to challenge and refresh our received wisdom and our theoretical assumptions,” just as theory can challenge our concepts of what constitutes an archive or artifact. Curtis Perry, “Introduction,” *Material Culture and Cultural Materialisms*, Arizona Studies in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance 5 (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2001), x. See also James A. Knapp and Jeffrey Pence, “Between Thing and Theory,” *Poetics Today* 24, no. 4 (2003): 641–71.

16 H. G. Wells, *The Shape of Things to Come: The Ultimate Revolution*, ed. Patrick Parrinder (London: Penguin, 2011), 382.

17 A typical example is found in *The Critic* of 1850, where an anonymous critic opines: “It has long been cause of complaint that our organs of veneration are called upon to be influenced by the I.O.U.’s and washing-bills of great men.” Anonymous, “Exhibition of Modern British Art at the Old Water Colour Gallery,” *The Critic: The London Literary Journal* 9 (1850): 576. See also “On a Joke Once Heard from the Late Thomas Hood,” in *Roundabout Papers* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1863), 117; and “Hero-Worship In Extremis,” *Every Saturday: A Journal of Choice Reading* 1, no. 2 (January 13, 1866): 40.

18 Frederic Harrison, *Historical Method of Professor Freeman* (London: Macmillan, 1898), 14, 17, 26.

path of its scientific future. In his view, the empirical methods of the social sciences, with their valorization of primary sources and quantitative methods, represented History's best hope and greatest threat, for in opening the field to ever wider and more diverse forms of evidence, they threatened to dilute its proper focus by inundating its great men in "heap[s] of dirty linen."¹⁹ For the Historian to occupy himself with "washing-bills," he warned, was like a scientist applying an "oxyhydrogen microscope . . . to the pimples on his chin or the warts on his thumb."²⁰ In doing so, he threatened to "unman" both himself and his discipline.²¹

Harrison's intervention came in response to studies such as Hubert Hall's *Society in the Elizabethan Age* (1886), which included extensive appendices of primary documents, including inventories, rent-rolls, and records of household expenditures such as washing-bills.²² Although Harrison conceded that "all manuscript authorities of the smallest value should be accurately deciphered, copied, and edited," such archival drudgery was in his view "quite distinct from the work of the historian proper" and better left to "[r]aw girls," who might "devote years of their lives to deciphering the washing accounts of a medieval convent."²³ Female scholars working in archives were thus cast as the antiquarian "handmaidens" of modern History, who provided the "raw" materials used by male Historians to construct their monuments to great men.²⁴

The gendered division of scholarly labor Harrison here describes emerged with the professionalization of History as an academic discipline, as female scholars who were unable to obtain university posts became librarians, research assistants, archivists, and editors.²⁵ Scholars such as Mary Bateson (1865–1906) and Lucy Toulmin Smith (1838–1911) transcribed, edited, and annotated massive, multivolume tomes of medieval and early modern manuscripts, thereby making "the archive" available to a far wider readership.²⁶ Although many of these women worked within traditional historiographical paradigms,

19 Harrison, *Historical Method of Professor Freeman*, 18; see also 14, 16.

20 Frederic Harrison, "Froude's Life of Carlyle," *The North American Review* 140:338 (1885): 9–21; 10–11.

21 Harrison, "Froude's Life of Carlyle," 12.

22 One of Hall's appendices includes the shirts, handkerchiefs, nightkerchiefs, socks, and collars found in the Darrell family's laundry basket. Hubert Hall, *Society in the Elizabethan Age*, 3rd ed. (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1888 [1886]), Appendix II: The Darrell Papers, 209.

23 Hall, *Society in the Elizabethan Age*, 12–13.

24 Philippa Levine, *The Amateur and the Professional: Antiquarians, Historians and Archaeologists in Victorian England, 1838–1886* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 29.

25 Bonnie G. Smith, "Women's History: A Retrospective from the United States," *Signs* 35, no. 3 (2010): 723–47, 726.

26 E.g. Mary Bateson, ed. *A Collection of Original Letters from the Bishops to the Privy Council, 1564, with Returns of the Justices of the Peace and Others within Their Respective Dioceses, Classified According to Their Religious Convictions* (Westminster: Camden Society, 1893), *Records of the Borough of Leicester*, 3 vols. (London: C. J. Clay, 1899–1905), *Borough Customs*, 2 vols. (London: B. Quaritch, 1904–1906); Lucy Toulmin Smith et al., ed. *English Gilds: The Original Ordinances of More Than One Hundred Early English Gilds* (London: Early English Text Society, 1870), *The Itinerary of John Leland in or about the Years 1535–1543*, 5 vols. (London: G. Bell, 1907–1910). Toulmin also edited *The York Plays* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1885), and *The Shakspere Allusion-Book* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1909). On the ghettoization of nineteenth-century women historians, see Bonnie G. Smith, "The Contribution of Women to Modern Historiography in Great

focusing on state papers and political institutions, others began to interrogate what was excluded by such archives and disciplinary methods, and to produce pioneering studies of women's social, cultural, and economic history. Departing from earlier efforts in the field of women's history, which emulated the "great men" model by chronicling the public lives of exceptional "women worthies," they documented the everyday lives of ordinary women, putting their archival training to work on unconventional sources.²⁷ Influenced by the emergence of first wave feminism in the 1870s, this first generation of feminist historiographers were particularly interested in the everyday material conditions that differentially shaped women's lives.²⁸

