Producing the Eighteenth-Century Book

Writers and Publishers in England, 1650–1800

Edited by
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Newark: University of Delaware Press

Invisible Books

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Invisibility is a curious thing, absence predicated on presence—just because you cannot see it does not mean that there is nothing there. Are things born invisible, are they made to become so by being obscured, do they choose it in preference to being seen? Or perhaps, indeed, there is nothing there after all. The history of books as physical objects in circulation is a relatively new field, albeit one well served by scholars such as Robert Darnton, David Hall, and Pat Rogers, whose work has invited others to think seriously about books in revolutionary France, Colonial America, and early modern England. It was not that earlier generations of literary historians were unaware of information following the "communication circuit," that no one had noticed the possibility of "Godly culture" in seventeenth-century Chesapeake area, or that Grub Street and its practitioners were somehow unavailable for study by literary scholars, but in a true sense, these systems and locations of authorship and reading, of ways and means of textual circulation, were invisible to those previously working in the periods in question.

In part because of the efforts of scholars such as Hall, Rogers, and others such as J. Paul Hunter's work on "before novels," Darnton's insistence twenty years ago that we think about "how exposure to the printed word affects the way men think," and his urging us to consider seriously what happens when "oral traditions came into contact with printed texts," has resulted in a generation of scholars who see what before had been overlooked in traditional literary histories, which largely ignored the material culture of texts as being the province of archivists, bibliographers, and librarians.[1] Studies of the material book in the twenty-first century are firmly grounded on the certainty that this is indeed a profitable field of study for accessing the past and also for sorting through issues raised by changing communication technology in the present. It is now a given that the material book is a vehicle of social communication (Darnton, 22).

My questions for book history at this stage are, how do we recognize a book when we see it and, correspondingly, are there books that

we don't see? By working from a consideration of the nature of invisibility as an actual physical phenomenon occurring in the natural world, I would like to consider another aspect of the way in which the field of book history and literary studies in general characterize "books" as such and what might still be there waiting to be seen. To begin with, it is worth noting that we are in the habit of speaking of books as if they are living organisms—for example, we consider with true concern the possibility that a digital age will mean the "death of the book." Rather than dealing with this fear of the extinction of books, I, however, shall be exploring the implications of thinking about books themselves as dynamic systems rather than static objects. My argument is that the fluid and dynamic nature of what we have always considered to be a stable and static object, even if it is viewed as an object in circulation, has taken some types of books out of our field of vision.

Technology has already provided some assistance in making certain types of books more easily "visible." As George Justice has argued, the availability of databases such as the ESTC and EEBO and the more recent Eighteenth Century Collections Online already has had a significant impact on the way eighteenth-century studies is conducted.[2] Databases that can be electronically searched can help us to see books that otherwise might have only been physically available for a small number of researchers able to travel to collections and to see links between books in ways not always so apparent when working from printed bibliographies.

But what of books not included in these supposedly all-compassing databases? My question then becomes, when is something that looks like a book, not a book? Many answers spring to mind. A book is not a book when it is something else, for example a box to hold valuables designed to look like a book and to be hidden in plain sight on a library shelf. Scholars such as Peter Stallybrass, Henry Woudhuysen, or Heather Wolfe working with late sixteenth, early seventeenth-century materials might answer, when it is a "table," or rather a piece of "writing technology furniture," in their particular attention to the technology of writing, from the development of shorthand to erasable tablets for taking notes.[3]

Another answer might be when it doesn't "act" or behave like a book and when the environment in which it is found leads us to see it as being "something else" or to overlook it entirely. First, "behavior"—how do we expect books to "behave"? I would suggest that as modern readers trained by print culture how to read (although this is being challenged in interesting ways by electronic media), we have certain expectations of how a book, rather than a collection of unbound sheets,

should "behave" which affects how we read. On the most basic level, we expect a bound book to begin at the beginning and continue until end. Depending on the genre, which we expect will be signaled by the paratextual apparatus, it is nice, too, if it has clearly marked divisions in its contents, and some structural features to orient or assist us in finding particular sections and keep our place. As Ilana Snyder has commented in contrasting books with electronic hypertext, printed books are "essentially repositories for the sequential storage of information."[4] For the reader of modern printed texts, the title page is there to convey specific types of information, in a particular, anticipated spatial relationship. As J. David Bolter has observed of the spatial nature of the printed page in general, with print, visual space becomes fixed and "the visual, physical artifact of the book becomes synonymous with the text itself . . . [where] writing is stable, monumental, and controlled exclusively by the author."[5]

