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James R. Brantley
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What’s Past is Prologue

The Ancient Foundations of Renaissance Rome

BY AMY ARDEN
Pamela O. Long—recently named a 2014 MacArthur Foundation Fellow—has been working in the trenches of ancient Rome—figuratively, if not literally—to find out how aqueducts and other antiquarian structures helped Renaissance architects solve some pressing civic problems.

What does imperial Rome have to do with flood control and engineering? Quite a lot, according to research conducted by Pamela O. Long, an independent historian and recipient of a 2013-2014 NEH Fellowship at the Folger Shakespeare Library, where she’s been consulting an area of the collection whose presence may come as a surprise to some: items that help reveal Rome during the late Renaissance, a time when the city was transformed under the influence of powerful popes, humanist inquiry, and a vigorous exploration of Rome’s ancient past.

“The Folger has a wonderful collection of Italian rare books and Latin books with an Italian provenance. There are also the works of many humanists writing guidebooks and other tracts on the antiquities of Rome,” Long says.

Long is using these materials to explore how items such as maps, images, guidebooks, and books on Roman antiquities influenced sixteenth- and seventeenth-century thinking. The ideas at work—how knowledge and experience are articulated, transmitted, and interpreted—are reminiscent of topics explored during an NEH Summer Institute at the Folger in 2001, which Long co-led with Pamela H. Smith.

“There were many people in Rome who were fascinated by the ancient ruins and studied them intensely, while they also excavated and collected the numerous coins, statues, and other antiquities that they found. These individuals included learned humanists as well as those who practiced professions such as painting and architecture. Humanist scholars and practitioners often worked together and learned from each other in their study of ancient ruins,” Long explains.
Guidebooks documented and described ancient ruins, offering rich perspectives on what structures from antiquity could be seen among Rome’s early modern cityscape, and what residents and visitors thought about these relics from Rome’s imperial days. Meanwhile, ambitious churchmen set about stamping their own influence on Rome’s landmarks.

“In late sixteenth-century Rome, two cultural and political factors were in operation, which motivated an extensive movement to renovate the entire city,” explains Long. “First, this is the early Counter-Reformation period, and it was widely believed, by the popes and others, that the reform of the Catholic Church should also entail the renovation of the physical city. Second, conspicuous consumption under the popes, cardinals, and as well as other prominent figures, reflected power and social status. This drove the construction of numerous luxurious palaces and churches.”

Cultural, religious, and political factors were not the only influences at work in Rome’s transformation. In September of 1557, the Tiber River overran its banks, devastating low-lying areas in central Rome and killing hundreds of residents. The floodwaters destroyed homes as well as city infrastructure such as bridges and sewers; mud and human waste fouled the streets.

Between the demolition wrought by the flood as well as the ambitious building projects of Sixtus V—whose brief pontificate of just five years between 1585 and 1590 oversaw the completion of the dome of St. Peter’s Basilica, expansive additions and repairs to papal palaces, and leveling buildings to create four new city streets—Rome was transformed. Remnants of classical Rome lay at the heart of the city’s reconstruction.

“Sixteenth-century architects—whom we would call engineers today—observed ancient structures and analyzed how they were built. These architects strove to acquire historical knowledge of ancient building styles and techniques,” Long says. As a result, forms dating from antiquity experienced a revival in late Renaissance Rome.

The influence of ancient Rome extended beyond grand buildings inspired by classical techniques. Devastation from the Tiber overrunning its banks in 1557 brought flood control techniques to the forefront for Roman architects and scholars.

In examining methods for preventing future floods, Italian physician Andrea Bacci drew directly

There were many people in Rome who were fascinated by the ancient ruins and studied them intensely, while they also excavated and collected the antiquities that they found.
from ancient sources. His book, *Del Tevere di m. Andrea Bacci medico et filosofo libri tre*, is one of many Italian texts in the Folger collection. It references techniques employed by the emperor Augustus Caesar in the first century B.C. It provides a clear example of a sixteenth-century thinker looking back to classical techniques to solve a contemporary problem.

“When Andrea Bacci recommends doing what the ancients did he refers specifically to the Emperor Augustus cleaning the Tiber’s riverbed and appointing an officer in charge of the river. Bacci knows that Augustus did these things because he read Suetonius’ *Lives of the Caesars*, first published in AD 121 and later reprinted in many editions from the fifteenth century onwards,” Long explains.

The dilapidated state of Rome’s centuries-old aqueducts provided another opportunity for ancient techniques to prompt solutions for early modern challenges. The growing Roman population needed increasing amounts of fresh water, placing strain on the only one of the city’s ancient aqueducts that still remained partially functional. Debate raged about how best to solve this problem, with some arguing that the aqueducts should be repaired and used to bring spring water into the city, while others suggested that water from the Tiber was preferable.

Bacci weighs in on the matter in *Del Tevere*, arguing that water from the Tiber River would be healthier for Romans to drink than spring water. “Seeing this text led me to realize that there was a big argument on this subject and that it involved many people, not just Bacci. And I found all sides of the argument in Folger books,” Long says.

By examining materials about early modern Rome, Long is uncovering a vision of the city that extends back into antiquity, and illuminates how sixteenth-century thinkers not only studied ancient sources, but also used them to address contemporary challenges.

Amy Arden has been a contributing writer to *Folger Magazine* since 2008. She most recently wrote about Paul Menzer and his research on Shakespeare anecdotes for the Summer 2014 issue.
A new Folger exhibition considers the hidden side of Shakespeare’s world with a stimulating mix of early works on codes, ciphers, and concealed messages, the story of two preeminent twentieth-century codebreakers, and the stunning and still-unsolved Voynich Manuscript.