Exemplary in this regard was Lucy Maynard Salmon (1853–1927), founder of the History Department at Vassar College in 1887, who drew on a wide range of ephemeral sources to document her groundbreaking histories of everyday life and to inform her rethinking of what constitutes an "archive." She was especially fond of laundry lists, arguing that they are "closely and continuously connected with everyday life," and therefore reflect "custom and change in social conditions, industry, [and] in language, with a detail and rapidity with which other sources seldom do" (see Figure 5.1). Like other proponents of what was then called the "New History," Salmon insisted on the "significance of the small . . . and the obscure," including "common men and common things," while broadening her focus to encompass "common things" that shaped the lives of ordinary working women.²⁹ Her feminist appropriation of the "washing-bill method of research" revealed how the micro illuminates the macro, how a "humble laundry list" might shed light on labor patterns, the distribution of wealth, technological change, shifting norms of hygiene, and so forth.³⁰ To working women like Salmon, the material processes of laundering—its gendered division of labor, location inside or outside the home, transformation by labor- and time-saving technologies—were neither inconsequential nor beneath the "dignity of history." In seeking to remove the stigma attached to laundry and other unorthodox forms of evidence relating to ordinary women's everyday lives in the past, she aimed not only to legitimate them as proper objects of intellectual inquiry, but to advocate for social change in the present. Her groundbreaking 1897 study of domestic service as a "labor question" thus analyzed the gendered division of labor and undervaluation of women's work as a means to advance

Britain, France, and the United States, 1750–1940," *American Historical Review* 89, no. 3 (1984): 708–32, esp. 723.

27 For an account of this shift, see Smith, "The Contribution of Women," 718–20, and Smith, "Women's History." On the historiography of "women worthies," see Natalie Zemon Davis, "Gender and Genre: Women as Historical Writers, 1400–1820," in Patricia Labalme, ed. *Beyond Their Sex: Learned Women of the European Past* (New York: New York University Press, 1980), 153–82.

28 See Billie Melman, "Gender, History and Memory: The Invention of Women's Past in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries," *History and Memory* 5, no. 1 (1993): 5–41, esp. 23–24; see also Maxine Berg, "The First Women Economic Historians," *Economic History Review* 45, no. 2 (1992): 308–29.

29 James Harvey Robinson, *The New History: Essays Illustrating the Modern Historical Outlook* (New York: Macmillan, 1912), 48, 132.

30 The appearance of the "shirt waist, stock[ings], and the separate dress skirt" in laundry lists, for example, reflected "the entrance of women into business life." Lucy Maynard Salmon, *Historical Material* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1933), 89.

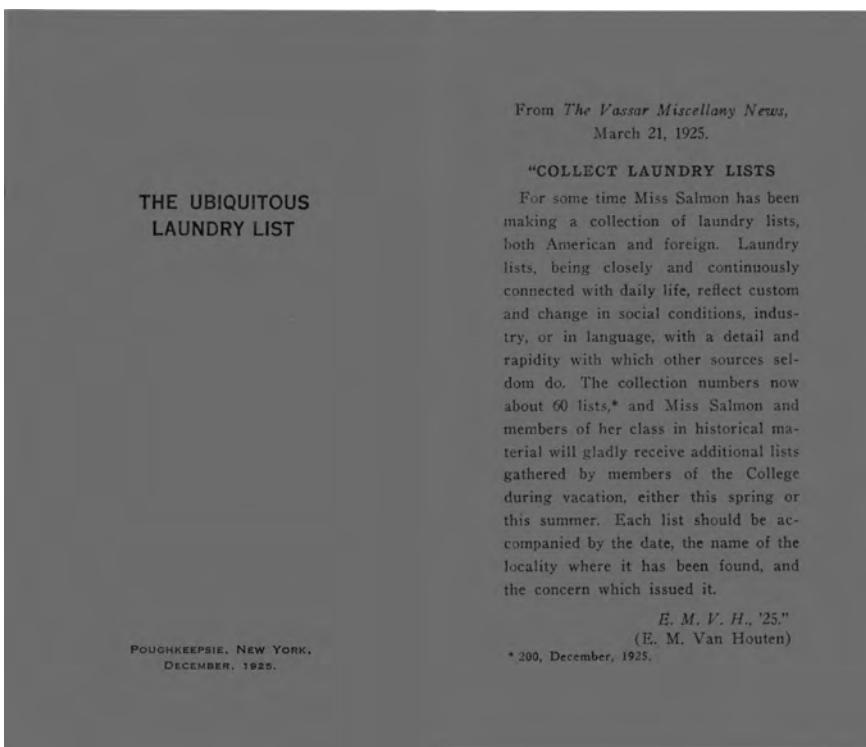


Figure 5.1 Lucy Maynard Salmon, “The Ubiquitous Laundry List,” 1925. Salmon Papers, 54.1. Courtesy Archives and Special Collections Library, Vassar College

single women’s independence, equal pay for equal work, female production networks, and unconventional domestic arrangements.³¹

Salmon therefore encouraged feminist scholars to create heterodox, counterarchives of their own, arising from the pressing political concerns manifested in their daily lives, and thereby to shape the future contours of the archived past.³² In this regard, her work

³¹ See Lucy Maynard Salmon, *Domestic Service*, 2nd ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1901 [1897]), 212, 260, 269, which paved the way for such later and better-known studies of female labor as Alice Clark’s *Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Routledge, 1919), and Ivy Pinchbeck’s *Women Workers and the Industrial Revolution, 1750–1850* (London: Routledge, 1930). Salmon modeled such alternatives in her own domestic life with Vassar librarian Adelaide Underhill, with whom she set up housekeeping in 1901 and maintained a lifetime romantic partnership. Nicholas Adams and Bonnie G. Smith, “Introduction,” in Lucy Maynard Salmon, *History and the Texture of Modern Life: Selected Essays*, ed. Nicholas Adams and Bonnie G. Smith (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 9.

