



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE

Humanities

DIVISION OF RESEARCH PROGRAMS

Narrative Section of a Successful Application

The attached document contains the grant narrative and selected portions of a previously funded grant application. It is not intended to serve as a model, but to give you a sense of how a successful application may be crafted. Every successful application is different, and each applicant is urged to prepare a proposal that reflects its unique project and aspirations. Prospective applicants should consult the Research Programs application guidelines at <http://www.neh.gov/grants/research/fellowships> for instructions. Applicants are also strongly encouraged to consult with the NEH Division of Research Programs staff well before a grant deadline.

Note: The attachment only contains the grant narrative and selected portions, not the entire funded application. In addition, certain portions may have been redacted to protect the privacy interests of an individual and/or to protect confidential commercial and financial information and/or to protect copyrighted materials.

Project Title: *Nonconformist British Women Writers, 1720-1840*. 8 vols.

Institution: Georgia Southern University

Project Director: Timothy Whelan

Grant Program: Fellowships Program

***Nonconformist British Women Writers,
1720-1840. 8 vols.***

RESEARCH AND CONTRIBUTION: In spring 2008, the London publisher Pickering and Chatto awarded me a contract to complete an 8-volume series, *Nonconformist Women Writers of the West Country, 1720-1840*. This series will publish 955 poems, 525 for the first time, as well as some 500 letters, three extensive diaries, and several shorter ones. The manuscripts now reside in the UK, primarily in the Reeves, Steele, Attwater, and Saffery Collections in the Angus Library, Regent's Park College, Oxford; a significant portion can also be found in the Reeves Collection (uncatalogued) in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, as well as the collections of the Bristol Baptist College Library, Bristol.

Spanning more than 150 years and six generations, these manuscripts constitute the most significant collection of 18th- and 19th-century Nonconformist (Baptist) women's materials. I will be writing the General Introduction to the entire series, as well as introductions to each writer, with the exception of Anne Steele, who will be addressed by my colleague, Julia Griffin. Each volume will include biographical sketches and in-depth critical analyses of the works, placing them in their historical, social, literary, and religious contexts. Each volume will be extensively annotated, identifying key individuals, places, and allusions. The order of the volumes will be as follows: Vols. 1 and 2: *The Poetry, Prose, and Letters of Anne Steele*; Vol. 3: *The Poetry, Prose, and Letters of Mary Steele*; Vol. 4: *The Poetry of Mary Scott*; Vol. 5: *The Poetry of Maria Saffery*; Vol. 6: *The Correspondence of Maria Saffery*; Vol. 7: *The Noble Enthusiast, a Novel by Maria Saffery*; Vol. 8: *The Poetry and Prose of Six West Country Nonconformist Women Writers, 1720-1810*. The first four volumes will be published in late spring or early summer, 2010; the final four volumes in spring 2011.

Of the nine Baptists and one Unitarian included in this series (all women from England's West Country), only Anne Steele (1717-78), Mary Steele (1753-1813), Mary Scott (1752-93), and Maria Saffery (1772-1858) published during their lifetime. The remaining six were nonetheless gifted poets, epistolarians and diarists: Anne Cator Steele (1689-1760), Anne Steele's stepmother; Mrs. Wakeford; Mary Steele Wakeford (1724-1772), Anne Cator Steele's daughter, Mrs. Wakeford's daughter-in-law, and Anne Steele's half-sister; Marianna Attwater (1749-1832), grandniece of Ann Cator Steele; Jane Attwater (1753-1843), Marianna's younger sister and close friend of Mary Steele and Mary Scott; and Frances Barrett Ryland (b. 1761), a friend of Maria Saffery and second wife of the Rev. Dr. John Ryland, Baptist minister, educator, and co-founder of the Baptist Missionary Society. These women were self-acknowledged writers, like the more famous Bluestockings, concerned about women's education and literary accomplishments. As provincial Nonconformists, however, they never moved in the elite circles of London society and English culture. Nevertheless, as daughters of merchants, well-to-do farmers, and, in the case of Anne Steele, a merchant/preacher, they were fluent in the literary traditions of the age. The quality and diversity of their writings are equal to those of any coterie of 18th-century female writers.