Crumbling under siege, this ornate building might stand for the tragedy of war, perhaps, or endurance under fire. To the cryptographer Johannes Friderici, however, its meaning was much more direct. As explained in his 1685 book Cryptographia, the four-pane windows represent letters of the alphabet. The first three are w, i, and r, or wir—German for “we.” The full message? “We are out of [gun]powder.”

That hidden text exemplifies the wealth of covert systems, codes, and ciphers that poured forth in the early modern age. In the exhibition Decoding the Renaissance: 500 Years of Codes and Ciphers, curator Bill Sherman, head of research at the Victoria and Albert Museum and professor of Renaissance studies at the University of York, traces the period’s fascination with secret communication through rare books, manuscripts, and more.

As the following pages show, still more materials—including a once top-secret US cipher machine—tell the parallel story of William Friedman, the founder of modern American cryptography, and Elizebeth Friedman, a gifted codebreaker in her own right. Best known in literary circles for debunking the idea of ciphers in Shakespeare’s plays, the Friedmans had a wide-ranging interest in Renaissance materials, including attempts to decode the Voynich Manuscript, one of the great manuscript mysteries of the world.
the Renaissance—
AND THE TWENTIETH CENTURY
BY ESTHER FERINGTON
Although some Renaissance ideas for secret communications seem more creative than practical, others were the stuff of grim reality. This letter conveyed information on Oliver Cromwell’s troops to one of King Charles I’s nephews. The letter, as sent, included long sequences of numbers. The recipient then worked out the message on the same page, using an agreed-on list. Crucial words had three-digit codes: in the enlarged phrase, 425 is “your” and 106 is “army.” Codes for common words like “this” started with a letter (here, n4). Others were spelled out: 56. 17. 70. is w, a, y.

Coded letter written for King Charles I by George Digby, Earl of Bristol, to Prince Rupert or Prince Maurice. Manuscript, April 27, 1645. Folger Shakespeare Library.
Renaissance authors also conceived of cipher machines. A “volvelle” like the one at right had a movable inner disk, making it, in effect, a paper machine. Others imagined several disks used in a series. Centuries later, such multiple components were essential to World War II cipher machines. The SIGABA machine, which William Friedman co-invented, had fifteen rotors—producing a result so complex that, as far as is known, it was never broken.
Francis Bacon invented his “biliteral” (two-letter) cipher, shown at right in one of his books, as a teenager. First, he determined that any message could be represented by two letters, a and b. In the cipher, A is aaaaa, B is aaaaab, C is aaaaab, and so on. His next insight was simple but brilliant: the two letters can then be replaced by anything that comes in pairs, such as two shapes or two musical notes.

In the early 1900s, Elizabeth Wells Gallup argued that printing variations in Shakespeare’s plays were part of just such a scheme, yielding cipher clues that Bacon had written the plays. The Friedmans first met as staffers on Gallup’s project, although they refuted the idea in a later book.

The biliteral cipher fascinated William Friedman. In a 1918 photo, students in his first World War I cryptanalysis class spell out almost all of Bacon’s saying, “Knowledge is power.” Those looking at the camera are a’s and the others are b’s.
“[T]he highest degree of cipher . . . is to signify anything by means of anything.”
—Sir Francis Bacon, 1623
n 1912, a bookseller named Wilfrid Voynich came across the puzzling, unreadable manuscript that now bears his name. Now part of the Yale University collection, the Voynich Manuscript is in no known alphabet or language. Its many illustrations include plants, remedies, and cosmological, astrological, and astronomical diagrams like those shown here, but its purpose and origin remain unknown. Carbon-14 dating places the parchment in the early 1400s.
Both Friedmans were intrigued by the text, which William Friedman repeatedly returned to with groups of cryptanalysts, without success. A typical chart summarizes the frequency and distribution of its letters, translated into a standard alphabet. Friedman’s ultimate conclusion was that the work must be an attempt at an artificial language, rather than a true cipher or code. To this day, the manuscript remains unsolved and unread, a mystery awaiting its solution.
The Friedmans reveled in the many ways of communicating in secret. Their 1928 Christmas card (a “telephotogram,” one of the era’s innovations) offered friends a fairly easy challenge. It included a variant on a tool known as a “grille,” developed in the mid-1500s. Recipients were invited to place the grille—a sheet with irregularly placed holes—over the text puzzle in each of four orientations, revealing the four lines of their Christmas verse.

In the mid-1630s, this letter from John Clotworthy, Viscount Masereene, to John Winthrop, Jr. used the same method in earnest to conceal its meaning. Marks at each of the four corners helped the sender and recipient to place their copies of the grille precisely. The text that can be seen through the grille is the letter’s true message.

**Meet the Curator**

Bill Sherman is head of research at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London and a professor of Renaissance studies at the University of York. He was director of the Centre for Renaissance & Early Modern Studies (CREMS) at York from its creation in 2005 to 2011, and associate editor of *Shakespeare Quarterly* from 2001 to 2012. Sherman is the author of *Used Books: Marking Readers in Renaissance England* (2009) and *John Dee: The Politics of Reading and Writing in the English Renaissance* (1997).

**ON EXHIBIT**

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Learn more at [www.folger.edu/decodingtherenaissance](http://www.folger.edu/decodingtherenaissance)
For Christmas greetings in 28,  
We use a means quite up to date:  
A cryptotelephotogram here  
Brings you word of Xmas cheer.  

—FRIEDMAN FAMILY, CHRISTMAS 1928

**Esther Ferington** is an editor, writer, and content developer based in northern Virginia. Her most recent article for the *Folger Magazine* was “In the Company of Heralds” in the Summer 2014 issue, for which she also took the cover photograph.
The Folger is producing a series of audio recordings of the complete, unabridged texts of the Folger Editions and performed by leading Shakespearean actors. The series launched with five of Shakespeare’s most popular plays: Hamlet, Macbeth, A Midsummer Night’s Dream, Othello, and Romeo and Juliet. Julius Caesar and Richard III will be released in early 2015.