My examples of books that are not "seen" as being books, even within the new discussions of book history, are handwritten books and the ones I shall focus on are from the period in English book history when our attention has been turned to the development of print culture and its impact. They are not included in the ESTC or EEBO, which of course, is devoted to digitalizing printed texts. Here I am not referring to the beautiful, sometimes illuminated manuscript volumes of the scribes, praised by the founding scholar in the field of literary manuscript study, Peter Beal, which sometimes are digitalized for their sheer aesthetic qualities, or the fine presentation copies presented to Queen Elizabeth and to powerful aristocratic families.[6] I am not even referring to the fair copies of papers I explored in thinking about a notion of social authorship.[7]

Instead, the books on which I wish to focus are ones which, I must confess, I myself have tended to avoid in my rambles through the archives. They are the "messy" manuscript books, books that combine accounts of rents collected with copies of verses, alphabet exercises with prayers and diary entries. They are books that look like "real" books, that is to say, like printed books, on the outside, but behave entirely differently for the reader and writer once the cover is opened, and which, at present, are largely invisible in studies of book history.

Handwritten books are, of course, an important feature of book history, but it is necessary at this point to stop and look at how they have figured there and for what reasons they are viewed as being important. Based on the model suggested in 1979 and 1983 by Elizabeth Eisenstein's exploration of the "revolution" of print and the "rise" of "print culture," handwritten texts have apparently lost their significance by the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. They do so, I believe, because

of our interest in the technology of public communication. The *Introduction to Book History* by Finkelstein and McCleery is a good recent example of that model of the nature of manuscript book's participation in history: it has a chapter discussing the transition from orality to literacy, immediately followed by one on "the coming of print."[8] In the chapter "Authors, Authorship, and Authority," it discusses "manuscript culture" as being divided into two distinct periods, "the Monastic Age circa 400 to the late 1100s" and the "secular age," from the twelfth century to the late fifteenth, (with "and even beyond" added on in parenthesis).[9] Its introduction concludes with the heartening observation that print texts are the core, indeed define, what is truly significant about book history, which is the shaping of public discourse, public culture. "But if the book in the future will no longer be the main form of human communication, this does not signify, as some critics would have us believe, the death of the book. Nor does it lessen the impact of print on social formations. Book history is important for what it says about human development. For well over five hundred years, print has been central to the shaping of Western society, and to the transmission of its values outwards" (4). In such accounts, "print" and "book" seem to exist as interchangeable nouns.

Similarly, in the 2005 special issue of *PMLA* devoted to the history book, with the exception of Matthew Brown's interesting references to handwritten culture in the context of colonial devotional texts and the "steady seller" (which he uses to establish shifts in reading practices by rethinking the notion of the codex as a format which "features script, print, and images"), you will look in vain for discussions of handwritten books created after the "rise" of print culture as they exist as textual objects, equally worthy of study as print texts.[10] Nor do postmedieval handwritten texts feature in the *Blackwell Companion to the History of the Book,* which dates "manuscript culture" between 1100 and 1500, unless it is in reference to printer's copies, individual art works, or because they create interesting questions about copy-text.[11] Some welcome exceptions come in Julia Crick and Alexandra Walsham's 2004 collection of essays *The Uses of Script and Print, 1300–1700,* which seeks to bring together medieval and early modern understandings of modes of communication, and H. R. Woudhuysen's introduction to the 2004 special issue of the *Huntington Library Quarterly* looking at early Tudor literature in the context of "the material forms that literary works take," which acknowledges that texts are "not inherently stable" and includes essays such as Cathy Shrank's investigating the ways in which print attempted to mimic "scribal intimacy."[12] Unfortunately, the majority of studies currently available do not extend into seventeenth-century materials, but their approaches do

offer a refreshing alternative to studies that insist on the primacy of print or simply overlook the presence of handwritten texts in a print culture.