In these volumes, readers will discover who these women were and the communities in which they lived. Their writings reveal them as angry and satirical, playful and witty, sentimental and cynical, at times full of faith and hope, at other times riddled by doubt and despair. Ann Cator Steele's diary details the early life of her stepdaughter. She and her husband fully supported Anne's decision to live at home unmarried, devoting herself to her poetry. Anne Steele's *Poems on Subjects Chiefly Devotional* (1760) appeared in London under the pseudonym "Theodosia," but her identity was no secret in the West Country and among her friends in Bristol, one of whom was the Bluestocking Hannah More. Caleb Evans, Baptist minister in Bristol and Steele's friend and correspondent, included 62 of her hymns in *A Collection of Hymns adapted to Public Worship* in 1769 and in 1780 republished her *Poems* with an additional volume of *Miscellaneous Poems*. Steele's popular hymns remained in use among Baptists and other Protestant denominations for over 100 years. Besides republishing her printed poems, the volumes on Anne Steele will also include for the first time more than 190 of her unpublished poems and a

substantial body of correspondence. They reveal a woman of wit and intellectual vigor, devoted to her family, faith, and her pen. Her letters to her half-sister, Mary Steele Wakeford, are witty and charming, remarkable for their honesty about poetry, men, marriage, and children.

Wakeford's poems are some of the best in the collection and will possibly be the most anthologized. Despite her self-deprecating tone, the result of living in the shadow of her illustrious sibling, Wakeford's poems, especially those addressed to her niece, Mary Steele, reveal the sharp, almost bitter, conflict between the poetic imagination and the mundane realities of marriage and domestic life. The younger Steele eagerly accepted the poet's mantle from her two aunts. Her poems—more than 140, composed between 1766 and 1810, of which only four appeared in print—are equal in quantity and quality to those of her more well known contemporary, Anna Letitia Barbauld. Their publication, along with her correspondence and a remarkably detailed spiritual autobiography, will make the series invaluable.

Her close friend, Mary Scott of Milbourne Port, Somerset, published two long poems, *The Female Advocate* (1774) and *The Messiah* (1788), but her 27 hymns, copied by Anne Steele, will be published here for the first time. Scott later developed a connection with some of the Bluestockings, including a correspondence with Anna Seward, and embraced Unitarianism. She was also friends with Jane Attwater of Bodenham, Mary Steele's closest friend and distant relation. Attwater would remain a staunch Baptist all her life. Her extraordinary diary (1767-1833) includes a chronicle of her only daughter's death from consumption in 1809. Her letters to Mary Steele reveal much about the friendships and literary aspirations of these three gifted women. All three married after the age of 37, well past the normal age for women of their time. Jane's older sister, Marianna, married in 1770 at 20, but prior to her marriage she composed a set of 20 poems, including the political "Ode to Peace," the feminist "On Reading Fordyce's Sermons to Young Women," and a long religious poem, "Serious Reflections."

Attwater married Joseph Blatch and settled near Salisbury where, as a member of the Baptist congregation in Brown Street, she was instrumental in encouraging John Saffery to become the new pastor in 1790. In the early 1790s, Maria Grace Andrews and her younger sister Anne began spitting time between their home in Isleworth, near London, and their grandparents' home in Salisbury, where they came under the influence of Rev. Saffery. They also became friends with Jane Blatch, Marianna Attwater Head, and Mary Steele [later Dunscombe], thus linking the Andrews sisters with the literary tradition of the Steele circle. The two sisters would soon leave the Church of England and join Saffery's church in Salisbury. After the death of his first wife, Saffery married Maria in 1799. As a teenager, she published a poem, *Cheyt Sing* (1790) and a novel, *The Noble Enthusiast* (1792), both anonymously. Her novel has been previously unidentified and is the only novel written by a Baptist woman in the 18th century. She continued to write poetry, especially sonnets, and published a volume in 1834, all the while operating a successful boarding school for young ladies. My series will present 117 of her unpublished poems, composed between 1795 and 1840, and a large portion of her correspondence with her sister (more than 200 letters), adding much to our knowledge of Nonconformist women poets and their domestic lives, 1790-1850.

SIGNIFICANCE: The series will take its place among the new collections that seek to recover women's writings, such as the 6-volume *Bluestocking Feminism: Writings of the Bluestocking Circle, 1738-1785* (1999) and two online resources—the Women Writers Project at Brown University and the Orlando Project at Cambridge University. Unfortunately, in many contemporary anthologies, women writers have appeared all too often as "angry amazons, opponents of traditional heterosexual marriage, and freaks," as Backscheider puts it (394). Women's poems are excerpted far more than men's; even the *Norton Anthology of English Literature* restricts women's poems to those that rail against the opposite sex. "The overall impression," Backscheider writes, "is of angry, often satirical women who do not rise above women's 'situation' or write beautiful as well as biting poetry" (394).