Below, Louis Butelli, one of the recording actors who has also played a variety of roles on stage for Folger Theatre, dons yet another hat as he describes in posts to the Folger Theatre Production Diary what it was like to be in the recording studio during the sessions.

TAKE ONE: 
OTHELLO ON THE MIC
NOVEMBER 29, 2011

Hi from your pal Louis Butelli, aka Roderigo, in Folger Theatre’s production of Othello.

A couple of weeks ago, the company learned that the Folger was going to attempt a bold new experiment, for which we were to be the guinea pigs. Selected Folger Editions will be made available as an audio recording of the whole text of the play.

On Monday, then, the entire company of Othello made a trip to a recording studio in Maryland where, under the supervision of director Robert Richmond and Grammy Award-winning engineer Charlie Pilzer, we set about the task of creating a complete audio recording of Othello.

ALL IN A DAY’S WORK
With just one day in the studio, from 9am to 6pm, and working out of sequence, everyone had to move quickly and efficiently, keep their energy up, and stay on their toes. Grouped together by scene, actors would head into a large soundproof booth equipped with six highly sensitive Neumann microphones—the sound of footfalls, breathing, and rustling script pages are all highly audible—and put on headsets. Meanwhile, in the adjacent mixing room, through a thick pane of glass, our coaches Robert, Charlie, and the Folger management team kept an eye on sound levels, performances, and the text of the play.

“There’s more pressure than I thought there’d be because of the time constraints—plus, you can see their faces through the window,” said Ian Merrill Peakes (Iago). “Robert Richmond does not have a good poker face.”

Meanwhile, at the catering table in the waiting room, Owiso Odera (Othello) added, “It’s both wonderful and daunting to put something on tape that will possibly last forever.”


**ACTING WITH MICS**

As with working on a film set, the recording process is highly technical and completely unlike the experience of producing a live stage performance.

“It’s difficult because it feels like you’re acting with the mic more so than the other actor you’re playing the scene with, and I’m so used to looking at the other actor,” Owiso continued. “But it’s good because it helps you listen to the music of Shakespeare’s language.”

There’s also a lot of “hurry-up-and-wait” with plenty of downtime for the actors not being used to record a given scene. “It’s kind of like an audition with people anxiously waiting around,” said Karen Peakes (Emilia) of the vibe in the waiting room. Everyone processed the downtime in their own way—some looking at their lines for an upcoming scene, many people on laptops and iPads, one actor (certainly not me) outside smoking heavily.

**NO LINE LEFT BEHIND**

One of the most striking parts of the experience has been working with the complete, uncut version of the play’s text. As with most stage productions, Robert directed us in his adaptation, or cutting, of the full text. At the studio, though, we were recording every single line of the play. This poses new challenges for the actors.

“The given circumstances for each of the scenes change drastically because of the differences in the script,” said Thomas Keegan (Cassio). “Add in the intimacy of the microphone and it’s a totally different experience from our stage production.”

Ian added, “Another thing that’s fun is hearing all the words we don’t say [in our show]—directly in your ear. It’s so present. In the headphones you can hear it so well, and it’s really great to hear these words.”

**EVERYTHING OLD IS NEW AGAIN**

While breaking the habit of saying a particular set of lines in a particular way can be challenging—this group of actors has been working on our version of *Othello* for ten weeks now—the recording experience has also helped us all to look at the play with fresh eyes.

It also gave us the opportunity to work together in a completely brand new way, as if we were performers on a radio show. As Joe Guzman (Lodovico) put it, “There’s a great shorthand in the ensemble and we were able to do some complex group scenes, adding sound effects and slaps and laughter. We all know each other so well, this late in the run, and that, I think, made it almost effortless.”

As the day wore on, the coffee flowed, and a slight giddiness started to set in. We found our groove, learned our way around the studio, and ideas and laughs were abundant. By the time 6pm rolled around, we had an amazing recording of the entire Folger Edition of *Othello* in the can.
Because the actual text will be visible to listeners in the app, we had to be absolutely word-perfect and pronunciation-accurate. If one said “do it” or “thinkest” where Shakespeare had written “do ‘t” or “think’st,” we had to repeat the take.

TAKING TWO: 4 PLAYS IN 20 DAYS, OR IF THIS IS TUESDAY IT MUST BE HAMLET

JULY 30, 2013

For three weeks this summer, a team of actors, producers, and engineers gathered at Omega Studios in Rockville, Maryland to record audio of the complete, un-cut text of four of Shakespeare’s greatest plays: A Midsummer Night’s Dream, Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet, and Macbeth.

The team rehearsed each play for two days around a table, and then spent two days in the studio recording each play. A whirlwind, to be sure, but also an epic adventure.

Of the ensemble of actors that came together for these recordings, many of us have worked on productions of some—if not all—of these plays through the course of our careers. Still, my suspicion is that none of us have ever worked on the full, un-cut text in performance.

NOTHING BUT OUR VOICES

Moreover, while some of us have done audio and voice-over work before, the challenge here was to create compelling, believable characters using nothing but our voices.

Often, when a creative team is pulling together a stage show, there are elements to consider that reach beyond the text: running time, or how long you want to keep an audience sitting in their seats; directorial concept, or what it is a stage director hopes to communicate in staging a particular play of Shakespeare’s at a particular moment in time; and how to handle denser, more complex language—which often impacts on the clowns and fools who are frequently handed some of Shakespeare’s odder passages.