The most frequently encountered focus for book history, however, is observing how print assists in creating, to use David Hall's original term, a "collective mentality," and, to answer the question in their words, "who and what mediates activity in the complex path taken by books and texts from producer to consumer?" (Finkelstein and McCleery, *Introduction,* 135). Of course, because of the efforts and accomplishment of scholars such as Hall, Rogers, and Darnton, there is little argument about the self-evident importance of studying printed texts and how they circulate in the human world. What I will be arguing is that by paying attention to another type of book, and as a secondary question why it has eluded our scholarly gaze, we are offered still further ways of considering important issues about the circulation of ideas then and now, while at the same time interrogating why certain types of writing and reading phenomenon have been, or become, invisible.

The English manuscript volumes that have caught my eye are from the mid- and later seventeenth century and they are both a treasure trove and a puzzle for literary historians. Unlike loose sheets of paper, they were not intended for circulation out of the household, nor are they examples of "scribal publication" in Harold Love's sense.[13] Typically written over the space of many years, containing as they often do, a multiplicity of hands, sometimes from several generations, they are particularly difficult to classify using the traditional genres commonly assigned them—are they "commonplace books," "recipe books," "diaries," "miscellanys" or "devotions"? The end result of the cataloguers' dilemmas, I have argued elsewhere, is that sometimes in the desire to classify the contents in order to preserve the manuscript text for future study, or for print publication, the imposition of a genre label derived from later generations' literary productions and usually from printed books often conceals not only the content but also the authorial and the reading practices found in the manuscript one.[14]

Sometimes this passion for identification and classification turns physically violent: later eighteenth- and nineteenth-century librarians clearly felt that *something* had to be done. One simple, if radical, solution by librarians and archivists was physically to split up the volume's contents, removing them from their original bindings and contexts and then reclassifying them under an individual author's name. This can clearly be seen when one looks at such items, some with sad shreds of leather binding clinging to the edge, with their original manuscript volume page numbers now ignored in favor of new pencil ones for our

reference, tucked safely in acid-free file folders labeled with the poet's name on the cover—order, coherence, identity, and the textual object of the individual's poems are thus safely recovered and preserved. But the manuscript book itself, along with all of its information about readers and writers, has been sacrificed in the process.

While much attention has been paid to manuscript volumes concerning sorting through their contents, much less has been spent on their authors or readers, especially if the volume is perceived as being a compendium of miscellaneous materials or a domestic object rather than an individual author's fair copy or working draft of a longer piece. Hardly any attention has been paid to the way in which the space of the original blank white pages of such domestic, as opposed to printer's copies or fair copy presentation volumes, was utilized by the writers, certainly not to the extent that D. F. McKenzie and his successors have given to the physical nature of the printed page and the conventions which govern them.[15]

This is not to say that manuscript texts have not been valued in book history, any more than to assert that the patriarch did not indeed love his wife. It is the way in which they have been "seen" and valued that in effect has removed a body of them from our line of sight and permitted them to blend into the background.[16] What I am suggesting for consideration is more closely related to questions posed by Nicolas Barker, in his judicious essay, "Reflections on the History of the Book" published in 2003 which calls for recognizing the "commonality" of books. He is, of course, talking about printed products, even as he mentioned manuscripts, but his interest is the circulation of textual material through multiple hands and how this is physically impressed on the object, from the copyist to the printer, the bookbinder, and the vendor, through the additions of generations of readers who add their initials, their bookplates, their marginalia.[17] In short, he is interested in the physical traces of all the different people at different times on the object that we call the book.

