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The Maid of Haddon: event, text and women in Derbyshire literate culture

‘from her own Mouth, by the Hand of a Friend’

This essay asks how women participated in seventeenth-century literate cultures, and does so by exploring the events and texts associated with the case of the Derbyshire Maid, Martha Taylor (1667-9). Using the twin frames of place and event, it explores local and national, elite and non-elite, responses to the Maid and their implications. It then tracks beyond the transmission of the event into the society that held it to explore women’s participation in literate cultures, taking ‘culture’ in Raymond Williams’s sense of the ‘ordinary’ complexity of the everyday.¹ Ultimately, it turns to the question of what is at stake in the historiography of local and national responses to the Maid, to address some questions of limit and significance often raised with regard to microstudies and reconsider the articulation of ‘micro’ and ‘macro’.

The facts of the event, insofar as they are ascertainable, are that in the small Derbyshire village of Over Haddon a maid in her teens appeared to have stopped eating. She was also suffering from a gynaecological problem, possibly precipitated by being kicked in the back in 1661 when she was eleven.² She was soon confined to her bed where the last recorder of her condition, Dr Johnston, told the Royal Society in Latin in 1669 that she spent her time ‘ “reading the holy scripture, or sacred books, day and night” ’.³ While, as Simon Shaffer has convincingly suggested, one frame of reference for the maid’s experience is that of an extended and intense good death; she is initially dying well, yet the responses seem to begin when the timespan involved exceeded, then far exceeded, the social protocols for those bodily events.⁴

Taylor was significant in textual culture because many of her visitors wondered whether her starvation was miraculous in showing God over-riding nature's laws to make this young woman a vessel of his truth, or was she a liar and a fraud? Pursued particularly by those with religious and scientific interests, this question was canvassed in the Royal Society and religious circles and, accordingly, the concerns of these groups - each in some way an educated specialist network - have set the agenda for much of such scholarship as exists on the Maid. She features in the history of nonconformist and Anglican Protestantism (for example, in the work of Jane Shaw investigating the idea of the 'miracle' in the Enlightenment) and in explorations of the claims of members of the Royal Society to scientific rationalism.⁵ Showing the ways these two strands of debate are interwoven, Simon Shaffer explores the distinct religious views that shaped the way the Maid's body was understood and used polemically. In delineating debates at the border of 'science' and religion, Scholars, including Shaffer and Shaw, move rapidly from the local responses to Taylor to national debates. However, the debate involving the Royal Society was just one part of a richer set of concerns, texts, echoes and concurrent events.

Texts about an event, particularly one of some duration, perforce generate information about a place and, potentially, reveal its culture. Using evidence often discarded during the extraction of a debate which scholarship assumes can legitimately be considered significant begins to disclose local culture and interactions with the wider world. 'Local' manuscript and printed responses to an event likely to represent much about the culture of the writer as well as about the event itself. This essay, then, tests an approach which allows us to both locate women in literate culture (though not, perhaps significantly, as themselves generators of texts directly reporting the Maid) and to map, rather than efface, connections between local and national cultures. In tracking the texts of an event, and on beyond, the essay takes as its starting point work in

both book history and microhistory, drawing the work in these areas towards questions of gender and cultural transmission. Thus, it is framed by the model used by Christian Jouhaud in examining the siege of La Rochelle in terms of a ‘variety of forms’ of ‘printed matter’ which respond to that single event.⁶

Jouhaud compares the aims and genres of different groups of printed texts which shaped understanding of the events in late 1628 and early 1629, between La Rochelle and Paris to trace connections and tensions between local and national coverage and agendas, noting a ‘complex range’ of responses.

Changing much about the model – location (to Derbyshire), material (manuscript and print), purpose (the investigation of gender and transmission) – the essay extends and repurposes the core question: can we generate significant findings by a close up on responses to an event? It argues that by combining print and manuscript and examining the various accounts of male witnesses to a particular event, we can draw into the frame of analysis non-elite women as players in literate culture, and in doing so focuses questions of method in researching non-elite subjects and writing in seventeenth-century society.⁷

II Visiting the Maid: men, women and literate culture

The young Woman at Over-Haddon hath been visited by divers persons of this House. My Lord himself hunting the Hare one day, at the Towns-end, with other Gentlemen, & some of his Servants, went to see her on purpose; & they all agree, with the relation you say was made to your self. They further say that on their own knowledge that part of her Belly touches her Back-bone. She began (as her Mother says) to loose her Appetite in December last . . . tis thought she cannot last much longer.⁸

So wrote Thomas Hobbes to his friend John Brooke, a very minor member of the Royal Society, in October 1668. The Maid was an event and a cause celebre and regarding the fervid discussion of whether she was a cheat or God’s vessel

and how closely her body should be observed, Hobbes notes ‘I think it were somewhat inhumane to examin these things too nearly, when it so little concerneth the Commonwealth’. Hobbes also gives us one of the few accounts of a female member of the gentry visiting her, noting ‘Her talk (as the Gentlewoman that went from this house told me) is most Heavenly.’⁹ Notwithstanding Hobbes’ view that Taylor’s body ‘little concerned the Commonwealth’, the letter’s recipient sent it on to Daniel Colwall, an active member of the Royal Society and the whole was stored in the Royal Society Letterbook.¹⁰