All of which is to say that working on the full, un-cut text was, in a sense, like experiencing familiar plays for the very first time. In 2006–07, I performed in a production of Romeo and Juliet which played 65 American cities, toured Europe, and played the Edinburgh Festival. I thought I knew the play inside and out. However, what I knew so intimately as “Romeo and Juliet” was actually only our edit of Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet.

CREATING FLESHED-OUT WORLDS

Working on the full, un-cut version in the studio revealed to me a totally different play. Don’t get me wrong—all of the major characters live in both, all of the same events occur in both, thematically they are the same. Still, the full version confronted me with a different experience—in tone, in timing, in incidental scenes which prove to be anything but incidental.

I hope I don’t over-reach here, but in placing the star-crossed lovers in a more fully fleshed-out world where attention to the everyday lives of servants, musicians, and “sidekicks” push both Romeo and Juliet, the ostensible stars of the show, offstage for significant chunks of time, it actually makes the lovers’ demise that much more incomprehensible and, in my opinion, that much more tragic.

Secondly, I can’t begin to tell you what a thrill it was to watch this company of actors learn to navigate, not only the unfamiliar parts of the text, but the intricate ins-and-outs of studio work.
DON’T FORGET TO EAT YOUR WHEATIES

I can’t tell you emphatically enough exactly how sensitive the microphones are in the studio. This sounds like an obvious thing to say, but it was the largest concern in terms of the logistics of “acting” on this project. One had to figure out how to have all of one’s pages laid out in front of them at once because rustling paper, on mic, is deafening and completely ruins the illusion.

Also, one had to be certain to have a big breakfast before recording. While coffee and a delicious plate of eggs and bacon certainly helps one to focus mentally, more to the point, if one came in hungry, the mic would pick up even the smallest rumbling of the stomach.

Further, because the actual text will be visible to listeners in the app, we had to be absolutely word-perfect and pronunciation-accurate. If one said “do it” or “think’est” where Shakespeare had written “do ‘t” or “think’st,” we had to repeat the take.

And all of this before anything even resembling “acting” could take place!

CONNECTING AURALLY

The largest challenge here was the ability to connect with fellow actors. The studio itself was a forest of cables, mics and mic stands, music stands for text, prop tables and props we used to generate sound effects. Plus, if you didn’t keep your eyes on their papers, you could very easily botch a word or two, requiring another take. This meant that the only substantial way to connect with scene partners was aurally, via the large headphones we all wore.

On the one hand, this flies in the face of all actor instinct—you want to look at your partner, read their face and their body language.

On the other hand, it’s also incredibly freeing. The actor doesn’t ever have to appear visually, which meant that we were able to do things with our bodies, as we spoke, that we could never do onstage. As we got used to this, to a person, everybody in the studio gave themselves permission to contort themselves and move in odd ways—all of which a listener can actually “hear.”

That sounds strange, but the difference between a take that had “life” and a take that sounded “read” would almost always come down to the actor using his whole body to speak.

We had an absolute blast working on these recordings. Many of the actors had previous relationships and had worked together before. Some of us were meeting and collaborating for the very first time. It was all fairly fast and furious, and we had a pretty tight deadline.

What I found was that being under pressure, as always for us theater folks, old friendships were strengthened, and new ones were formed. With many of us living together in artist housing, a day in the studio was often followed by a night in the backyard discussing Shakespeare with the barbecue fired up and the wine flowing. In no small measure, I think this camaraderie helped to make the performances truly excellent. I think you’re really going to enjoy them.

Louis Butelli has spent the past eighteen years working as an actor, teacher, director, and writer. From 1998–2008, he was Artist-in-Residence and Company Clown for the Aquila Theatre Company, and has worked with many other theatrical companies and appeared in several television series. His work for Folger Theatre in Twelfth Night and Henry VIII earned him nominations for a Helen Hayes Award for Outstanding Supporting Performer, which he won for Henry VIII. Most recently, he played Cassius in Julius Caesar.

Learn more at www.folger.edu/audio

The Folger’s audio recordings can also be heard in the Folger Luminary Shakespeare app for the iPad.
For the past 30 years, the halls, classrooms, and theater at the Folger have rung with the summertime sounds of enthusiastic teachers learning how to bring Shakespeare to life for their students. We call it the Teaching Shakespeare Institute. But for them, it’s Total Shakespeare Immersion.

Andrea Alsup has taught high school English for 30 years now, but she was only a first-year teacher when she applied to the Folger’s inaugural Teaching Shakespeare Institute in 1984. Alsup had just tried teaching *Hamlet* to all the senior English classes at Woodstock Union High School in Vermont. She says she taught it the way she’d been taught: paraphrasing and explaining every word, sentence by sentence.

“The kids slept and drooled while I sweated blood,” she says. “Then the flier came from the Folger. I applied and told the truth—I had no idea how to interest kids in Shakespeare.”

Alsup describes what happened at the Folger that summer as the most important experience of her teaching career.

**SHAKESPEARE FOR ALL**

The Teaching Shakespeare Institute, or TSI, takes as its premise the belief that Shakespeare is for all students, of all ability levels, and that studying Shakespeare should be “active, intellectual, energizing, and a pleasure for teacher and student,” in the words of the Folger’s education director, Peggy O’Brien.

Over the past 30 years, with funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities, TSI has followed much the same course, to powerful effect:

- Bring a group of 25 high school teachers from all over the country to Washington, DC, for a month in the summer.
- Expose them to an unparalleled collection of primary sources, expert librarians and scholars, leading actors, and master teachers at the Folger.
- Forge a community where teachers share intense learning experiences and stretch their minds with a three-prong approach: scholarship,
performance, and practical techniques for teaching Shakespeare.

Send the teachers back to their classrooms reenergized, filled with confidence, and better equipped to teach not just Shakespeare, but all kinds of literature.