The group of books I am interested in are handwritten texts that are typically described only to be dismissed by literary historians (including me) as "personal collections" of no recognized aesthetic merit; books that deal with a variety of materials, including inventories, recipes, and remedies in addition to poems and prayers, and typically involve more than one writer from more than one generation. Harold Love has suggested such mixed manuscript volumes were the province of women writers, although in fact, many were created by men (54–58). But there is a sense in which the term "domestic" feels appropriate here. The connection with women compilers, and with the domestic space of the home, indeed, I believe has perhaps contributed to their

invisibility for scholars. In existing discussion of manuscript volumes, this type of material is fairly consistently described, classified, and evaluated as they compare with the norm of a printed text—a practice not entirely dissimilar from the one that feminist critics in the 1980s encountered when all early modern women writers tended to be linked to and studied against a norm defined as being male. This was a process, as many of us know, which resulted in a large body of "invisible" women writers, and many, many pages being spent in the 1970s and 1980s explaining why there were "no" women writers before Aphra Behn.

I am interested in looking at the different ways in which in these volumes, their typically multiple authors made use of the available blank space. In fact, I hope to argue that domestic manuscript volumes, like late seventeenth-century printed texts, possess conventions of composition and paratexts for reading that involve multiple writers, who are readers negotiating space, but that confusingly operate unlike the conventions found in print texts. These are the conventions of concretion that modern readers find less than useful in terms of situating the contents, even positively disruptive to reading practices based on print. For the rest of this piece I will briefly describe some specific examples, hoping to see if the ways in which these textual "things," in the critic Bill Brown's sense of the term, upset or subvert expectations based on our conventions of reading derived from printed books and in what ways this disruption can serve to illustrate early modern responses to the page.

By using the term "paratexts" as a way of thinking about this, I am also stealing vocabulary from print culture, in particular from the work of the literary theorist Gérard Genette. "The paratext," writes Genette, "is what enables a text to become a book and to be offered as such to its readers and, more generally, to the public."[18] He describes it as acting as a "*threshold* or . . . a 'vestibule' that offers the world at large the possibility of either stepping inside or turning back. . . . at the service of a better reception for the text and a more pertinent reading of it" (2), in short, that paratexts are conventions used by a writer for the better understanding of the reader. What I will be considering are examples raising the question of whether the use of space found in late seventeenth-century English domestic or messy manuscript volumes in places such as title pages, indexes, and the location of text on the page, as well as marginalia and annotations, on the space of the originally blank page appear with any consistency or are merely random scribblings, vandalism, or a thrifty habit of mind.

I will offer as examples a group of manuscript volumes compiled between 1650 and the early 1690s.[19] The objects which are the focus of this analysis, began their "lives" as bound, blank books, ranging from

inexpensive octavo- or quarto-sized texts with paper or vellum covers to handsome leather-bound folios stamped with their original purchaser's initials in gold, superficially, externally thus resembling printed books.

The first example of a type of the messy domestic volume is in the British Library as part of a larger collection labeled, "The Brockman Papers." It is a rebound folio volume, which is cataloged as being "recipes" with the additional note that it contains "besides cookery, medical and veterinary recipes, the volume includes (ff 84–82 reversed) some genealogical notes concerning her husband and descendents." Unlike the other text I will be describing, it is a single author volume: on its first page, centered with ornate capital letters, it is announced "Anne Glyde/ Her Booke / 1656."[20]

Anne Glyde, as far as I have been able to discover, was absolutely no one, just a woman sitting at home, going about her domestic life. This volume was preserved not because of any striking or original compositions or because she was a trangressive radical figure or one of Virginia Woolf's crazed aristocratic scribbling ladies of the period. Her book, as she so carefully and prominently proclaims it in 1656 on a title page, and repeatedly elsewhere in the volume, is one example of the nature of the "messy volume." Parts of Glyde's volume are fair copy of recipes with attributions, which were clearly composed at different times over the years, but that follow the same format. For example, on the recto side of the pages are recipes for human consumption—"to make a paste of Geneva the true way" given her by her cousin Berry—while on the facing verso side, in a different ink perhaps put in at a later point, one has recipes for the benefit of animals—"a most approved & Souerragne Medicine for to Cure the K[H]ybe or Weepe in any Bullocke," signed Anne Glyde. In effect, reading the recto sides gives one tasty ideas for the kitchen, but reading the verso side anchors you firmly in the farm yard, and it seems important that the two areas remain separated.