The Devonshire household at Chatsworth was interested in Martha Taylor and the Duke himself had seen her. Some of the texts generated by that interest (such as Hobbes’s comments) have been transmitted into a ‘national’ strand of discussion. Yet such texts had both local and national implications and audiences – including the information that the Duke of Devonshire having set a guard over her to monitor her intake of food: ‘*Elizabeth Toft, Elizabeth Crane, Mr. Buxton's Maid, Barbarah Mosley, Ann Webster: from Grutton, Elizabeth Milner, and Elizabeth Wolley, as two went out two came in*’¹¹ The names were prefixed to a printed pamphlet as part of the ‘attested’ testimonial of a ‘Gentleman in *Chesterfield*, a frequent Visitant of *Martha Taylor*, for many months’. For a wider audience the names were additional witnesses to the scrutiny of Martha, but for a local market audience recognition would give them different significance as they might be locally known characters.¹² Evidently, to print the event is not necessarily to distance it from its original location, but involves representing it to multiple audiences. Widely separated audiences have access to print.

Martha Taylor focussed the question of women’s relationship to learning and scripture. All writers used knowledge of local conditions and of Martha’s life. Only local observation over time enabled writers like Thomas Robins to claim it a ‘providence’ that Taylor was ‘very ready in the Scripture, ... able to discourse

with any of the Clergy,' because at the start of her experiences she was of 'very small learning.'¹³ H.A., who has 'twice or thrice' visited the area, underpins his careful support for Taylor with similar local evidence. Her father is 'a plain Country-man, whose employment lyes in the Lead Mines', while her mother is 'somthing an higher Rank then himself, both as to Birth and Education', possibly more pious.¹⁴ Taylor is non-elite.

In judging Martha's words, H.A. uses published comparisons, and has clearly read earlier texts of non-elite fasting, speaking women. He writes:

I know others who have writ upon Young Maids, under some such like Visitations' as much as 'twenty, forty, or more Pages, upon the meer repetition of Scripture Passages: These I do not, I dare not reflect upon, though I shall not imitate.'¹⁵

The criticism of appropriative distortion of words may address Henry Jessey's interpretations of Sara Wight.¹⁶ Eschewing such inappropriate scriptural larding of plain words, H.A. emphasises that '[o]ur *Martha* had the happiness, to enjoy a considerable, clear, smooth Phrase, not guilty of bombast or boyish vanity'.

That she had no Latin, and, rhetorically untutored at first produced 'some small mistakes of Words and Terms, which afterwards were polished to a more acute and regular way of speaking' guarantees her gift. Her plain speech is, though, both godly – H.A. reports another saying he '*never heard her speak any thing untheological*', and spiritually unassuming '*she pretended to nothing of Inspiration, nor any thing extraordinary, but what was the Effect of her Reading and Diligence*'.¹⁷ Carefully positioning Martha as short of the incredible, the pamphlet enhances its diagnosis of the event as significant. Martha is not to be supernatural (and so dangerous), nor is her transmission to be hyperbolic: she is to be decorously remarkable to be just the right kind of event. H.A. seeks to fashion Martha as 'herself', using local detail.¹⁸ To do so, he uses close attention to language and processes on the very border of literate and oral:

Thus I have given you a taste of her sayings, out of the Paper above mentioned; which I have compendiz'd and put something into another order, inserting also some few short Sentences which I heard my self, or were communicated to me by worthy friends; doing what I could to keep to her very words. But I can assure you, that much of what she used to discourse was little inferiour to these, for she is well versed in the Scripture, and of a quick apprehension.¹⁹

For H.A., the very qualities of its irregular untutoredness illustrate her genuine place as a vessel.²⁰

Overall, H.A.'s description presents a figure balanced on the cusp of literate agency. She did not present her words for the record herself (though given her fluency and that she went to school it seems likely that she could also write) but, as time passed, she must have been aware of the production of written texts. Her words are gathered and shaped but to signify they must be 'her very words'. If she can be understood, like one of Michel de Certeau's writer-readers, as a nomad 'poaching their way across fields they did not write,' it is clear that she is able to speak the language of those who own the fields; she is almost an agent within that culture.²¹ Thus H.A. insists that her value is bound up with her specific uses of literacy; she is well read, almost a writer, yet oral. In the context of religious argument, he delineates for us a specific sphere of literate provincial culture in which men and women, elite and non-elite, participate not equally but together in writing and speaking. It is in transmission of texts that the major agents obscure the many who were not, like Taylor, notable, but were in literate culture nonetheless – and part of the debate.

Martha Taylor's words and actions are largely transmitted to us through London-published print. However, as we see, print alerts us to writers and readers constituting a busy, literate village world shared by Martha's unschooled male visitors, and the women who knew them. That world had been through twenty years of war and 'Restoration' had recently brought plague and

fire. Thus, John Gratton wrote in his journal that in 1669 he ‘was as one alone, like a speckled bird, none like me (for as yet I had not been to a Quaker meeting)’ but:²²

thought to live as holy and righteous as I could among men, and join with none in worship, for fear of being deceived, by joining in false or ill-worship, or idolatry. But sometimes I went two miles to see a woman at Over-Haddon, who pretended to live without meat; where I met with professors (I think I may say) of all sorts. And one day a man of London came, called an Independent, and there was a meeting....Then he prayed and preached;²³

Here, John Gratton is looking back on the late 1660s as a time of religious struggle. Gratton was later to become one of the more celebrated Quaker preachers of the Restoration, famous for his fostering of the congregation in his village (Monyash, close to Over Haddon), for his conversions throughout England and in Ireland, and for his journal, printed after his death.²⁴ Using Jeremiah to evoke his terrible isolation and suffering, he is also alert to the drama of fragmented faith and radical religion in Derbyshire.