³² Adams and Smith, “Introduction,” 14.

was profoundly *anti-antiquarian*, and “untimely” in precisely the ways Harris endorses, “produc[ing] the possibility of a new future even as it evokes the past.”³³ Her use of seemingly trivial sources helped to redefine what constitutes an “archive” by incorporating ephemera (such as newspapers, check books, laundry lists) and everyday artifacts (such as “the family Christmas tree,” the “garbage can,” and the “laundry line and pulley”) in ways that anticipate the current “material turn” in the social sciences and humanities, and from which contemporary feminist scholarship might draw inspiration.³⁴

In resisting rigid distinctions between History and Literature (endorsed by practitioners of the “New History”),³⁵ Salmon was inspired less by her discipline’s belletristic past than by its avant-garde present, and the generic and stylistic experiments of early women writers of historical fiction, including those of Leslie Stephen’s own daughter, Virginia Woolf, who throughout her life defied the dictates of Victorian historiography and biography epitomized by her father.³⁶ Like Salmon, Woolf challenged the notion that “the lives of great men only should be recorded,” arguing that “the humble as well as the illustrious” are part of history, and that what is deemed small and great are matters of perspective.³⁷ She praised the efforts of feminist scholars to illuminate the “unlit corridors of history” by incorporating the “lives of the obscure,” including those of women and “queer people living out-of-the-way lives,”³⁸ and sought to awaken feminist consciousness of the poetic and imaginative potential of archives and archiving, suggesting that they could “produce something of the intensity of poetry, something of the excitement of drama, and yet keep also the peculiar virtue that belongs to fact—its suggestive reality, its own proper creativeness.” What is needed, she maintained, is “much more than another [antiquarian] fact to add to our collection,” but rather “the creative fact; the fertile fact; the fact that suggests and engenders.”³⁹ Woolf’s early experiment in historiographical fiction, “The Journal of Mistress Joan Martyn” (1906), thus narrates the creative awakening of an unmarried female antiquarian who has spent her life cataloguing “fragments of yellow parchment, which only a few people can read and still fewer would care to read if they could,” but who, through the discovery of the

33 Harris, *Untimely Matter*, 11.

34 That this future may lie in counterarchives is suggested by Salmon’s own work, which is only fully accessible through her archives at Vassar College: most of her heterodox scholarship remained unpublished during her lifetime (much remains unpublished today), and her full contribution can only be understood by considering the counterarchives she compiled, including her archive of laundry lists. See Smith, “The Contributions of Women to Modern Historiography,” 725–26; Claire Bond Potter, “Ahead of Her Time,” *Women’s Review of Books* 19, no. 2 (2001): 21–22; and Anthony Grafton, “History’s Postmodern Fates,” *Daedalus* 135, no. 2 (2006): 54–69, 61.

35 See Robinson, *The New History*, 51–2, 55, 69.

36 See Adams and Smith, “Introduction,” 19–20; Smith, “The Contribution of Women to Modern Historiography,” 720. Woolf described herself and her sister, painter Vanessa Bell, as “explorers, revolutionists, reformers,” while describing her father as “a typical Victorian.” Woolf, *Moments of Being: Unpublished Autobiographical Writings*, ed. Jeanne Schulkind (Sussex: Sussex University Press, 1976), 126.

37 Virginia Woolf, “The Art of Biography” (1939), in *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*, ed. A. McNeillie, 6 vols. (London: Hogarth, 1986–1988), 6:186.

38 “The American Woman” (1905) and “Women and Fiction” (1929) in *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*, ed. A. McNeillie, 1:47 and 5:28.

39 Woolf, “The Art of Biography,” 6:184, 187.

diary of a medieval spinster (described as a “Queer old lady” who wrote “queer things”), comes to recognize the “large substantial things” that may be accessed through queer, “out-of-the-way” archives.⁴⁰

Woolf’s revaluation of the “trivialities” of history would later lead her to appropriate the trope of “Shakespeare’s laundry bills” invented by her father in her own daring, gender- and genre-bending experiment, *Orlando: A Biography* (1928). Orlando is delighted to discover that Shakespeare’s “poetry was scribbled down on the backs of washing-bills held to the heads of printer’s devils [i.e., apprentices] at the street door. Thus Hamlet went to press; thus Lear; thus Othello.”⁴¹ The Shakespearean text-as-process is here inseparable from the material processes recorded in washing-bills: the playhouse and printing-house belong to a commercial network that includes the laundry-house. In *A Room of One’s Own* (1929), Woolf went on to develop a countervailing intellectual paradigm for the study of gender and material culture with reference to Shakespeare, insisting that his plays were inextricably intertwined with the material conditions and gendered constraints in which they were produced. Literary texts, she famously argued, “are not spun in mid-air by incorporeal creatures,” but “are attached to grossly material things.”⁴² She encouraged scholars to search in “parish registers and account books” for remnants—including washing-bills—of the material conditions that led to Shakespeare’s flourishing and to the silencing of his sisters.⁴³ Later the same year she went still further, urging, “Anyone who should seek among those old papers, who should turn history wrong side out and so construct a faithful picture of the daily life of the ordinary woman in Shakespeare’s time, . . . would not only write a book of astonishing interest, but would furnish the critic with a weapon which [s]he now lacks.”⁴⁴

Shakespeare’s Laundry

Bottom: In any case, let Thisby have clean linen . . .

A Midsummer Night’s Dream (4.2.40)⁴⁵

Falstaff: [T]hey’ll find linen enough on every hedge . . .

Henry IV, part 1 (4.2.48)

Ophelia: White his shroud as the mountain snow . . .

Hamlet (4.5.36)

Autolycus: The white sheet bleaching on the hedge . . .