**A BEGUILING PARTNERSHIP**

Skip Nicholson, who today conducts teacher-training workshops and institutes for the College Board, was also part of that first group of teachers in 1984. But for him, TSI came at the midway point in a 40-year teaching career.

“The Institute had no reputation yet, so I went in unaware that it would change how I taught more than what I taught,” Nicholson says. “I arrived hoping no one would realize that I didn’t have the experience, the intelligence, the knowledge that everyone else did. But when I saw some of the scholars helping my fellow participants carry their luggage into the dorms at American University, I began to suspect the experience would be richer than I had anticipated.”

O’Brien, the driving force behind TSI, remembers that first summer as “completely fabulous and completely exhausting.” She also remembers how radically that simple act—the faculty carrying the teachers’ bags—set the tone for an overall atmosphere of mutual respect and collegiality, at that institute and all the ones that followed.

“I was overwhelmed by the enormousness of what I was being offered,” Nicholson says. “And it was the new feeling that it was all ‘offered’ rather than given as truth or thrust at us. We were made partners with the scholars in their intellectual pursuit and with the master teachers in developing curriculum for our own students and with the actors in bringing it all to life to communicate to an audience, however small or inexperienced.”
DEEP IMPACT
When the Folger recently sent out a survey to TSI alumni, asking them to describe their experiences, responses were tremendously positive. A sample shows just how deep an impact the program made:

Definitely this changed my career. It came at a time when I could have “burned out”; instead, I was fired up, recharged, and able to inspire students and colleagues. I can never say thank you enough.

Transformative. Empowering. Delightful. Beguiling. The essence of what teaching and learning should be. Gets to the heart of why most of us got in this business in the first place. A necessity in these test-centric days.

The first two things that pop into my mind are “lifechanging” and “intense.” It changed the way I teach and gave me the confidence to do so. “Unforgettable” would also work.

CHANGING TEACHERS
“I remember the brainstorming and encouragement that everyone shared with each other,” says Geoff Stanbury, a high school English teacher in Texas and 2010 TSI alumnus. “At such times when I would feel overwhelmed by the pressure to do quality work, someone else would always remind me that TSI wasn’t a trial; that rather, we were all there to appreciate and celebrate Shakespeare, and to learn how to help kids do the same.”

After TSI, Nicholson says the changes in the way he taught weren’t at first clear to him. “I knew my kids were enjoying Shakespeare in a completely new way, but I realized only much later that what I learned in the Institute had changed the way I related to my students.

“Being with students while they worked their way to a performance of a scene gave me the chance to let them get to know the text while I sat on the sidelines, sometimes coaching, sometimes just admiring their work.”

TRANSFORMING STUDENTS
Teachers also report changes in the way their students act. Stanbury says that teaching Shakespeare through performance has allowed many of his students “to let go of the roles that they’ve established for themselves.” Fidgety students suddenly become attentive, shy students step forward to act out lines from Shakespeare’s plays.

Mary Bevilacqua, a 1991 TSI graduate who taught high school English for 30 years in Florida, says that her students “ran to class when we read Shakespeare, and years later they tell me how he continues to enrich their lives.”

We were all there to appreciate and celebrate Shakespeare, and to learn how to help kids do the same.
I knew my kids were enjoying Shakespeare in a completely new way, but I realized only much later that what I learned in the Institute had changed the way I related to my students.

TSI creates a strong bond between teachers and the Folger Shakespeare Library, and among the teachers themselves. Upon returning home, they spread the Folger’s performance-based learning approach in their schools, even starting student festivals for Shakespeare performances.

Andrea Alsup organized a Shakespeare festival for New England students, teaming up with other teachers who had been at the Folger with her. The festival ran for the remaining 10 years she taught in Vermont, before she moved to teach at a high school in Hanover, New Hampshire.

**Shakespeare Set Free**

TSI also led to the groundbreaking Shakespeare Set Free series, which came out of the summer institutes of 1988 and 1989. O’Brien wanted to put together material for teachers who weren’t able to come to TSI, so a group of teachers set to work on building curriculum for seven Shakespeare plays, and then tested out the lesson plans during the school year before regrouping the next summer with everyone’s notes and results. The first volume, *Teaching Romeo and Juliet, Macbeth, and A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, was published in 1993; two other books soon followed. All three are still in use today.

Some things have changed since 1984. Initially, TSI was held every summer, but the institute eventually moved to every other summer. And while the first TSI pushed participants through eight plays in four weeks, the teachers this past summer took a more in-depth look at two plays, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Twelfth Night*.

**A Lasting Legacy**

But even as the format has shifted over time, the core of the program remains constant.

“We know that the content is really solid,” O’Brien says. “It changes the way that teachers read literature, it changes the way they teach literature, and it changes their opinion of themselves as teachers. It gives them a new confidence.”

And the friendships that came out of TSI have endured over the years.

“I have remained friends with several of the people I met at the Folger, who taught me a great deal about teaching poetry, writing, new books, and generally being courageous in the classroom,” Alsup says.

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*Esther French* is a contributing writer to *Folger Magazine*. As the Folger’s Communications Associate, she helps to manage the Folger website, social media, and other digital communications.

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The Great Rebuilding: 
Changing the Timber of the Elizabethan Countryside

“IT’S ME OR THE SHEEP, THOMAS! And while you’re at it, do something about all this smoke.” It may be tempting to envision such a domestic scene in a medieval longhouse—its space shared with farm stock and an open fire in the middle of the floor—but there’s no evidence that it actually took place, or that a disgruntled housewife ever spurred the great changes about to take place in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English countryside. What is known is that the Elizabethans ushered in an architectural revolution that affected not only people’s houses but also how they lived in them—and the reasons for the change, as with most things, were myriad.