Gratton leads us into his world of religious searching and controversy, and its local topography; when he visited Martha Taylor’s bedside he had broken with Lodowicke Muggleton and had already tried Presbyterianism and an Independent congregation as far away as Chesterfield. As represented in Gratton’s retrospect, Quaker culture is dominated by powerful masculine preaching figures but three female figures stand out: Phebe Bateman (his daughter); Ann Gratton (his wife), and Dorothy Carter, his Muggletonian adversary.

‘Phebe Bateman’s Testimony concerning her dear Father and Mother’ in Gratton’s posthumously published journal leads us to his wife. Looking back from the time when they ‘broke up house-keeping at Monyash’ in 1707 and moved to her house in Nottinghamshire, she recalls her mother’s participation in

her parents' last tour of Quaker friends, 'our friend James Smith taking her behind him' into 'several counties, for 'her last farewell'.²⁵ So, John and Phebe introduce Ann, and, once we have these two co-ordinates, texts begin to emerge that, albeit fragmentarily, suggest her participation in literate culture.

We find her writing letters. When the Quaker John Rodes (of Barlborough Hall, near Bolsover, a location substantially east of Monyash) set off on a journey (apparently with John Gratton), his mother, Martha Rodes wrote to her son noting that Ann had conveyed the news that 'thou went well and cheerfully away from her house that day when she write, and she said it was thy desire I should send A letter to Bristol, and direct it to her husband. It was very well thou writ from Monyash, for it gave me great satisfaction.'²⁶ In another, undated, letter apparently written soon after, Ann Gratton appears as someone to whom John will send money via his mother.²⁷ Moreover, Bateman remembers her mother as primary educator.²⁸ Overall, evidence hints that as well as the influential, published and now relatively well-known John, Ann too was networked, perhaps widely, in Quaker fellowship and sufficiently revered to join him in a retirement tour in 1707.

As we know, Quakers emphasised literacy, had clear religio-political motivations to communicate at a distance and, perhaps, across status and the changing part played by women in Quakerism is richly documented.²⁹ While it is unsurprising to find them linking local literate culture with London through John Gratton and John Rodes, it is only in the study of local cultures that Ann And Phebe Gratton begin to emerge as agents and such figures definitionally do not rise to the surface of studies of the many (usually higher status) debating Quaker women even as women like Ann Gratton were locally significant and sometimes nationally networked. So, perhaps unexpectedly, study of the local can add a dimension to research focussed on the history of specific groups.

At the same time, Quaker hatreds and their documentation of them can illuminate literate culture as much as love, and amongst the controverting

women Gratton records is also ‘D.Carter’, a follower of Lodowick Muggleton. In 1666 Gratton describes a meeting based on the false prophet Muggleton whose followers:

[h]ad no worship at all, and when we met together (those few that were) at one widow Carter’s, we were not for either waiting upon God, or any other exercise at all of either preaching, praying, or leading Holy Scriptures

but ‘to believe Muggleton and be saved’. And they were to ‘trust in Muggleton’s name’, awaiting his irrevocable blessing or his curse.³⁰ Gratton knew Carter because he went to meetings at her house in 1666 but, becoming disillusioned, he broke with Muggleton who cursed him.³¹

Once she is brought into view via the Maid and Gratton, we find further textual testimony to Dorothy Carter’s significance. At present we have no record of Carter travelling to London, but London is where Gratton is when he next mentions Carter. He was at the London Meeting of 1674, during which he and other Quakers paid a visit to their arch-enemy and author of *The Neck of the Quakers broken*, Muggleton himself.³² Dorothy Carter, it seems, had ‘cursed’ a Quaker, Patrick Levingstone, promising that his spiritual life would wither. Amongst other business, Muggleton’s visitors were keen to prove Carter’s prediction ill-founded and a lie. From this we know that at least from 1666 to 1674 Carter was active as a Muggletonian in and around Chesterfield, and her activities nationally noted by Quakers.

Muggleton himself is a colourful, if not wholly competent, adjunct to this story, and tends to push to centre stage because it is the prophet’s words that are revered, stored and circulated not those of the handmaiden. At the same time, the more of Muggleton we see the more Carter appears. Claiming to be responding to the desire of his followers to ‘see’ him in the flesh as opposed, presumably, to reading his texts, Muggleton records three visits to the ‘North Country’ between 1663 and 1669.³³ Muggleton’s letters to Carter survive, and

he describes visiting her, ‘a Widdow’, and her household, in 1663, in Chesterfield. After ‘disputes’ at her house, he writes, ‘I pronounced the Sentence of eternal damnation upon Four, or Five Men there.’³⁴ The survival of Muggleton’s side of their correspondence (presumably through Carter saving his letters) leads us into the trade in books in the towns and villages where Carter was a close associate of William Newcome, a peripatetic bookseller mentioned by Muggleton as ‘a Bookseller who lived at *Darby*, but was every *Saturday* at *Chesterfield* Market, and at *Bakewell* Market on the *Monday*.’³⁵ In December 1663 Muggleton wrote to Mr Sudbury that if he wants one of his books, ‘I do think that William Newcomb of Derby, Bookseller, can help you to one, for he hath three of me, and I hear he hath not sold them yet.’³⁶ Carter and Newcome were close associates; she saw Newcome or Newcomb every Saturday, and the bookseller or, at least a William Newcomb of Derby was sufficiently established to generate a trade token inscribed with the controverting verse from Psalm 105:15, ‘Touch not mine anointed –Doe my prophets no harm. Darby. W.N’ . Thus, we find that Carter’s use of Muggletonian rhetoric is embedded in literate culture; she associates with a bookseller, houses a congregation and corresponds with Muggleton.