Like so many other seventeenth century domestic manuscript volumes, the volume also follows the manuscript convention of the physical reversal of the volume, or a doubling of the matter in an inverted format, a practice alien to print technology at that time and disorienting for modern readers. Again, in effect, such inverted manuscript texts function as two books, beginning repeatedly, but lacking a clear sense of ending. Reading in this second direction, one finds not quite what one expects from "genealogical notes," but instead records of the births and deaths of her children and her husband, and her responses to them. On the death of her husband Richard in 1658, he left behind as she meticulously notes, "6 small children . . . the Eldest of them being

But 8 years old and 9 weeks. The youngest of them but 6 weeks and 6 days old." Writing, it appears, the day after his death, she records her prayer that, "as [God] hath been graticously pleased to be both Father and Mother unto me will [he] be so to them" (82b). As she continues her reflections on the event of her husband's death, her thoughts turn to another audience and at the end she speaks to her children, and perhaps herself, reminding them that, "My Dear Husband always Laboured firmly to beleve that all the promises in the Gospell made to the righteous and ther seed should at one time or other be made good to him and his seed[.] Now I besseche my good god to inabell mee while I live to beleve this." In order to fit the next section on to the remaining space of the page, she moves outside the ruled margins and addresses directly, "My Dear Children let this thinge be remembred by you when my body shall be desolved into Dust," and admonishes them to remember the values by which their father lived, that "who if he should have lived to have seen you Children of unbeleve would . . . rejoice in your Just condemnation if you should be wicked wretches."

This "recipe" book continued to be used for multiple purposes from 1656 until nearly the end of the century. There are happier events interspersed in the "backward" volume, such as marriages and birth of grandchildren. The entries describing the births of Anne Drake in 1684 and Ralph Drake in 1688 have additional glosses in the margins, clarifying dates and names, but also making reference to contemporary events: Ralph Drake was born as, "the prince of orang began to Land his army" and in her prayer for this child, added at some later time, "although he was born at a time that looked sad and darke and wee were under great confussion: yet of thy mercy, Be pleased to spare him that he may live to see good and gratious times thy church to flourish in peace and holiness" (83a). The final entries in the inverted volume relate to the death of her daughter in 1694 from smallpox and on July 29, 1695, her son-in-law, once again leaving six young children needing her care, against which she had to fight the "unkind and I may say Evill carridge of their trusties to me." Crammed into the space at the bottom of this page, she prayed in the final personal entry: "O Lord my God ever assiste in my Duty to thee my god and in all keep mee in my right reason and true understanding and spare my Life so for as I am able truly serve and please thee and be useful for the true good of the souls and Bodys of these orphans."

This is clearly a "domestic" volume in its content, the situation of its author, its readership, and where it physically was kept. It does not follow the format example of printed spiritual journals, nor recipe books, although it makes use of them. Nor is it in any way a methodically organized journal or diary. But nevertheless, surely this seventeenth-

century woman is, in "her book," writing her life for future readers, and in her use of this space, from writing first on only one side of the page and later on the other, from inverting the volume and interlacing opposing texts, she is signaling something about the connection between reading and writing, about what people thought was worth writing about and who they anticipated reading them, and how the manipulation of the physical object as a writing surface could serve to house multiple "books" within one cover.

In terms of the contents themselves, one wonders how "private" the information was. As Sara Pennell has pointed out in her essay on women's recipe books, the contents speak not only to what has been dismissed as merely "domestic" writing, but also to the ways in which information among women was circulated, and the preservation by a literate woman of a perhaps illiterate laborer (e.g., Goodman Giddick's solution for diarrhea in calves).[21] It is also a narrative of the major events of her life, the births and deaths of those she loved and cared for through the generations, how relatives connect, and how values are transmitted. Surely this falls within the province of book history as it has been defined, except that we are seeing circulation within a different sphere than the public, political one.