“The Great Rebuilding” was the term first proposed by W.G. Hoskins in 1953 to describe the housing boom in England from 1570 to 1640. Subsequent scholars have debated the timeframe, extending it or even proposing that it occurred in two separate phases. Others have questioned the extent of the rebuilding, suggesting that regional and economic differences rendered the effect more scattered than initially thought. But no one doubts that a transformation was taking place, with people of all social classes rebuilding or remodeling their houses at an unprecedented rate. “While we may query the dates,” writes archeologist Matthew Johnson, “the idea of a rebuilding refers to a deeper underlying pattern of thought; it captures some key insights about the period. This was a moment of social and cultural, as well as architectural, transformation.” Or, as William Harrison, a rector, observer of social changes, and author of Description of England (1577), noted, “If ever curious building did flourish in England, it is in these our years.”

WHERE CAN WE PUT ALL THIS STUFF?
So what inspired this frenzy of building? For one thing, people at all levels of society were enjoying a higher standard of living than ever before. As historian Colin Platt writes, “the disposable wealth of English property-owners of every known degree was rising very rapidly during Elizabeth’s reign, and the quality of their housing rose with it.” Scholars can track the rising standard of living thanks to a 1529 regulation requiring inventories of English households, which details a dramatic increase in the quantity of possessions during the period.

 Johnson notes that working farmhouses prior to this time were so “full of noise and clatter” that, as the need for a quiet domestic retreat increased, some property-owners came up with a solution: “the spaces between the joists were packed with walnut shells or other materials to deaden the noise.”
In *Elizabethan Households*, Lena Cowen Orlin illustrates the difference with a comparison between two farmers. Edward Kempsdale, who died in 1560, left less than £20 worth of household goods. Fewer than thirty years later, another farmer named Thomas Gyll left this mortal coil boasting twenty-eight pieces of pewter, five silver spoons, and a variety of linens totaling more than £67. Tellingly, Orlin notes that Kempsdale’s house had two rooms while Gyll’s had four, a trend that was seen at all social levels and raises the question of which came first: Did people add on to their houses to accommodate their goods or buy goods to fill their new rooms? Orlin believes it was the former; that is, “people began first to accumulate more possessions and only afterwards discovered that they needed more space to store and display them.”

**A ROOM OF ONE’S OWN**

While people were living more comfortably, there was also an increase in population during this period and people were living longer. So not only was more housing needed, but longer life expectancies and greater material security also encouraged people to invest in rebuilding. The Reformation of the 1530s played a part as well, with the dissolution of the monasteries making stone, timber, and other materials available for building, and the destruction of interior elements in many churches giving parishioners pause about continuing to contribute to something that might well be subject to ruin again. As Johnson writes, “When the medieval peasant had a succession of good harvests, the money might well be donated to the Church, for the good of his soul; after the Reformation, the money might go in other directions, for example, toward the purchase of land or the construction of a new home.”

A desire for individual privacy also helped drive the remodeling of open medieval houses. A rising literacy rate meant that more people began indulging in the practice of solitary reading, which led to a heightened sense of self and a wish sometimes to be alone. In fact, Johnson notes that working farmhouses prior to this time were so “full of noise and clatter” that, as the need for a quiet domestic retreat increased, some property-owners came up with a solution: “the spaces between the joists were packed with walnut shells or other materials to deaden the noise.”

**THIS OLD HOUSE**

So other than baffling the racket, what changes were people making to their houses? A significant part of the transformation in vernacular architecture involved remodeling old dwellings, adding a ceiling to the medieval open interior to create rooms above, and installing a chimney stack to replace the open fire. Initially, the room might be partitioned to separate the stable and living space; eventually, the animals were moved to outbuildings and the hall divvied up into individual rooms.

For example, Platt describes how Nicholas Hill, a baker from Oxfordshire, partitioned his large open interior in 1580, installing windows and furnishing it with a chimney, and flooring an apartment over it to create two new bedchambers above. Part of the ground floor was devoted to cooking and eating and, according to Hill’s 1590 inventory, the remainder was dedicated to a “Buttyre” where he kept his pewter and linens, and a parlor that held a “great bed.” Over his brewhouse was another large chamber with two canopy beds where he kept “all his wearing apparell.”
RAISE HIGH THE ROOFBEAMS
New houses constructed during this period followed suit, with ceiling and chimney stacks being part of the owner’s design—if not always the carpenter’s. Johnson’s investigations have revealed what “often seems to be confusion between builder and client about what the final form of the house should look like,” he notes, with the carpenter, schooled in the old manner, having to make modifications midstream. Analysis of the frame of a house built in Norfolk at this time, for example, shows where the joists to support a floor had to be jury-rigged around an opening originally intended as a window in an open hall.

Homes in the English countryside were timber-framed rather than all-wood construction to save on precious timber. Generally built in a box shape (although bowed timbers called crucks were used in some areas prior to 1600), the frames were held together by carpentered joints secured with wooden pegs. Nails were seldom used in construction as each one had to be painstakingly hand-wrought. The frame was sometimes constructed elsewhere and then erected at the site, which required the carpenter to employ a system of modified Roman numerals, scratching the marks onto the various components so that the builders would know how to put the thing together. Once the frame was raised, it was frequently incumbent upon the homeowner to reward the workers with bread and ale.

A WINDOW ON THE PAST
Builders then filled the walls with various materials such as lath and plaster, stone, wattle and daub (a lattice “wattle” daubed with a combination of clay, soil, sand, straw, and animal dung), or cob, an especially impervious mud peculiar to the Devon region that was often unwittingly mixed underfoot by cattle and then tamped, leveled, and left to set into chunks. While it was the Romans who introduced bricks to England, few people could afford them for anything other than chimney stacks. Thatch was the preferred form of roofing, keeping houses warm by providing good insulation, but it could harbor rodents and insects and presented a fire risk. Many people opted instead for clay tiles, slate, or shingles, depending on local resources.