The sale of books was important to Muggleton - so much so, that when in 1674 he wrote to Gratton, he vividly remembered earlier sales figures. In Chesterfield Gratton ‘was acquainted with some of my friends’, he writes ‘thereby you came to see some of my Writings, for I think you never bought any but what you borrowed’.³⁷ Muggleton’s obsession tells us more about Carter and literate culture. In November 1663, Muggleton had written to Carter, ‘I perceive by your Letter that you would willingly have those Letters of mine to the Quakers put in Print’ and suggests that she ‘contribute towards the printing of them’.³⁸ So Carter seems to have lodged a bookseller who sold Muggleton’s books; cursed Quakers; corresponded with Muggleton and held a congregation at her house. If he got his way, she will also have been a financial sponsor of his

publishing. Carter, then, is an example of a woman who is hardly well off yet is clearly a highly independent participant in Chesterfield literary culture and religious controversy – a substantial player in literate culture. Once we enter the world of nonconformist controversy, women of relatively low status leave traces as agents within literate culture – Carter used the power of the Muggletonian curse to damn people, but beside the spoken word, her writing to Muggleton was a vital and unusually functional link in the tenuous Muggletonian chain of associates. Thus, a step from Martha Taylor's bed, or a ride away, as Newcomb's pattern of selling shows, we find women involved in the distinct and antagonistic local-national religious relationships within which Taylor's contemporary significance was debated.

The final example of a visitor to the Maid is chosen as a contrast with Gratton in being an example of a local visitor, like Gratton highly literate and non-elite, but with markedly secular interests: the tailor and ex- and future parish clerk, Leonard Wheatcroft. In his autobiography he commented:

about Jan. 6 1668[1669] I and my man tooke in hand to go a jorney to Over Haddon to se a woman that by relation had receved noe food for the space of 40 weeks, with this maid I had much discourse of god, and Jesus Christ, of hir selfe and of her distemper, but noe food she tooke maite or drinke for the space of many years after, as may be I shall hint of hereafter, concerning her condission.³⁹

The timing makes it likely that he is referring to 1669 and the material seems to be reworked from a journal or notebook. The visit follows his recollection of his very troubled experiences in 1667-8 which saw financial catastrophe, sale of his goods, three imprisonments for debt and, ultimately, dispossession.⁴⁰ Within his currently known writings, this comment on Martha Taylor is one of comparatively few extant notes about God, who is here central to the maid but seems perhaps peripheral to his interest which is in the phenomena of her

‘condission’ and her inedia. Here, as elsewhere in his writings, we see Wheatcroft’s powerful concern with his social relationships.

Many of the figures and voices Wheatcroft records and evokes in his two texts are those of women, and in doing so, in a different way from Gratton, he transmits to us many women inhabiting, or bordering, literate culture; we have their names, and their participation in literate culture is implied, in various ways, in Wheatcroft’s texts. So, as a writer and curator of another’s texts, Wheatcroft transmits a third set of women participating in Derbyshire literate culture and, again, two stand out as raising questions about how we approach women in literate culture: Elizabeth Hawley and his daughter Elizabeth Wheatcroft.

If we follow Wheatcroft into his own world we find him involved in his trade as a tailor and many other enterprises, spread spread between his wife’s village of Winster (a settlement about five miles from Haddon) and his native Ashover (close to Chesterfield). For all that many of the locations and neighbourhoods (London , Bakewell, Chesterfield and Ashover itself) are shared with the religious controversialists, Wheatcroft has left us records in manuscript writings and inventories which make clear he owned books (including probably some religious and liturgical texts), and two substantial manuscript texts of his own which curate the words of others and which deliberately seek to articulate and codify local oral-literate practices of the kind we have been considering.

We first hear of Wheatcroft in the 1650s when he is a soldier for Major General Whalley and, on his own behalf, in search of a wife. From this search he generated a section devoted to courtship in his mixed prose and poetry miscellany, using his own words and those of others to make an a eclectic romance-poetic-epistolary anthology, of his courtship – in part a record and in part a useful model for others.⁴¹ It is here that we, as well as he, meet Elizabeth Hawley whose correspondence he desires, solicits, receives and integrates as curated letters in the text their love.

