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Faculty Development Research Grant
Proposal Narrative
February 2009

Travel in Time: Reading Records of Local Travel
in the Margins of Early Modern English Almanacs

I am writing to apply for a Faculty Development Research Grant awarded through the Center for Academic Innovation. This grant would enable me to perform necessary archival research for an article that examines a curious phenomenon in the history of English travel writing: the use of printed almanacs as personal travel diaries. Beginning as early as the late 16th century, readers turned to the pages of these small, expensive books—filled with bits of advice, horoscopes, histories, and, of course, monthly calendars predicting the phases of the moon, tides, weather, and farming conditions—to record their own passage through time. In the British Library and the Bodleian Library alone, more than two-hundred almanacs published between 1500 and 1700 contain evidence of marginalia, notes, and other markings. This proposed project seeks to extend my earlier dissertation research in the archives in the British Library in two distinct waves for a period of three to four weeks in the summer of 2009: Phase 1, deepening my analysis of the almanac diaries of Lady Isabella Twysden and John Evelyn; and Phase 2, broadening the cultural and literary context of these remarkable texts by carefully surveying the vast collection of printed almanacs in the holdings of the British Library and the Bodleian Library.

During the fall of 2006, I spent several weeks in the Manuscript Room of the British Library and discovered the diary of Lady Isabella Twysden (BL Add 34169-34172), a baroness who regularly recorded her movements between homes in Kent and London during the 1640s and 50s. Given my dissertation work on local travel (“Plotting Movement: Epistemologies of Local Travel in Early Modern England, 1600-1660”), I was initially drawn to the thematic content of the manuscripts: details of places, route descriptions, accounts of difficulty, etc. However, Twysden’s decision to

inscribe her entries on the margins and blank spaces of the corresponding month of the almanac soon consumed my attention, eventually leading me to dedicate a chapter of my dissertation to Twysden, other almanac diarists and the “form” of travel writing. This preliminary research led me to the following question: How is it that books of time also came to function as books of space in early modern England? It is the form of the almanac, I argue—blank page juxtaposed alongside monthly chart—that produced a unique style of travel notation which mirrored the almanac’s own systematic, non-narrative method of presenting information to readers. The significance of such a claim is threefold: first, almanac diaries offer us an alternative genre to the highly popular voyage narratives (entertaining tales of adventure and encounter in foreign lands) which have largely dominated studies of early modern travel; second, these records recalibrate our scholarly attention by demonstrating the presence of an archive of local travel texts; and third, with the diaries of Twysden in particular, we derive further evidence of women’s journeys that predate the often discussed accounts of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu in the eighteenth century.

My present aim is to rework this chapter into a journal article. Indeed, after presenting my findings at a conference (“The Forms of Travel: Early English Almanacs,” Modern Language Association Conference, 2007), I received an invitation from Kostas Myrsiades (Editor, *College Literature*) to submit my work for publication. Despite the advances made with this initial research and my confidence in its conclusions, submitting and refining the work for publication requires that I return to England to both sharpen (Phase 1) and broaden (Phase 2) my analysis of almanac travel diaries. Regarding the necessity of the first phase of study, both Lady Isabella Twysden’s and John Evelyn’s almanac diaries have been transcribed into modern editions (see Bibliography). However, because my project is invested in the marginalia themselves—where they appear, what they look like, how the jottings appear alongside the charts, images, and text within the original almanac page—these transcriptions have limited value and function as tools rather than objects of study in and of

themselves. The second portion, as I explain below, extends my evidentiary base and, thus, the strength of the project's argument.

My first encounter with Twysden's diaries in 2006 was limited; although I was introduced to a compelling figure and set of materials, I nonetheless left England without the kind of extensive examination such a collection requires. Moreover, I had not yet determined the lens with which I would view almanac entries like Twysden's. Therefore, a second, more focused treatment of the records (four separate almanacs and an addendum, covering six continuous years during the Civil War) is imperative. In particular, I will look for patterns such as ink color/thickness, date sequence, and other markings that will provide insight into when she may have inscribed her thoughts on the page, a feature which is absent in the modern edition that simply lists the entries "in order" without indication of page breaks or facing images. Such sequencing and formal details shed light onto the degree to which Twysden consciously grouped and constructed moments in her life (much like a modern diarist might produce a particular kind of entry based on the size or design of a journal in hand). Such focused study will both solidify and extend my earlier work.

Unlike Twysden, John Evelyn's importance as an almanac diarist and traveler did not come to my attention until after I had returned to the States; therefore, I was unable to work with either his memoir manuscript (BL Add 78323) (copied from previous almanac marginalia) or the two remaining original almanac diaries, held at Balliol College Library, Oxford University (ESTC S104379 and ESTC 1456). E.S. De Beer's modern edition of Evelyn's extensive memoirs includes facsimiles of one page from each of the two almanacs. Although reproductions, the images reveal not only the crucial spatial relationship of notation to almanac page (we can literally see Evelyn's handwriting squeezed between the edge of the page and the printed content of the almanac), but they also reveal Evelyn's habit of editing himself: nearly all of the original jottings have evidence of second and even third revisions—cross-outs, circles, new words, etc. These self-edits become critical

parts of my own argument as the very look and feel of the almanac, I suggest, dictated a certain kind of travel writing that Evelyn later changed and expanded in distinct ways for his lengthier, more narrative memoirs. As such, my work demands examination of these original documents.

Meanwhile, I intend to offset my focused study of Twysden's and Evelyn's original almanacs (Phase 1), with a survey of the related holdings at both the British Library and the Bodleian Library in Oxford (Phase 2). For example, the British Library lists one hundred and thirty-nine almanacs with "notes" printed between 1500 and 1700; similarly, the Bodleian holds nearly one hundred such works. Because my time abroad would be split between London and Oxford (1 ½ to 2 weeks in London, 2 weeks in Oxford), the two phases of my research will at times be simultaneous, rather than distinctly separate periods of investigation. I intend for this second wave of research not only to strengthen the current historical and literary context of the project, but also to introduce essential, "missing" pieces to my archive. I want to explore second and third copies of almanacs that Evelyn and Twysden turned to for their own records: Jonathan Dove's *A new almanacke and prognostication* (1636), John Booker's *Mercurius Coelicus: Sive Almanack et Prognositcon, vel speculum* (1647), and Edward Pond Pond's *Almanack* (1648), for example. I will derive a broader sense of the patterns of annotation, whether particular almanacs were favored by diarists, and the extent to which my preliminary argument regarding the dominance of travel records within almanac pages is detectable among these anonymously edited books. Finally, I would like to turn to some of the earliest known almanacs that advertise themselves as journals or "memory books": Thomas Hill's *An almanack published at large, in forme of a booke of memoire* (1571), copies at both the British Library and the Bodleian Library (ESTC S104388). The history of this genre is one that informs not only this particular article, but also a second dissertation chapter on the development of the travel guide—a genre, I argue, whose ties to the almanac provide essential keys to understanding how the books were used by early modern travelers. In other words, the blurred boundaries between and shared

origins of the two texts may help to explain why books of time are used as books of space and vice versa.

Together with my focused study of the original almanacs of Lady Isabella Twysden and John Evelyn, I will use this extensive research to draft and submit an article for publication prior to the start of the Fall 2009 semester. This article and the archival research that undergirds it have significant potential to impact not only scholarship in early modern English literature and culture, but also a range of interdisciplinary work on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century travel, the history of the book, and autobiographical genre studies.

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