A side argument at this point is that the habit of early modern readers of adding or amending paratextual materials, such as signing the title page or creating a "personal" index, is a bit different from readers who are responding directly to the content of the main text with glosses or other annotations. H. J. Jackson, in her 2001 study *Marginalia: Readers Writing in Books,* is primarily interested in handwritten commentary or markings in the margins of printed texts from 1700 onward, but there are many useful points of comparisons between the handwritten annotations in printed books and what we encounter in manuscript volumes. As she points out, the conventions for how to mark up a text "is consistent with centuries of tradition reaching back far beyond the birth of print, through the ages of manuscript culture. If you ask annotators today what systems they use for marking their books and where they learned them, they generally tell you that their methods are private and idiosyncratic. . . . if you are allowed to examine their books, however, you find (with very, very few exceptions) that they reproduce the common practices of readers since the Middle Ages."[22] Although she is cautious of the ways in which such annotations feature into making modern editions of older books, and the extent to which they can be used to reconstruct a historical reading environment, Jackson argues passionately for the pleasures of annotation and reading annotated books. She concludes, "we would do well to consider the example of the sociable readers of the eighteenth cen-

tury and later who shared their annotated books and looked on readers' notes as value added. . . . annotated books bring pleasure by association every time they are taken up" (265). Please note, however, that for her twenty-first century reader, Jackson has to make the argument that this *is* a pleasurable reading experience rather than vandalism or a scholarly nuisance.

This leads to my final extended example for consideration, a very messy domestic volume in quarto, leather-bound originally, now rebound in white vellum residing in the National Library of Wales.[23] It is credited in the catalogs to the radical Welsh minister Vavasour Powell, the person to whom Katherine Phillips responded in her poem "On the Double Murther of King Charles" and at whose trial, Anna Trapnel fell into the trance preserved in *The Cry of the Stone.* As the catalog notes, the majority of the contents are fair copies of verses in English, sporting ruled margins and scripture glosses in the margins. However, to open the cover and to attempt to read in a modern way is to experience a very different book than described in the catalog.

On opening to the flyleaf, there is a cursive alphabet writing exercise; on the verso side of the second sheet, there are at least two different hands, writing in three different directions. One of these identifies himself as William Brees, who offers us verse written both horizontally and vertically on the page; some of his lines are copied—or is it that they are echoed? Or performed?—by another writer in different ink, "The more prepared we are to die/ The fitter then we are to live." The horizontal text ends on the verso side of the fourth sheet with a signature "wm Brees," followed by another hand, declaring, "William Thomas, His Book." On the next page a different hand begins a series of epigrams in English and in Welsh, with lines drawn between them to separate the poems, and concludes "William Thomas [his] book God Bless the King book book book book book." Then one has the start of yet another hand, "Tho. Peal," who gives us his verses: "God commandes me to round my Head/ A round head I will be/ / . . . The scripture and nature both show/ It is a shame to see/ A man to weare long harie or lockes/ A round head I will bee," accompanied by appropriate scripture in the margins. One finally arrives at the materials referenced by the catalogers, "The Lamentation of Jeremiah" by Powell, on the fourteenth sheet.

In the final pages of the stout little bilingual volume, William Brees makes a return appearance in heavy black ink to note "Finis brees" and a new hand announces "Elizabeth Brees her booke in the year of ye Lord 1694," which is repeated twice more, only to have "Jones" claim the book as his and to pen an epitaph in Welsh described as "found" on the tomb of Mrs. Jane Owen. One more hand makes its appearance

as "John Brees Nathanial Jones," who also declares "His hand and book" only to be jostled on the same page by "Thomas Jones his hand and book book book" (150v). William Brees's lines from the front of the volume are repeated in the final pages, as is another alphabet exercise, and the whole messy thing concludes with the record of an indenture made for a serving girl, "this second day in june one thousand six hundred and sixty" (158).

According to the no doubt exhausted librarians who had identified this as being a manuscript of Vavasour Powell's verses written while he was imprisoned (and how did it return to Wales?), there are no fewer than eleven readers/writers who jostled for space over a period of at least forty years. One could argue this is a classic example not only of a domestic manuscript volume but also of one behaving badly indeed, as it is exceedingly daunting to read today. It certainly can lay claim to the term "domestic" in more than a simple contrast to a public presentation volume, including as it clearly does, space for young writers to practice making letters, young poets to experiment with verses, and even young women to announce that they can read, write, and control books. It was clearly an object that had a multitude of readers who used it for a multitude of purposes, moving between two languages, readers who, interestingly, preserved the writings of predecessors rather than ripping them out or crossing them over, and instead manipulated the object itself to create a "new" discreet writing/reading space for themselves. In short, one could argue, such "messy" pages are examples of generations of readers and writers sharing space and behaving beautifully in negotiating the material nature of handwritten culture.