Having seen Elizabeth Hawley in a garden he strikes up a conversation and then, '[b]eing as a never-daunted soldier in the wars of Mars, I played several cannon-like letters against the main tower of her heart'.⁴² His aim becomes to lure her into correspondence; having 'charged' his 'fiery heart piece' (his pen) with a letter which he gives us, he tells us, 'I did expect an answer from her again, but none came.'⁴³ The epistolary siege having failed to elicit a response, he goes with a friend to her village, Winster, 'well armed with a 'full resolution to face and embrace my beloved paramour' – only to find himself involved in a skirmish, and to return (literally?) to 'camp' where he pursues his campaign by letter, addressing her as 'Venus'.⁴⁴ Her failure to reply in writing elicits a stream of letters in the mode of chivalric discourse with complaints including 'O then let me hear from you how you love me, and say I shall but come to you, and I will not fly from you. Let your father make ready his hard speeches, and your mother her angry looks, yet I will see you ere long, if you will vouchsafe me leave.'⁴⁵ The text suggests that as a soldier of the major generals Hawley's 'friends', or perhaps the citizens of Winster, found Wheatcroft a problematic suitor or visitor and this may have been a matter of politics. For Hawley herself, an equally vexed issue might be the suspect nature of his playful high-flown language which, as part of a strong epistolary presence, the voice of her letters seems to blank, deflate, parry and counter.

Reader, she married him. Perhaps he would not have kept the letters if she had not, but she did, and he builds the narrative and miscellany around their exchange as a model of obstacles overcome. Certainly, by April or May 1656 she is sending a token to him from her home in Winster, writing that 'I have sent you a band, desiring you to let it embrace your neck as willingly as you would embrace my waist'; we know this because he copied out and anthologised the letter.⁴⁶ So, lodged in a cameo role in her husband's shaped text, the words of Elizabeth Hawley offer us a sequence of letters by a non-elite subject inhabiting provincial village literate culture. At the heart of the narrative

are all we at present have of her words - just seven letters written by Elizabeth Hawley in 1656 and transcribed by her husband. Here is part of one, framed as 'Her loving answer back again':

Loving friend,

. . . You say you desire but three words, and I shall use as few as may be (although not such as you would have perhaps). First, I take you for my friend, otherwise I would not have kept you company so long as I have done; and withal think you the only deserving man, but you know hubs which lie in our way.

Seek to remove them as soon as you can and you shall find me real; but for further expression of my love than I have showed I will seal it up in the closet of my heart, to attend upon our nuptial feast.⁴⁷

So his 'obliged friend' both advances their love and retreats from it. Her language is distinct from Wheatcroft's but, though plainer, it shows her in rhetorical command, articulate, fluent and dextrously reasoning and assessing. Wheatcroft certainly could have changed her words, or even (though this seems unlikely), made them up. However, although throughout the book the forms and use of apparent speech show him strikingly willing and able to imagine the thoughts of another, these are distinct in being set as transcriptions. Thus, the books incorporated the correspondence, perhaps a pooled lovers' archive after marriage. Moreover, the book is explicitly oriented towards readers and that it was so understood, at least after Wheatcroft's death, is indicated by the fact that for many years before it came to the archives, it lived in church buildings in Ashover.⁴⁸

Martha Taylor probably did not meet Dorothy Carter, Ann Gratton, Martha Rode, Phoebe Gratton (Bateman) or Elizabeth Wheatcroft. However, by starting with just three accounts of Taylor by male visitors we can find both stubs of information indicating the active participation of these women in literate culture and begin to build up a sense of how that culture works. 'Transmission', then, is

a helpful model here in inviting us to see that non-elite women participated in literate culture, inviting us to track contemporary relationships amongst women of different social standings. Third, we can see how, in the primary and secondary debate on Taylor, the presence of women as discussants is steadily shed in the process of textual transmission from local to national debate, both in the primary texts and, as significantly, in the scholarship discussing the Maid. While men's contribution to literate culture therefore offers the most accessible evidence to non-elite culture, those very texts can begin to disclose information about women participants.

How does evidence such as that examined here impact on a general acceptance by historians that by the mid-to-late seventeenth-century 'literacy' was increasing? As Keith Thomas has hinted, it is worth thinking about the fact that for subjects doing them reading and writing are purposive – and the evidence of textual transmission presented here shows that they are so at the point that many historians of literacy consider the border at the 'lowest' level of literate society above the mark-makers – those educated, like Phebe Bateman, by their mothers or, like Martha Taylor and it seems Leonard Wheatcroft, at village schools. So literacy may be numerical, but it is also operationally part of 'ordinary' literate culture. More, even if it is local in its initial use, it can be tracked in texts which are circulated nationally. So, what the evidence given here has to offer to the 'big picture' of literacy rising or falling is an invitation to also consider literacy for what and to consider non-elite literate agents at work. So the exploration of transmission in terms of culture, event and place brings into focus larger questions for microhistorical and 'general' history.

III Method: Questions for Microhistory

In using an event in a specific location to investigate the place of women in literate culture the essay responds to a difficulty in finding women involved in

non-elite transmission. It gives the findings generated by a method used to track such subjects by focussing on the texts generated by a particular event. So, we can now explore how investigating the events of the Maid has responded to the twin issues of how to illuminate women's places in provincial culture and how to show that culture is connected to, not wholly isolated from, the wider world.

In considering the used here to exploring women in literate culture in mid to late seventeenth-century Derbyshire might help us with larger questions a key issue is the evaluation of the method's potential to contribute to reconsideration not only of studies of non-elite women, but to understanding of the relationship between local and national. Crucially, can it contribute to a reconsideration of the relationship between micro- and macro-historical approaches?