The Winter’s Tale (4.3.5)

40 “The Journal of Mistress Joan Martyn,” in *The Complete Short Fiction of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Susan Dick (London: Hogarth, 1985), 33–62; 33, 41, 44, 45.

41 Virginia Woolf, *Orlando: A Biography* (London: Hogarth, 1990), 54.

42 Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*, ed. Susan Gubar (New York: Harcourt, 2005 [1929]), 41–2.

43 Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*, 45.

44 Woolf, “Women and Fiction,” 5:29. The archive of “old papers” and ephemera Woolf compiled for her own uncompleted history of women’s contributions to literature was recently donated to the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Duke University by activist-collector Lisa Unger Baskin.

45 William Shakespeare, *The Riverside Shakespeare*, 2nd ed. (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1997). All further references to Shakespeare are to this edition.

If early modern literary texts were “not spun in mid-air by incorporeal creatures,” neither were linen textiles: every aspect of their production and maintenance was touched by female hands. It is thus not surprising that scholars of women’s social, economic, and cultural history have taken a special interest in textile culture, and linen in particular.⁴⁶ Laundered linens were ubiquitous in Shakespeare’s work and world: they appear in every dramatic genre in which he wrote, as noted above, and were as visible onstage as they were in the culture at large, where they could be found bleaching on “every hedge.” Yet from its very inception, Shakespeare criticism has deemed such “trifles” beneath the dignity of criticism, and the poet’s own attention to them unseemly—much ado about nothing. Thus, Thomas Rymer, in his *Short View of Tragedy* (1693) famously opined of *Othello*: “So much ado, so much stress, so much passion and repetition about an Handkerchief! Why was not this call’d the *Tragedy of the Handkerchief?* . . . Yet we find, it entered into our Poet’s head, to make a Tragedy of this Trifle.”⁴⁷ The critical stigma attached to Shakespeare’s laundry thus long predates the nineteenth-century “washing-bill” trope, and is therefore only partially attributable to it. The elevation of the page over the stage within a strand of criticism that gained ascendancy during the eighteenth century, but whose terms were already established by Ben Jonson’s quarrel with Inigo Jones, laid the ideological groundwork for the anathema of laundry in Shakespeare’s own lifetime. For if laundry has a “tittle” of theatrical significance, it seems pertinent to the sweaty body of the actor, the sordid business of playing, and the fripperies of stage-spectacle.⁴⁸

In Jonson’s view, these material trappings belonged to the transiently sensuous, effeminate (and overvalued) “body” of theater, as opposed to its enduringly intellectual, masculine (and invaluable) poetic “soul.”⁴⁹ Within this familiar—and still arguably entrenched—hierarchy of theatrical value, the arduous exertions of production and performance are subordinated to the transcendent, intellectual labor of the dramatic poet-as-author. The “washing-bill” trope merely extends this logic to the labor of scholarship: the laborious toil of scholars who work in archives, soiling their hands with “grossly material things” is cast as women’s work and subordinated to the rarified, intellectual endeavors of modern historians or (postmodern theorists). The assumption that laundry pertains solely to the “body” rather than the “soul” of theater, however, misconstrues the very “grossly material” processes the critical tradition has

46 The laundering, bleaching, and starching of linen were almost exclusively female occupations. See Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England, 1550–1720* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), 221–25, 271–81; Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass, *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 87–172; Dympna Callaghan, “Looking Well to Linens: Women and Cultural Production in *Othello* and Shakespeare’s England,” in *Marxist Shakespeares*, ed. Jean E. Howard and Scott Cutler Shershow (New York: Routledge, 2001), 53–81; Natasha Korda, *Labors Lost: Women’s Work and the Early Modern English Stage* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).

47 Thomas Rymer, *A Short View of Tragedy; Its Original, Excellency, and Corruption. With Some Reflections on Shakespear, and Other Practitioners for the Stage* (London, 1693), 135, 145.

48 The “washing-bill” method of research,” according to one nineteenth-century critic, was comprised of those who scoured archives for every ephemeral “tittle of evidence, however minute,” including laundry lists! Anon., “Shakespeare’s Personality,” 367.

49 Stephen Orgel, ed., *Ben Jonson: The Complete Masques* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), 75. See also D. J. Gordon, “Poet and Architect: The Intellectual Setting of the Quarrel between Ben Jonson and Inigo Jones,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 12 (1949): 152–78.

eschewed, and in so doing, obfuscates the cultural poetics of laundry.⁵⁰ Indeed, as practitioners of “the washing-bill method of research” have revealed, unlike outer garments, which were refreshed by superficial brushing and spot cleaning, linen undergarments (as well as sheets and table-linens) required “deep” cleansing by soaking in water and lye, and beating with bats to drive water through the fibers and force dirt from the fabric.⁵¹ For this reason, clean linen was viewed as a sign of *inner* cleanliness and virtue. In contrast to the dissimulative status of most clothing, pristine linen undergarments purported to be self-evident signifiers of what lay within: a purity not merely of body, but of spirit. The emphasis of Protestant reformers on “cleanness of heart,” rather than “outward cleanness,” reinforced this distinction. Spiritual purification was thus frequently likened to the laundering of linens, as when Thomas Taylor speaks of “Gods laundrie, wherin his children by beating, scowring, and rubbing are made whiter and whiter.”⁵² The deep cleansing of the soul necessitated more than brushing soil off the exterior: it required the scrupulous industry and violent vigilance of the laundress scouring her linens.