In terms of its physical organization, while the contents do not reverse, nor the volume invert, as Glyde's does, the ninety degree turn required on some pages serves, one could argue a similar function by creating a "new" writing and reading space based on how the book is held. It is not clear from the spatial, linear arrangement any sequence of when material was added, and the few dates add to the confusion rather than order it, bouncing a linear reader back and forth through time. Such texts, one could argue, have *too many* beginnings and endings, titles and signatures that shape our expectation of what the contents will be only to bewilder and surprise us by what actually is there; although it often functions as an object whose spaces—which are seemingly well-ordered and organized through dates, lists, page numbers, and annotations—are nevertheless dazzlingly kaleidoscopic when one actually sits down and tries to read it, with its pieces, colors, and patterns shifting depending on how it is rotated. It is, in short, neither stable nor linear and its contents defy the simple classification its external presentation format—book—might seem to suggest.

How do we deal with such badly behaving books? The common answer is to assert that our seventeenth-century authors and book owners were thrifty people, for whom paper was a precious commodity and thus were determined to utilize every blank inch of it. These volumes, however, are not actually suffering from a lack of blank pages on which to start again. Is there another "strangeness" appearing here? Bill Brown, whom I referenced earlier in this piece, has observed, in his thoughts on what he calls "thing theory," that there is a little regarded difference between what we loosely label "objects" and "things" and the distinction he draws seems illuminating about reader's expectations in this case. "We look through objects (to see what they disclose about history, society, nature or culture—above all, what they disclose about us)," he suggests.[24] "We look through objects because there are codes by which our interpretive attention makes them meaningful. . . . We begin to confront the thingness of objects when they stop working for us: when the drill breaks, when the car stalls, when the windows get filthy, when their flow within the circuits of production and distribution, consumption and exhibition, has been arrested, however momentarily" (4). The group of seventeenth-century domestic manuscript volumes in question simply "don't work" the way "real" books do and in the way they do work, they challenge our traditional interpretive strategies for uncovering "facts" about the past through a focus on defining the content's genre or proprietary authorship, whether it is our desire to recover the poems of John Donne or to analyze records of political events and the movements of radical ministers. I would argue that many early modern domestic manuscript volumes operate in our modern reading experience as "things" par excellence, that is, "objects asserting themselves as things," which disrupt our consumption of the anticipated genre's contents, which break the circulation of exchange a reader accustomed to printed texts has with the author and producer of the text. Their resistance to being read as one text, one author's product, their seeming to insist that the reader, too, is involved in creating and circulating the text as opposed to being merely the one who acquires and controls an object, all these aspects seem to me to fit comfortably within Brown's distinction that "things" are "what is excessive in objects" and that the very "specific unspecificity" that the term "things" invokes captures better than any simple genre classification these volumes that look just like books but that don't work like books "should" and don't permit us to behave as we as readers expect.

I would like to argue in conclusion that there is more than one concept of reading and authorship operating here and that these domestic manuscript volumes, with all their difficulties and layers of additions,

draw our attention to the different expectations about reading and writing in the early modern and the present time. The closest model of a modern print reader might be Michel de Certeau's notion of "transgressive" reading or "reading as poaching," as the reader "wanders" through the system of the text, "stealing" what he or she needs.[25] It is in the ways that these handwritten texts do not behave like printed books, even though they share common features, it is the space in which they were produced and consumed, the household, it is the multiplicity of functions and voices female as well as male, which, I would suggest, have made them invisible to us as being a part of what we call "book" history.

We have seen manuscripts as being important in the development of print culture, as they participated with printed documents in the shaping of public opinion and discourse. However, at the same time, we have dismissed, or made invisible, books that "live" in a different space, the domestic one, notoriously a space that demands collaboration and tolerance of its occupant, whether master and servant, husband and wife, or reader and writer. Once viewed not as a failed print exercise, but instead as a thing in and of itself, we can see what such volumes actually do perform, and, in my sense the ways in which they behave beautifully in a handwritten culture, with its emphasis on collaboration, elaboration, and preservation. We can see that they transmit what was viewed as important in the sphere delineated by the household, which as we know, was no small world.