In terms of methods of studying the past, an ever-present challenge for studies with a small, or apparently marginal, object is to show its significance in some wider sense. This challenge is implicitly explored in Carlo Ginzburg's *Cheese and the Worms* and responses to its understanding of literacy, particularly that of David Levine and Zubedh Vahed. Ginzburg had claimed that his microstudy was significant by relating it to oral culture and a bounded environment, arguing that: 'an oral culture that was the patrimony not only of Menocchio but also of a vast segment of sixteenth-century society'.⁴⁹ It is because of this -'[c]onsequently' - that 'an investigation initially pivoting on an individual, moreover an apparently unusual one' can legitimately become 'a general hypothesis' on the popular culture (more precisely, peasant culture) of preindustrial Europe' (p. xii). For Ginzburg, Menocchio's importance is bound to the particularity of oral culture, seen as self-integral and 'almost an extension of the body'.⁵⁰ However, as Levine and Vahed note, the evidence suggests that, rather than being in an absorbing, exclusive, oral culture Menocchio took advantage of trips to Venice to acquire and read books – particularly reading the Koran.⁵¹ Thus, returning to Ginzburg's evidence they produce a peasant who is oral, literate and acquiring books at a merchant hub of all Europe even as he is

isolated in a small village. Where Ginzburg emphasises isolation, they place Mennocchio as an agent in the crossing paths of several cultural forces – spoken and read word, writing, print, trade. As their reconsideration of the evidence implies, Mennocchio as an exemplar of oral-literate culture is as significant. This study worked along some similar lines to demonstrate the literate participation non-elite subjects in spoken and written culture as having a claim to consideration as a significant part of cultural study. Non-elite subjects are definitely distinct from the schooled, but that difference of status and culture is in part the nature of the connection between elite and non-elite; it is as much scholarship as status that renders non-elite subjects, for us, as isolated from the wider, and schooled, realm of writers and readers.

From Levine and Vahed's complication of Mennocchio we can draw at least one response to the question 'so what?' when asked of a small history – such as one of the Maid of Haddon. What can be at stake in a small study and a study specifically focussed on non-elite subjects, is to show their position not in isolation from or, necessarily as equals to, those who (like Hobbes here) are adept in the use of cultural capital. What is at stake is to draw out their place in that culture, and to show their value for a reader's attention, in giving another light on a set of problems we know in elite form.

In his retrospective reflection on the initial wave of microhistory, and the derivation of the term, Ginzburg suggests that both theoretical and empiricist practitioners of microhistory choose 'a circumscribed and close up perspective' because of 'dissatisfaction' with what he identifies as the 'macroscopic and quantitative model' dominant, suggestively, perhaps in the period of post-war consensus, 'the mid-1950s to the mid-1970s'. Using the metaphor of close-up and taking his title from Jean-Luc Godard's discontinuous practice of film as socio-political critique in *Two or Three Things that I Know About Her*, towards the end of his essay Ginzburg turns to film theorist Siegfried Kracauer's final study, of history.⁵² In justifying microhistorical close up of the kind that situate

the literate miller Menocchio in 'oral' culture, Ginzburg claims that Kracauer acknowledges that because 'reality is fundamentally discontinuous and heterogeneous', historical method must involve 'constant back-and-forth between micro- and macrohistory'.⁵³ Kracauer's text on history does indeed offer a meditation on totality and specificity and is of value here in posing open, but still unexamined, questions for big-picture history:

The subject matter of general history must be imagined as representing a whole of a sort. Without a unifying frame of reference the genre would not be viable. Its very existence depends upon the possibility for the historian to relate his materials to a common denominator. Is the unity he looks for discovered or imposed? Assuredly he will be inclined to believe that it is inherent in historical reality itself. And what does the unity consist of?

There is no clear-cut answer to this either.⁵⁴

Eschewing generality might involve focus on radical discontinuities in social fabric (riot; revolution; bodily violence including state punishment), but also, as John Walter notes, more connected articulations and disarticulation between oral and literate, hierarchy and authority, high and low which in England inhabited legal, ecclesiastical, parisonal, manorial and civic structures designed to link as well as separate social precincts and roles: Wheatcroft was not so unusual in having time as both an imprisoned debtor and an officeholder. However, in a macro, or 'general', history, detailed articulations and small events are hard to address. How, indeed is a history of, say, the Stuarts, to adequately ground itself in evidence. In the case of both the micro and the big picture study, not all the evidence can be considered at once yet, methodologically, the two kinds of history expose the other's shortcomings and advantages – microstudy may face the question of 'so what?' but simultaneously exposes that macrostudy must answer the question 'oh really?'. If a study of the Maid of Haddon makes it clear that we need an overview of the politico-religious Restoration, the absence of examples like the Maid, or indeed

any non-elite women, from, for example, Tim Harris's recent generalist study show that we need these too.⁵⁵ The most flexible, and so usable, responses to the making explicit of the tension between, and need for, micro and macro study consider culture as dynamic. One example is Natalie Zemon Davis's insistence that 'popular culture' is not isolated culture but the cultural world that is shared by high and low.⁵⁶