Paradoxically, as linen gained importance as a signifier of spiritual as well as bodily cleanliness and virtue, linen underclothes became increasingly visible on the exterior of the body. Once concealed, they were now subject to extravagant display both onstage and off. Bands, cuffs, and ruffs, originally part of undergarments (such as shirts and smocks), developed into separate, detachable accessories, which grew ever larger. Fashionable outer garments, such as doublets and bodices, were cut and slashed to reveal the quality and purity of linen shirts and chemises worn underneath.⁵³ When displayed onstage in the commercial playhouses, clean linen visually associated the professional players and their playing spaces with both moral virtue and social refinement, distancing them from the soil and toil of their vagrant past, as well as from the perceived filth and contagion of the surrounding suburban “stews” (or bathhouse-brothels). Indeed, it was fears of contagion following repeated outbreaks of plague and other epidemics like syphilis that produced the dramatic shift during the sixteenth century away from immersing the body in water to laundering linens as the preferred mode of bodily hygiene.⁵⁴

50 For a more extended discussion of the material processes and cultural poetics of laundry, see Natasha Korda and Eleanor Lowe, “‘In Praise of Clean Linen’: Laundering Humours on the Early Modern Stage,” in *Ashgate Research Companion to Material Culture in Early Modern Europe*, ed. David Gaimster, Tara Hamling, and Catherine Richardson (Farnham, UK: Ashgate Publishing Co., 2015).

51 On the care of clothes, see Janet Arnold, *Queen Elizabeth’s Wardrobe Unlock’d* (Leeds: Maney, 1988), esp. 232–4.

52 John Calvin, *A Harmonie Upon the Three Evangelists, Matthew, Mark and Luke with the Commentarie of M. John Calvine* (London, 1584), 381–2; Thomas Taylor, *Davids Learning, or The Way to True* (London, 1617), 385. See also Keith Thomas, “Cleanliness and Godliness in Early Modern England,” in *Religion, Culture and Society in Early Modern Britain: Essays in Honour of Patrick Collinson*, ed. Anthony Fletcher and Peter Roberts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 56–83.

53 C. Willet and Phillis Cunnington, *The History of Underclothes* (London: Michael Joseph, 1951), esp. 14–45.

54 See Georges Vigarello, *Concepts of Cleanliness: Changing Attitudes in France since the Middle Ages*, trans. Jean Birrell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988 [1985]); Virginia Smith, *Clean: A History of Personal Hygiene and Purity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

At stake in the staging of laundered linens was from this perspective the very “soul” of theater: the visibility of bleached and starched linens onstage worked to counter contemporary antitheatrical diatribes against players and playhouses as purveyors of physical and moral filth and contagion. John Stephens’ “Character of a Common Player” characterizes the typical actor as “profess[ing] himselfe, (being unknowne) to be an apparent Gentleman. But . . . his foule Linnen, and faire Doublet, doe (in him) bodily reveale the Broker.”⁵⁵ The actor’s “fair Doublet,” according to Stephens, conceals a filthy, lousy interior: he is only an “apparent Gentleman,” but underneath his showy costume lie “foule Linnen” undergarments purchased from a second-hand broker. Contemporary portraits of players and playwrights attired in clean linens—including the Droeshout engraving of Shakespeare in the First Folio (1623) sporting a starched linen collar—likewise worked to combat antitheatrical prejudice by asserting the virtue, civility, and rising status of the theatrical profession.

A stunning portrait believed to be of Nathan Field (dated c.1615), described in William Cartwright’s inventory as “master fields pictur in his shurt . . . an actour,”⁵⁶ depicts the actor/playwright in a linen shirt elaborately embroidered with black-work to enhance its whiteness. The portrait invites the viewer’s gaze to examine the cleanliness, beauty, and refinement of the actor’s undergarment, which together with his striking gesture—his linen-cuffed right hand is placed over his heart—visually convey his inner virtue (see Figure 5.2).⁵⁷ Like the clean linen undergarment exposed to view, the gesture presents itself as a self-evident signifier or outward manifestation of inward truth. According to John Bulwer’s taxonomy of hand-gestures:

To Lay the Hand Open to Our Heart . . . is a garb wherein we *affirm* a thing, *swear* or *call God to witnessse a truth*, and so we seem as if we would openly exhibit unto sense, the *testimony of our conscience*, or take a tacite oath, putting in security, that *no mentall reservation doth basely divorce our words and meaning, but that all is truth that we now protest unto*.⁵⁸

In Bulwer’s view, it is the “touch” or tactility of the gesture that renders it touching, and therefore “Scenicall” or apt for the emotive performance style of a stage actor: “the touch doth most availe in a sharpe and inflamed stile, when the motions of the minde are by Action unfolded,” as when one “would expresse an incredible ardour of love lodged in his bosome, and cleaving to his very marrow; or grieve deeply settled in his yearning bowells.”⁵⁹ Rather than striking the “bosome” to unleash the heart’s “ardour” or deep grief like an actor,

55 John Stephens, *Satyrical Essayes Characters and Others* (London, 1615), 295.

56 Cited in *Mr. Cartwright’s Pictures: A Seventeenth-Century Collection* (London: Dulwich Picture Gallery, 1987), 25.

57 See also Edward Alleyn’s portrait in an immaculate, lace-edged ruff and linen cuffs in the Dulwich Picture Gallery (c.1626) and John Fletcher’s in a quadruply-layered ruff and lace-edged cuffs in a portrait by an unknown artist (c. 1620, private collection). Reproduced in Tanya Cooper, *Searching for Shakespeare* (New Haven: Yale University Press, London: National Portrait Gallery Publications, 2006), 27, 49, 183.

58 J[ohn] B[ulwer], *Chiologia, or, The Naturall Language of the Hand Composed of the Speaking Motions, and Discoursing Gestures Thereof: Whereunto Is Added Chironomia, or, The Art of Manuall Rhetoricke* (London, 1644), 1:88, sig. G4v.