Windows were also part of the revolution. Previously, painted windows of expensive imported glass had been available to the wealthy, but country folk had to be content with horn panels or lattice. Thanks to the switch to coal as fuel in the early seventeenth century, glass became more cheap and plentiful in England. One indication of its popularity was that windows became just another part of the house and no longer appeared on inventories. Up to this point, architectural elements such as panels, shutters, doors, staircases, and glass windows were considered household property and, as such, could even be bequeathed separately to heirs. In 1590, the will of Robert Birks specified that his house be left to his wife, but “all doors, glass windows, etc.” should go to his son. After 1600, glass became classified as a fixed asset.
SPREADING OUT AND BRINGING IT HOME

Creating additional rooms, either upstairs or by dividing the hall, led to different patterns of living within the house. As Orlin explains, “the family could then spread out,” with the new spaces becoming sleeping chambers or parlors for entertaining and leisure activities. People were thus able to enjoy some privacy and to segregate the various functions of their work and domestic lives. This was a significant change. “When people rebuilt their houses,” writes Johnson, “they also rebuilt their lives. The house was much more than timber, lime, stone, bricks, and mortar… [I]t represented a way of living and a way of understanding the world.”

Clearly, the transformative nature of this period, with its profound effects on the material, social, and cultural life of England, is undeniable. But what does it have to say to us today? We turn again to Orlin: “This is the point about the Great Rebuilding of 1570 to 1640: not only that England produced buildings of great architectural distinction during this period, but, more that the dramatic changes in domestic architecture reshaped private life. There are many points of intersection between our notions of comfort, privacy, luxury, and self-image and those that emerged during the architectural revolution of the Elizabethan years.” So if you’re reading this in a quiet room of your house—or what an upper-class woman of the time might call her “closet”—you have the Elizabethans to thank for making it possible.

Karen Lyon is managing editor of Folger Magazine and has written on topics relating to everyday life in Shakespeare’s time, including education, clothing, food and humors, sporting games, attitudes toward animals, the role of magic, crime and punishment, and table manners (or lack thereof). She also recently remodeled her kitchen.

If the English countryside is not in your travel plans, you can still view samples of Elizabethan architecture on this side of the Atlantic. At Historic Jamestowne in Virginia, for example, the site of the first permanent English settlement in America, you can see cruck construction (and glass-blowing demonstrations) at the glasshouse and tour reproductions of seventeenth-century buildings patterned after structures found archaeologically at sites near Jamestown. Conservator Ed McManus, who wielded a trowel at several digs in the area, shares his insights on the links between Elizabethan and colonial American architecture.
ENGLISH VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE IN THE NEW WORLD

BY ED McMANUS

The availability of materials had a significant influence on vernacular architecture in Elizabethan England and on colonial architecture in the New World. In England during the Elizabethan era, forests were almost depleted and much of what remained—especially old-growth oak—was set aside for naval ship building. Accordingly, the variety and sizes of timber available for domestic purposes declined, affecting framing techniques, the size of structures, and the adoption of a variety of fill materials between the wooden framing elements. By 1600, one style of English domestic architecture known as cruck construction had all but disappeared. Cruck houses and barns were made with large curved tree trunks as the primary support, much like an A-frame.

Upon arrival on the east coast of North America, English settlers found themselves blessed with an abundance of old growth forests. Some historians and archaeologists speculate that in Virginia, there may have been a brief resurgence of older English construction methods such as the cruck. There is evidence that the first church erected at Jamestown was a cruck building. It has been speculated that another early cruck house was built at Flowerdew Hundred, an early 1618 plantation along the James River. Wood was also available as a siding material and roofing material. Thatch, one of the preferred English roofing materials, did not transfer to the colonies because neither the variety of reeds available nor the drier climate favored its use.

English vernacular architecture evolved throughout the colonies based upon the availability of various building materials, such as stone and brick, and on regional environments. It was also influenced by new waves of settlers, who brought with them their traditional building techniques. Early Swedish settlers, for example, were responsible for the log cabin, which was the predominant form of vernacular architecture in the Scandinavian countries during the Elizabethan period thanks to an abundance of forests there. As other Europeans began to migrate toward the densely timbered west, the log cabin became the popular house form, transferring readily to the New World due to the availability of timber.

Ed McManus majored in history at the College of William and Mary and participated in many seventeenth- and eighteenth-century archaeological excavations along the James and York Rivers in Virginia. Most recently, he served as chief conservator of the National Air and Space Museum.
Behind the Scenes


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**Off the Shelf**

*Ideas of Order: A Close Reading of Shakespeare’s Sonnets*
by Neil L. Rudenstine
In this useful companion piece to the sonnets themselves, the former president of Harvard University takes a critical scholarly look at what is arguably the greatest single work of lyric poetry in English and reveals the existence of a dramatic narrative arc that links the poems when they are considered in relationship to one another.

*Shakespeare in 100 Objects: Treasures from the Victoria and Albert Museum*
Jane Birkett, editor
Curators from the Victoria and Albert Museum selected 100 objects from their extensive collection of shakespeareana—including artwork, costumes, playbills, sculpture, photographs, and film stills—to tell the story of the playwright, his work, and his world. Each is illustrated and accompanied by an essay on its history and provenance.

*Shakespeare and the Digital World: Redefining Scholarship and Practice*
Christie Carson and Peter Kirwan, editors
This collection of essays by a broad range of Shakespeare scholars provides reflections on how new technologies—and the digital humanities in particular—are having an impact on how Shakespeare is taught, archived, edited, and performed, examining current scholarship and practice in the digital age and redefining the boundaries of Shakespeare studies online.