My series will do much to correct these distortions. It will significantly redefine the canon of 18th-century women's writing and expand the definitions of acceptable genres and forms for women, all through the prism of British Nonconformity, a perspective largely ignored and misunderstood. These

women were not only avid letter writers and diarists but also accomplished poets, composing eloquently in the standard forms of the 18th century—friendship poems, retirement (nature) poems, political and religious poems, occasional poems, and sonnets—at times, strongly feminist.

Because of the wealth of manuscript materials available to me at Oxford, my volumes will recreate the private lives and literary careers of these women in the kind of depth and detail that is extremely rare for 18th- and 19th-century women, especially provincial Nonconformist women. Though isolated geographically and culturally, they were keenly aware of current events, boldly assertive in their opinions, and highly imaginative. Inspired at times by romantic sensibilities far ahead of the Romantic movement, at times all too aware of the limitations of their place and time, they never ceded their “right” as women to “write” their own lives and to pass on that literary legacy through four generations.

MATERIALS, METHODS, AND WORK PLAN: On my last research trip to Oxford in spring 2008, I was able to take digital images of *all* the manuscripts that pertain to my books, as well as Frances Barrett Ryland’s diary in the Bristol Baptist College Library. I also completed transcriptions of the pertinent materials in the Reeves Collection at the Bodleian Library. By the end of May 2009, I will have transcribed all the manuscripts and completed the biographical backgrounds on each writer.

During the summer, I will create editable texts of all the published and unpublished writings that will comprise the 8 volumes. I will then begin the task of annotating each text, identifying individuals, places, and events within the works to create a complete historical and cultural context for readers. I have already gathered substantial materials for the General Introduction; I will add more during fall 2009 while annotating the texts. By the beginning of the grant period (January 2010), I will begin writing the General Introduction, the most difficult introduction in this series, in that I will be creating the theoretical and historical background for all ten women as well as a general overview of their works. I plan to complete the General Introduction by the end of March. I will then write the introductions to Mary Steele and Mary Scott in April and May, when they are due to the publisher. That will leave me June to devote to Maria Saffery and the rest of the summer to the introduction to the final volume. During the fall I will revise the texts and submit the final 4 volumes to the publisher.

A **6-month NEH Fellowship** (January-June) will provide the protected time I need to produce this valuable addition to the history of women’s writing in England. Due to budget cuts to the University of Georgia System, my university is allowing *no sabbaticals* for next year; consequently, receiving an NEH fellowship is critical. Writing these introductions will also require occasional research at Emory University in Atlanta and Duke University in Durham, NC. I may also have to return to England for several weeks of further research. A Fellowship will enable me to travel and to complete the series in a timely fashion. Because of my previous work with British Nonconformity, I have been appointed a Visiting Fellow for the Centre for Baptist History and Heritage, Regent’s Park College, Oxford University; and Senior Visiting Fellow, Centre for Dissenting Studies, Dr. Williams’s Library, London.

FINAL PRODUCT AND DISSEMINATION: This series will be of great interest to scholars and students of 18th and early 19th century women’s studies, literature, history, and religion. Because of the wealth of new material and the publisher’s prestige, these volumes will be purchased by nearly every university and college library and find their way onto the reserved reading lists for many courses in women’s writing and history.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Manuscripts involved in this project are in the Steele Collection, Saffery Papers, Attwater Collection, and the Reeves Collection, Angus Library, Regent's Park College, Oxford; Reeves Collection, Bodleian Library (preliminary calendar of non-catalogued material by Timothy Whelan, May 2008); Bristol Baptist College Library, Bristol, UK.

Primary Sources:

- [Saffery, Maria Andrews]. *Cheyt Sing. A Poem*. By a Young Lady of Fifteen. Printed for the Author; And sold by J. Woodhouse, No. 10, Brook-Street, Grosvenor-Square; Fuller, Newbury; Collins and Johnson, Salisbury, 1790.
- . *The Noble Enthusiast; A Modern Romance*. London: William Lane, at Minerva Press, 1792.
- Saffery, Maria. *Poems on Sacred Subjects*. London: Hamilton, Adams, and Co., 1834.
- Scott, Mary. *The Female Advocate; a Poem. Occasioned by reading Mr. Duncombe's Feminead*. London: Joseph Johnson, 1774.
- . *Messiah: A Poem in Two Parts. Published for the Benefit of the General Hospital at Bath*. By Miss Scott, Author of *The Female Advocate*. Bath: R. Cruttwell [and sold by J. Johnson, London], 1788.
- [Scott, Mary]. "To Miss Aikin, on Reading her Poems," signed "Mira," in *Gentleman's Magazine* 44 (1774): 327.
- . "Verses Addressed to Miss Seward, on the publication of her Monody on Major Andre," *Gentleman's Magazine* 53 (1783): 519-20.
- [Steele, Anne.] *Poems on Subjects Chiefly Devotional*, by Theodosia. 3 vols. (Bristol: Printed by W. Pine. Sold by T. Cadell, T. Mills, and T. Evans; —and by J. Buckland ... and J. Johnson ... London, 1780.
- . *Verses for Children*. Salisbury: E. Easton, 1788.
- [Steele, Mary]. *Danebury: or the Power of Friendship, A Tale with Two Odes, by a Young Lady* (Bristol: William Pine, [1779]).
- . "To Miss Scott on Reading 'The Female Advocate,'" signed "Silvia." *The Lady's Magazine* 5 (December 1774): 662-63.

Selected Secondary Sources:

- Backscheider, Paula. *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets and Their Poetry: Inventing Agency, Inventing Genre*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2005.
- Davidoff, Leonore, and Catherine Hall. *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.
- Davie, Donald. *The Eighteenth-Century Hymn in England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993).
- Fairchild, Hoxie Neale. *Religious Trends in English Poetry. Vol. II: 1740-1780. Religious Sentimentalism in the Age of Johnson*. New York: Columbia UP, 1942.
- Ferguson, Moira. *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets: Nation, Class, and Gender*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995. 27-43.
- Hill, Bridget. *Women, Work and Sexual Politics in Eighteenth-Century England*. Oxford; New York: Blackwell, 1989.
- Hindmarsh, D.Bruce. *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative: Spiritual Autobiography in Early Modern England* (Oxford: OUP, 2005).
- Hunt, Margaret. *The Middling Sort; Commerce, Gender and Family in England, 1680-1780*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1996.
- Myers, Sylvia. *The Bluestocking Circle: Women, Friendship, and the Life of the Mind in Eighteenth-Century England*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990.
- Reeves, Marjorie. *Female Education and Nonconformist Culture 1700-1900*. London: Leicester University Press, 2000.
- Shaw, Jane, and Alan Kreider, ed. *Culture and Nonconformist Tradition*. Cardiff: U of Wales, 1999.
- Turner, Cheryl. *Living by the Pen: Women Writers in the Eighteenth Century*. London and New York: Routledge, 1992.
- Vickery, Amanda. *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1998).
- Watson, J. R. *The English Hymn: A Critical and Historical Study*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977. 190-98.

Occasioned by the Conversation of certain Gentlemen
of Y^e C^{ty} 1773

Ye boasted Rationals! Ye Lords of Nature!
Are these your vaunted claims to Sense & Reason?
Is this the Conversation of Immortals?

(Born for Slavery) Descending from
Of midnight Riot & drunkenness & noise
Where David fell & die Sapphira reigns
Swelling with pleasure on the shameful Tale!
Yet high enthron'd in wisdom & sacred seat
Ye scorn the silly prattle of a Woman!

If this be Gayly Colours Wit
O shield me from them, grant the calm retreat
Where Reason reigns & meek eyed Lucid dwells
From all this vain impertinence remote
Thine let me spend my little span of life
And bless that Power who form'd my Mind to taste
Of Intellectual Joys superior Pleasures
To all that Mithras mad Voluptys ever knew.

Mary Steele (1753-1813)

“Occasioned by the Conversation of Certain Gentlemen of Y-----I [Yeovil] 1773 (Steele Collection, 5/5)

Ye boasted Rationals! ye Lords of Nature!
Are these your vaunted claims to Sense & Reason?
Is this the Conversation of Immortals?
(Born for Eternity) describing Scenes
Of Midnight Riot Drunkenness & Noise
Where Discord fell & dire Prophaness reigns
Dwelling with pleasure on the shameful Tale?
Yet high enthron'd in Wisdom[s] sacred seat
Ye scorn the silly prattle of a Woman!
If this be Gaiety Politeness Wit
O Shield me from them! Grant the calm retreat
Where Reason reigns & meek ey'd Quiet dwells
From all this vain impertinence remote
There let me spend my little span of Life
And bless that Power who form'd my Mind to taste
Of Intellectual Joys superior Pleasures
To all that Mirths mad Votrys ever knew.