59 B[Bulwer], *Chiologia . . . Whereunto Is Added Chironomia*, 2:39, sig. D4r–D4v.



Figure 5.2 Portrait Called Nathan Field. Courtesy of the Trustees of Dulwich Picture Gallery, London

the civil orator is therefore instructed to “touch his Breast with his Fingers ends only,” as does the subject of the portrait, thereby signaling his own civility and gestural decorum.⁶⁰

Viewed from this vantage, the portrait illuminates the performative efficacy of “touch,” both in the archive and on the stage, to stir “deeply settled” emotion (perhaps all the more so when the toucher is also touched, as in the portrait), while reminding us that touch is never unmediated by the material world. In the portrait, the actor’s touch draws the viewer’s gaze to the pattern and texture of the linen “shurt,” and in particular, to its delicately wrought, black-work lace, tenderly caressed by “his Fingers ends only.” As they press against the worked stitches, they in turn impress his flesh (and heart beneath it) on the underside of the undergarment. The touch of his thumb and forefingers against the raised stitches, meticulously rendered by the “touches” or brushstrokes of the anonymous artist, also

60 J[ohn] B[ulwer], *Chirologia . . . Whereunto Is Added Chironomia*, 2:103, sig. H4r.

calls our attention to the craft of the anonymous sempstress who produced them. In contrast to the immaculately bleached and stiffly starched linen ruff, which elevates and frames the head, distancing it from the lower body and the domain of labor, the softness and texture of the black-work shirt, underscored by the wearer's touching gesture, exposes the artifice out of which whiteness is wrought, rather than simply functioning to reify its hegemony as a "badge" of spiritual virtue or social privilege (and increasingly, of racial purity).⁶¹

It is worth underscoring that whiteness in early modern England was not yet naturalized or dominant as an attribute of skin or complexion. Indeed, whiteness in Shakespeare's work and world was more commonly associated with the ubiquity of laundered linen, and the material processes of its making (its bleaching on every hedge). Shakespearean skin only becomes "white"—is whitened or *made* white—metaphorically: it is "white as lawn" or fine linen (LUC, 259).⁶² If the metaphorical juxtaposition of linen (or snow, or lilies) with skin served to whiten the latter, Shakespeare (like the anonymous portraitist) exposes the artifice of this whitening: "If snow be white," he maintains in Sonnet 130, then his mistress' "breasts are dun," and to suggest otherwise is to belie with "false compare" (ll.3,4). In life, laundered linen was used to cleanse and brighten the complexion by absorbing the body's excess humors; yet it is precisely because the humors were *not* white that linen's whiteness had to be continually reproduced.⁶³ In the portrait, the subject's "black" complexion (his dark eyes and hair, and melancholy demeanor), rather than simply being whitened and distanced from the humoral body by the immaculate barrier of a starched ruff, is more complexly juxtaposed with the black-on-white shirt. In touching and being touched by the textured black-work that produces its whiteness, he invites us to move beyond the critical disgust engendered by laundry to consider the varied affective responses it may have elicited on the stage and in the archive, including counterarchives created by women.

Counterarchives: A Laundry-Room of Her Own

Hamlet: Nay, but to live
 In the rank sweat of an enseamed bed
 Stewed in corruption, honeying and making love
 Over the nasty sty—

*Shakespeare, Hamlet (3.4.89–92)*⁶⁴

A nasty sty, indeed! Not that it's any of your business, but I change those sheets twice a week, which is more than you do, judging from that student slum pigpen in Wittenberg. . . .

61 On the racial politics and poetics of washing and bleaching white, see Karen Newman, "'And Wash the Ethiop White': Femininity and the Monstrous in *Othello*," in *Shakespeare Reproduced*, ed. Jean E. Howard and Marion F. O'Connor (New York and London: Methuen, 1987), 143–62; see also Kim F. Hall, *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995).

62 For a related argument on how black cloth functioned onstage as a prosthetic "supplement" to signify black skin and "to give *it* meaning," see Ian Smith, "Othello's Black Handkerchief," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 64, no. 1 (2013): 1–25; 4.

63 Only phlegm was occasionally described as "white."

64 William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor, The Arden Shakespeare (London: Thomson Learning, 2006).

I see that laundry of yours when you bring it home, and not often enough either, by a long shot!

*Margaret Atwood, "Gertrude Talks Back" (1994)*⁶⁵

The feminist rage Margaret Atwood attributes to Gertrude, enabling her to “talk back” to Hamlet, as well as to *Hamlet*, and thereby to refute the critical tradition’s disgust at and disdain for laundry, is but one of many affective responses that early modern women may have had to the linens that defined their everyday lives. Atwood’s Gertrude seems enraged not so much at laundry itself as at her scholarly son’s hypocritical stigmatizing of its gross materiality, a stigma saturated in revulsion at female sexuality and embodiment. Unlike Shakespeare’s Gertrude, who responds to his castigation with shame, internalizing his accusation that her “enseamed” (i.e., greasy) sheets are indicative of a soul deeply stained with “black and grieved [or, in the Folio, grained] spots” (3.4.88), Atwood’s Gertrude asserts agency through the labor of laundering, taking pride in its product. She schools her son by asserting that he too has a body that sullies linen and relies on the female labor of laundering (improbable as it may be that a queen would engage in such labor herself). Readers may here be reminded of Hamlet’s earlier visitation to Ophelia in his “shirt,” his “fouled” linens betraying the disorderly state of his body and spirit (2.1.76, 78). When, just after Hamlet impugns the “enseamed” sheets in which Gertrude lies with her “king of shreds and patches” (3.4.99), the ghost of Old Hamlet appears “*in his night gowne*” (according to the stage direction in Q1), the as yet unpurged “foul crimes” (1.5.33) that stain his virtue may likewise have been signaled by the shredded, patched, or otherwise befouled state of his linen nightshirt. Staged in this way, the closet scene’s airing of Gertrude’s dirty linen would suggest her culpability for the rotten state of Denmark, an imputation that Atwood’s rebuttal seeks to counter. Atwood’s imaginative appropriation of Shakespeare’s laundry thus builds on earlier feminist appropriations of the “washing-bill method of research” by exposing *Hamlet*’s dirty laundry. Not only does she make room in the theatrical archive for early modern women’s everyday lives and cultural expression, she reinvents it as a space of play.