*Barbarous Antiquity: Reorienting the Past in the Poetry of Early Modern England*
Miriam Jacobson
As trade expanded English horizons in the late sixteenth century, the language required new words to describe the wonders imported by merchants and diplomats from the Ottoman world. Jacobson shows how English poetry reflected these changes, balancing classical models against contemporary cultural exchanges and, in so doing, creating a new poetic form that blended East and West.

*Shakespeare’s Medieval Craft: Remnants of the Mysteries on the London Stage*
Kurt A. Schreyer
Is there a link between mystery plays, the biblical dramas performed throughout medieval England, and the plays of Shakespeare? Shreyer takes a new look at the debate, revealing how Shakespeare may have incorporated certain aspects of the older form, while distinguishing from it and forging new theatrical forms with his poetic additions to the older dramatic tradition.

*Covering Shakespeare: An Actor’s Saga of Near Misses and Dogged Endurance*
David Weston
Drawing on more than sixty years of acting experience, the author of the prize-winning *Covering McKellen* recounts the story of his own career—which includes acting in twenty-nine of Shakespeare’s thirty-seven plays and working with major companies and renowned directors all over the world—and offers advice to young actors.

*Poor Tom: Living King Lear*
Simon Palfrey
Edgar, the banished son of Gloucester, spends much of *King Lear* disguised as “Poor Tom o’ Bedlam,” a babbling madman. In a new book, an Oxford professor shines a fresh light on how Edgar’s character—perhaps one of Shakespeare’s most radical experiments in characterization—may in fact hold the key to the entire play.

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Available at the Folger Gift Shop, 202 675 0308 or www.folger.edu/shop.
From the Director

Shakespeare at the End of the World

This month I began reading a new novel by Emily St. John Mandel entitled *Station Eleven*.

Its story is bracing: the world’s population has been decimated by a global flu pandemic, and all that is left are tiny outposts of civilization—little towns built around an abandoned Walmart or McDonald’s. The heroine roams this land of ruins with a troupe of musicians and actors, offering ad hoc performances of the classical music repertory and the plays of Shakespeare. Ironically, these performers are now acting in the same conditions that traveling troupes performed in during the early modern period. Like the players who show up in Elsinore, they have a repertoire of plays that they have honed in front of audiences, and can set up shop almost anywhere.

The motto of this group, written on one of their caravan wagons, is “Survival is insufficient” (a quotation, as it turns out, from an episode of *Star Trek*). At the far end of the world, and in the face of catastrophic loss, this band of performers plays Shakespeare to anyone who will watch. The audience is passionate about the plays, perhaps because “people want what was best about the world.” Without power or fuel, there are still drama and music, both of which can be presented by candlelight.

Shakespeare was interested in our experience of extremes, some of which he explores on the heath in *King Lear*. Given the closure of London playhouses due to plague, he could easily have imagined the world grinding to a halt in the face of devastating sickness. He was a writer who could think in extremes, not just of the terrors that thrive in a godless world (as in Lear), but extremes of joy—of hopes fulfilled against impossible odds. These are the great gifts of the late plays, when Perdita is found on the shores of Bohemia in *The Winter’s Tale*, or when her mother Hermione walks back into life after having stood frozen as a statue. One wonders if Shakespeare learned to tell stories about these incredible hopes after seeing them upended in his own life, but such speculation may in the end prove fruitless.

What I appreciate in this new novel about Shakespeare at the end of the world is the sensibility I find in Shakespeare’s plays themselves: an awareness of our overwhelming desire for stories in which justice is done, people thrive, and love is possible (even likely). Perhaps one does not have to experience the extremes of Mandel’s novel to appreciate our desires for these things. But the longing for such things is real—perhaps the most real thing of all, if we follow the logic of Shakespeare’s late plays to their conclusion. And there will never be a world in which we fail to dream of these things.

Shakespeare was a writer who could think in extremes, not just of the terrors that thrive in a godless world, but extremes of joy—of hopes fulfilled against impossible odds.
From the Director

Old twists on new tunes, every Thursday at popsonnet.tumblr.com

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POPP SONNETS

xxx.

I had considered love a mythic force,
a fable told to children ere they slept —
and if ’twas real, it showed me no remorse
while it withheld the wistful dreams I kept.
I thought of romance like a chest of gold,
assuming what I gave would e’er be lost;
thus I commanded that my heart grow cold
so I might ne’er incur its heavy cost.
But when at last I saw her visage fair,
my chill’d convictions thaw’d to my relief;
I’m now the heart’s disciple, deep in pray’r
and thoroughly devout in my belief.
— No force on earth could ever be applied
to make me, love’s apostle, leave her side.

The Monkees, “I’m a Believer”
No production in the Folger’s history reached a wider audience than *Shakespeare: The Globe and the World*, a traveling exhibition that opened in San Francisco in October 1979. Launched while the Folger’s Reading Room was closed for renovation, the show attracted hundreds of thousands from coast to coast. It was a once-in-a-lifetime event, and host cities made the most of it. In Kansas City, nearly every schoolchild from St. Louis to Denver saw the exhibition, and universities held a three-month “Mid-American Shakespearean Chautauqua.” In Dallas and Atlanta, NEH-funded “actors in residence” spent weeks at local campuses. On the final weekend in Pittsburgh, Princess Grace of Monaco performed scenes from Shakespeare. And in New York, where a lecture by playwright Tom Stoppard kicked off the run, the *Times* hailed the exhibition as “instructive and continuously amusing,” singling out Sam Schoenbaum’s companion book as “a palpable hit.”

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