Thus, for the present study, what can make a bridge between general and particular – 'national' and 'local' -- and address the question of micro and macro study, is transmission understood as a way of thinking not simply of passing on, but of ideas and texts in dynamic change. In both the Royal Society and Haddon, once we see texts and ideas are moving between high and low status individuals, and changed in doing that, not only can we see more cultural players but, as in the case of women in literate culture, the non-elite also begin to be visible with more clarity. Taken together, Kracauer, Ginzburg and Levine and Vahed such studies offer a way to reset our agenda in the study of non-elite texts, and to do that in a way that includes women, yes, but as we see, in doing so must also include the unschooled men. We can see that to study the non-elite or unschooled and their texts is not to study isolated texts, fossils, in the rockface of a culture. These writers see themselves as cultural agents dynamic within their worlds whether like Dorothy Carter supporting Muggletonian bookselling or, like Ann Gratton, corresponding with Quakers from Monyash. Which agent had most influence the Quaker Ann Gratton, whose records are fragmentarily preserved, or the nearby gentry book-collector William Boothby?⁵⁷ Probably Boothby, in the longer term, because of his textual remains yet, at the time, perhaps Gratton has a claim to influence too, given what we know of her Quaker network.

As Steven May tells us, records of non-elite subjects are less likely to have survived not only ideology but rain and fire.⁵⁸ Following the textual clues that cling to an event has enabled us to find these figures and, starting with their

texts, begin to look for their cultural connections. **Of course**, such figures are not in possession of all the cultural resources of Thomas Hobbes or Lucy Hutchinson. Boothby and the Grattons are in different ways eclipsed by powerful writers who wrote influential texts, Boothby left no discursive publicly oriented use of his schooling and the Grattons had access to only some educational capital in what they wrote. However, the subjects discussed here are in, not out of, a shared or overlapping culture. Obviously these limit achievement. However, by studying the Maid's contacts with an opening agenda that they are agents leads us back to the culture they are in we see clearly that they are differently positioned from elite subjects in the same culture and act upon it. Because they are agents, they can in some ways be understood as equivalent to their legacy-leaving superiors such as Hutchinson and Hobbes not in achievement but, as importantly, equal as starting places for the scholar to discover culture. We can learn as much from the transmitted texts of non-elite subjects as from the elite because, as Levine and Vahed show, the web of culture does hold them just as it holds the elite; our task is to find methods that disclose them and the traces that link them. Such work is not history from above or below, or literary criticism of plebeian, labouring or artisanal 'poets' (though they may be these things) and nor is it custom – the oral, quaint, local folkloric countrified residual – that Hutchinson and Taylor have in common. Rather, what the textual transmission of the event most plainly shows is that as scholars we can get just as far into cultures by tracking the Maid as by reading Marvell. Menocchio was, as Ginzburg told us, steeped in what Yi Fu Tuan calls the 'pays', the culture of the Friuli yet he was also a book-reader in the world's marketplace, Venice. A village and Venice, are a world apart, a walk apart, a part of each other.

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¹ Raymond Williams, 'Culture is ordinary' (1958) rpt. in Raymond Williams, *Resources of Hope* (London: Verso, 1989), pp. 3-14.