A similar impulse has motivated contemporary art makers and theorists to playfully engage with archives of all kinds, and in the process, create “counterarchives” that “open up possibilities for new ways of writing histories” as “part of a living process.”⁶⁶ Certain artists “working through objects” have thus created “collections or assemblages of things” that have “been thrown away,” or are considered “rubbish, of no value.”⁶⁷ The contemporary archival turn is from this perspective a creative act: an act of re-collection, re-evaluation and re-presentation. The “artist-as-archivist” (and the archivist-as-artist/activist), according to Hal Foster, “draws on informal archives but produces them as well, and does so in a way that underscores the nature of all archival materials as found yet constructed, factual yet fictive, public yet private.” The counterarchive, he maintains, turns “belatedness

65 Margaret Atwood, “Gertrude Talks Back,” in Atwood, *Good Bones and Simple Murders* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 16–19; 17.

66 Charles Merewether, “Introduction: Art and the Archive,” in *The Archive: Documents of Contemporary Art*, ed. Charles Merewether (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 10–17; 12, 16–17.

67 Susan Hiller, “Working through Objects,” in *The Archive*, 41–8, 43.

into becomingness,” by finding in “a misplaced past . . . possible scenarios of alternative kinds of social relations,” thereby turning the shreds and patches of history into “so many promissory notes for further elaboration or enigmatic prompts for future scenarios.”⁶⁸

Within the academy, this impulse may be seen in contemporary queer and performance theory, which extends in new directions Lucy Maynard Salmon’s and Virginia Woolf’s creative expansion and reconceptualization of the archive to include “queer things” and “queer people living out-of-the-way lives.” Ann Cvetkovich thus encourages queer and feminist scholars working with archives to “transform our ideas about what an archive can and must include” by recognizing “the value of apparently marginal or ephemeral materials.”⁶⁹ The affective turn in such scholarship, rather than stigmatizing or shaming affects elicited by archival materials as fetishistic, antiquarian or “backward,” has embraced the affective and political investments through which counterarchives are created and preserved.⁷⁰ The “archivist of queer culture,” Cvetkovich maintains, “must proceed like the fan or collector whose attachment to objects is often fetishistic, idiosyncratic, or obsessional.”⁷¹ Such investments reveal, according to Jack Halberstam, that the “archive is not simply a repository; it is a theory of cultural relevance.”⁷² By redefining what constitutes the archive, these theorists have opened new imaginative possibilities in counterarchives by recognizing their affective power to (in Woolf’s words) “produce something of the intensity of poetry, something of the excitement of drama.”

Queering the early modern archive is not simply a matter of applying new theoretical paradigms to a preexisting canon of dramatic texts or theatrical documents, but of turning our concept of “theater” wrong side out, to incorporate its eclipsed, abjected “body”—including those of the sweat-soaked actor and of the lye-chafed laundress charged with cleaning his dirty linens.⁷³ To better understand the female networks of production surrounding the commercial theaters, I have argued elsewhere, we need to look beyond the canonical archive of theater history to consider records that pertain to its commercial environs. In the *Returns of Aliens Dwelling In The City And Suburbs Of London From The Reign of Henry VIII. To That Of James I.*, for example, we find not only details regarding the many female occupations relating to linen manufacture, maintenance, and sale, but evidence about the “queer” domestic arrangements of immigrant starch women and laundresses, who lived and worked together in all-female households, and who were accused of wielding phallic “poking sticks” (used to pleat ruffs) for their own sexual pleasure, as well as for profit.⁷⁴

68 Hal Foster, “An Archival Impulse,” in *The Archive*, 143–8, 144–6.

69 Ann Cvetkovich, “In the Archives of Lesbian Feelings: Documentary and Popular Culture,” *Camera Obscura* 17, no. 1 (2002): 107–47; 109, 111. See also Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feeling: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).

70 See Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003); José Muñoz, “Ephemera as Evidence: Introductory Notes to Queer Acts,” *Women and Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 8, no. 2 (1996): 5–18, and *Cruising Utopia*; Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005); Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

71 Cvetkovich, “In the Archives,” 116.

72 Halberstam, *In a Queer Time*, 169–70.

73 Korda, *Labors Lost*, 31–41, 93–143.

74 See Natasha Korda, “Sex, Starch-Houses and Poking-Sticks: Alien Women’s Work and the Technologies of Material Culture,” Special Forum on “Sex and the Early Modern Woman:



Figure 5.3 Linen room in doll's house of Petronella Dunois, Anonymous, c. 1676.
Courtesy Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

To access the ways in which female affective lives and relations were channeled through linens, we must study how they were handled in counterarchives created by women. Consider, for example, the female curiosity cabinets known as *Puppenhäuser* or *Kinderhäuser*, created or commissioned by women of the middling sort and merchant class (mostly in the Low Countries and Germany). These miniature archives, akin to modern dollhouses, are considered to have “exceptional cultural-historical value” among scholars of material culture due to the accuracy and detail with which they have preserved ephemera of women’s everyday lives that otherwise would not have survived.⁷⁵ Most extant examples, such as that of Petronella Dunois in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, feature exquisite linen attires and fully equipped laundry rooms, manufactured in minute detail with meticulous care (see Figure 5.3).

Representation, Practice, and Culture,” *Early Modern Women: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 5 (2010): 201–8.

75 Heidi Müller, *Good Housekeeping: A Domestic Ideal in Miniature: The Nuremberg Doll Houses of the Seventeenth Century in the Germanisches Nationalmuseum*, trans. Sarah C. D. Slenczka (Nuremberg: Verlag der Germanisches Nationalmuseum, 2007), 7; Leonie Von Wilckens, *Mansions in Miniature: Four Centuries of Dolls' Houses*, trans. Vivien Greene (New York: Viking Press, 1980), 18. The oldest extant *Puppenhaus*, in the Germanische Nationalmuseum, dates from 1611, but the earliest known example was commissioned in 1557–1558.

Previous scholarship has assessed their social function in highly conservative terms, arguing that, like *Wunderkammern*, they were an expression of “the acquisitive instinct, the desire to possess and collect,” and were used to instruct girls in their future domestic duties, and thereby to reinforce the social order.⁷⁶ They were “undoubtedly not intended as playthings,” it is maintained, but rather as “object lessons.”⁷⁷ This argument is based on a 1631 broadsheet advertising the “*Kinder-hauss*” of Anna Köferlin, in which she claims to use it “to provide instruction for the young.”⁷⁸ To define these tiny archives as tools of ideological indoctrination, however, is to occlude their status as spectacles and spaces of play, created and presided over by women. Anna Köferlin proudly charged admission to see hers, and promises in her broadsheet that her spectators will marvel at the miniature scenes, costumes, and properties displayed in her “show”:

Look all around you . . . look everywhere, how much there has been put on show for you, hundreds of pieces. Of bedding, of handsome presses . . . fitted up in such a way that though small, yet everything may well be put to general use. . . . [All] to be beheld and marveled at, that you may forget to shut your jaw.⁷⁹

The “mysteries of the world of play,” Walter Benjamin argues, is in no way confined to children, but is “enticing for adults” as well, including those who “desire to make light of an unbearable life” and to remove “its sting by playing with its image in reduced form.”⁸⁰ The Nuremberg regional archives indicate that Köferlin’s “*Kinder-hauss*” may indeed have been prompted by unbearable loss, as her two children, born in 1598 and 1599, died at a young age, after which she “devoted herself” to its “production and display.”⁸¹

Unlike *Wunderkammern*, which as Jonathan Gil Harris has argued, domesticated “marvelous objects from around the globe” by rendering them familiar, “comfortingly docile and unchanging,”⁸² female *Puppenhäuser* instead rendered the everyday wondrous and strange by transforming the domain of women’s work into a space of imaginative play. The care required to reproduce in miniature household linens and the technologies used to manufacture and launder them (including tiny sewing baskets and pin-cushions, buckets, tubs, scrubbing brushes, irons, and linen-presses), suggests the affective investments women had in archiving the material conditions of their everyday lives. In the case of less affluent women, like Anna Köferlin, these play-spaces may have allowed women to work through affects induced by loss, hardship, and hard work. Köferlin links the labor of making her *Kinderhaus*, which she claims was “put together with industry and much effort,” to the status of women as “born to labor,” yet unable “to direct big works,” as well as to “the great

⁷⁶ Von Wilckens, *Mansions in Miniature*, 6; Müller, *Good Housekeeping*, 7, 12, 14. See also Susan Broomhall, “Imagined Domesticities in Early Modern Dutch Dollhouses,” *Parergon* 24, no. 2 (2007): 47–67.

⁷⁷ Von Wilckens, *Mansions in Miniature*, 22.

⁷⁸ Von Wilckens, *Mansions in Miniature*, 15.

⁷⁹ Von Wilckens, *Mansions in Miniature*, 15–16.

⁸⁰ Walter Benjamin, “Old Toys,” in *Selected Writings, Volume 2: 1927–1934*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 99–100.

⁸¹ Müller, *Good Housekeeping*, 20; Von Wilckens, *Mansions in Miniature*, 15.

⁸² Harris, “The New New Historicism’s *Wunderkammer* of Objects,” 114–15.

care and trouble" they have in bearing children.⁸³ Even in the case of those commissioned by more affluent women like Petronella Dunois, the acquisitive impulse *Puppenhäuser* are thought to express was qualified by their status as female property, handed down within families from mother to daughter over many generations, before finally being acquired by museum collections. Far from being static or unchanging repositories in the hands of their original owners, however, they were continually updated and reassembled, rendering them "untimely" and "anachronistic" in precisely the senses advocated by Harris and Garber. For this reason, I would argue, they are as instructive about the future promise of feminist work in counterarchives, as they are about the antiquarian past.⁸⁴

83 Von Wilckens, *Mansions in Miniature*, 15.

84 Contemporary examples of dollhouses that function as counterarchives include those of the avant-garde art collector, Carrie Walter Stettheimer (1871–1944), in the Museum of the City of New York, which contains a miniature version of the *Nude Descending a Staircase* painted by Marcel Duchamp in c. 1918 (as well as a laundry room) and the dollhouse of Judith Young Mallin, the Surrealist archivist and collector, which contains numerous miniatures of Surrealist artworks, presided over by figurines of Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas. See Sheila W. Clark, *The Stettheimer Dollhouse* (New York: The Museum of the City of New York/Pomegranate, 2009). My thanks to Judith Young Mallin for allowing me to view her dollhouse and for sharing her expertise on their history and significance.