- ² This essay like other work on the Maid of Haddon is indebted to the late Janet Wadsworth, 'Martha Taylor the Fasting Maid of Over Haddon 1651-?1687', *A Derbyshire Miscellany* (8) 1978, p. 77-87.
- ³ H.A., *Mirabile pecci, or, The non-such wonder of the peak in Darby-shire* (London, 1669), p. 7; Dr Nathaniel Johnston Letter 29 June 1669 trans Monica Richardson, cited Wadsworth, p. 78.
- ⁴ See Simon Shaffer, 'Piety, Physic and Prodigious Abstinence' in Ole Peter Grell and Andrew Cunningham eds., *Religio Medici: Medicine and Religion in Seventeenth-Century England* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1996), p. 171-2003 (p. 181 n. 21).
- ⁵ Jane Shaw, *Miracles in Enlightenment England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006), 98-118.
- ⁶ Christian Jouhaud, 'Printing the event: from La Rochelle to Paris' in Roger Chartier ed., *The Culture of Print* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989) , p. 290-333 (p. 290).
- ⁷ See Jouhaud, pp. 326-7.
- ⁸ Thomas Hobbes to John Brooke, October 1668 *The Correspondence of Thomas Hobbes* ed., Noel Malcolm (Oxford: Oxford University Press, (1994), 2v vol 2 Letter 183, p. 701-3; p. 701.
- ⁹ Hobbes, 701, p. 702.
- ¹⁰ Malcolm ed., Hobbes, *Correspondence* (2 vols), 2: 703.
- ¹¹ Thomas Robins, *The Wonder of the World* (London, 1669), p.2; Wadsworth, 'Martha Taylor', p. 80.
- ¹² Daniel Lysons, *Magna Britannica* (London: T.Caddell, 1817), vol 5, p. xcvi.
- ¹³ Thomas Robins, *The Wonder of the World* (London, 1669), p. 8.
- ¹⁴ H.A., *Pecci*, p. 5.
- ¹⁵ H. A., *Mirabile pecci: or the non-such Wonder of the Peak in Darby-shire* (London, 1669), p. 27. This was printed by Giles Calvery who had a record of radical publications.
- ¹⁶ See Shaffer, p. 181.
- ¹⁷ H. A., *Mirabile*, p. 27.
- ¹⁸ H.A., *Mirabile* p. 28.
- ¹⁹ H.A., *Mirabile*, p. 32.
- ²⁰ On instability in women's literacy Margaret W.Ferguson, *Dido's Daughters: Literacy, Gender and Empire in Early Modern England and France* (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 2003), pp. 116-120.
- ²¹ Michel de Certeau, *Practice of Everyday Life* quoted by Roger Chartier, 'Laborers and Voyagers: From the Text to the Reader', *Diacritics*, 22.2 (1992).
- ²² Jeremiah, 812 KJV.
- ²³ John Gratton, *A journal of the ancient servant of Christ, J.G* (London, 1720), p. 43.
- ²⁴ E.g. *John the Baptist's Decreasing and Christ's Increasing Witnessed* (no location, 1674); *The Clergy-Man's Pretence* (London, 1703).
- ²⁵ Phebe Bateman, 'Phebe Bateman's Testimony concerning her dear father and mother'' in Gratton, *Journal*, p. xvii-xxiv; xvii-xviii.
- ²⁶ Martha Rodes to John Rodes, 1690 in Mrs Godfrey Lockyer Lampson ed., *A Quaker Pos-bag* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1910), p. 18-19.
- ²⁷ Martha Rodes to John Rodes, *Quaker*, pp. 23-4; p. 23. Both letters refer to Alice Harrison as ill see p. 19, p. 23.
- ²⁸ Gratton, *Journal* p. xviii.
- ²⁹ Margaret Spufford, 'First steps in literacy: the reading and writing experiences of the humblest seventeenth-century spiritual autobiographers', *Social History* vol 4:3 (1979, 407-435; See eg Hilary Hinds, *God's Englishwomen* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996)
- ³⁰ Gratton, *Journal*, 32-3.
- ³¹ Gratton, *Journal*, pp. 32-34.
- ³² Gratton, *Journal*, pp. 99-102.
- ³³ *The Acts of the Witnesses: the Autobiography of Lodowick Muggleton* ed T.L. Underwood (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 79, On Muggleton's self-demonstration see e.g. p. 109.
- ³⁴ Muggleton, *Witnesses*, p. 80-81.
- ³⁵ Muggleton, *Witnesses*, p. 110;
- ³⁶ Lodowick Muggleton, *Sacred Remains: or, a Divine Appendix* (London,, 1706), p.358-60; p. 437. See also Maureen Bell, 'Early book trade networks in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire' in John Hinks and Catherine Feely eds., *Historical Networks in the Booktrade* (London: Routledge, 2017), pp. 114-131.
- ³⁷ Lodowick Muggleton to John Gratton, *Verae Fidei Gloria est Corona Vitae a Volume of Spiritual Epistles* (1755); Muggleton, *Sacred*, p. 483-4.
- ³⁸ Gratton, *Verae Fidei*, 426-8.
- ³⁹ Leonard Wheatcroft, 'Autobiography' in *A Seventeenth-Century Scarsdale Miscellany* (Derbyshire Record Society, 1993), p. 85. See also Wheatcroft's daughter discussed Wiseman, 'Wheatcroft and Whythorne's passports in Rhyme', *Performance Review* 22: 3 (2017), pp. 61-68.

⁴⁰ Wheatcroft, 'Autobiography', p. 85.

⁴¹ Leonard Wheatcroft, *The Courtship Narrative of Leonard Wheatcroft* ed. George Parfitt and Ralph Houlbrooke (Reading: Whiteknights Press, 1986).

⁴² Wheatcroft, *Narrative*, p. 42.

⁴³ Wheatcroft, *Narrative*, p. 42, 43.

⁴⁴ Wheatcroft, *Narrative*, p. 43.

⁴⁵ Wheatcroft, *Narrative*, p. 44.

⁴⁶ Wheatcroft, *Narrative*, p. 81.

⁴⁷ Wheatcroft, *Narrative*, p.48.

⁴⁸ Personal communication, Derbyshire Record Office, 2017.

⁴⁹ Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms* trans. John Tedeschi and Anne C. Tedeschi ((1976) London: Routledge, 1981), xii

⁵⁰ Ginzburg, *Cheese*, p.xii, p.59.

⁵¹ David Levine and Zubedeh Vahed, 'Ginzburg's Menocchio: Refutations and Conjectures', *Histoire Social* (34) 437-464.

⁵² Carlo Ginzburg, 'Microhistory: two or three things that I know about it' in Carlo Ginzburg ed., *Threads and Traces* trans Anne C. Tedeschi and John Tedeschi (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012) p. 193-214; p. 198-199, 207. In this volume see also 'Details, early plans, microanalysis: thoughts on a book by Siegfried Kracuer', p. 180-192.

⁵³ See also 'Details, early plans, microanalysis: thoughts on a book by Siegfried Kracuer' in Ginzburg ed., *Threads*, 180-192.

⁵⁴ Siegfried Kracauer, *History: the Last Things Before the Last* (Princeton: Markus Wiener, 1969; rev., rpt 2014), p. 5.

⁵⁵ Tim Harris, *Revolution: the Great Crisis of the British Monarchy, 1685-1720* (London: Penguin, 20017).

⁵⁶ Natalie Zemon Davis, 'Towards Mixtures and Margins', *American Historical Review* 97/5 (1992), 1409-1416.

⁵⁷ Peter Beal, "'My books are the great joy of my life": Sir William Boothby, seventeenth-century bibliophile', *Book Collector*, 46 (1997), 350-78.

⁵⁸ Steven W. May and Arthur Marotti, *Ink, Stink Bait, Revenge, and Queen Elizabeth* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2014), p. 7-8.