As modern readers, the experience of turning a page to discover upside down writing, of constantly having a signature announcing with seeming triumph "my book" over and over again, of needing to pick one's way past discussions of manure and chemical experiments to get to the poetry, a seventeenth-century domestic handwritten book is clearly not "modern." In the same way that we no longer feel any need to move our lips when we read—unless one is giving a conference paper—and indeed feel it rather rude when someone in the rare book room sitting next to us is mumbling along as they transcribe, our hands are not moved to make our own indices of other writers' pages, to turn another's pages upside down to create a new book going in a different direction.

Making visible domestic manuscript volumes as "books" would in my opinion be a valuable addition to book history's announced projects. By re-introducing the book as a household object that is fluid and dynamic in nature rather than fixed, linear, or stable, one is offered further ways of thinking about collective mentalities, the public sphere, and a host of other topics of interest today. It also continues the process of making visible the larger than suspected numbers of women writ-

ing in early periods. It would correct what I see in book history as a limiting chain of associations: in explicit terms, "book" equals print equals public, with the content of such printed books finalized, fixed, and serious, what is valuable, what shapes public opinion, and what technology hath wrought. Correspondingly, but in implicit terms, "handwritten" seems to equal private, which seems to equal limited or suppressed, and the contents can be thus assumed to be fragmentary and unfinished (as opposed to ongoing), part of the domestic sphere peopled by women and children, not part of the literary canon and apparently not part of what we study in book history. What looking with care and seeing with appreciation the possible conventions of seventeenth-century, domestic handwritten books might indeed do for book history is once again permit us to consider Darnton's question of twenty years ago—what do books mean to people—and to add, "and how do they do it?"

Notes

1. Robert Darnton, "What is the History of the Book?" in *The Book History Reader,* ed. David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery (London: Routledge, 2002), 22; Pat Rogers, *Grub Street: Studies in a Subculture* (New York: Methuen, 1972); David D. Hall, *Cultures of Print: Essays in the History of the Book* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996); J. Paul Hunter, *Before Novels: The Cultural Contexts of Eighteenth Century English Fiction* (New York: Norton, 1990).

2. George Justice, "The ESTC and Eighteenth-Century Literary Studies," *Literature Compass,* 1 (2004): 18C 002, 1–3.

3. Peter Stallybrass, Roger Chartier, J. Frankling Mowery, Heather Wolfe, "Hamlet's Tables and the Technologies of Writing in Renaissance England," *Shakespeare Quarterly,* 55 (2004): 379–419; H. R. Woudhuysen, "Writing-Tables and Table-Books," *Electronic British Library Journal* (2004) article 3, 1–11; Heather Wolfe, "Reading Bells and Loose Papers: Reading and Writing Practices of the English Benedictine Nuns of Cambrai and Paris," in *Early Modern Women's Manuscript Writing,* eds. Victoria Burke and Jonathan Gibson (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 135–50.

4. Ilana Snyder, *Hypertext: The Electronic Labyrinth* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 17.

5. J. David Bolter, *Writing Space: The Computer, Hypertext, and the History of Writing* (Hillsdale, NJ: L. Erlbaum Associates, 1991), 11. Bolter's view of the book as a stable object under the control of its author, of course, does not work as well with many early modern printed texts, where authors frequently lament the liberties taken by the printer. It is also important to note that printed texts sometimes served more than one function, as studied by Adam Smyth, "Almanacs, Annotators, and Life-Writing in Early Modern England," *ELR,* 38 (2008), 200–244 and Smyth's analysis of the practice of the creation of compilation books involving the incorporation of both printed and manuscript materials, " 'Rend and teare in peeces': Textual fragmentation in Seventeenth-Century England," *Seventeenth Century,* 19 (2004), 36–52.

6. Peter Beal, *In Praise of Scribes: Manuscripts and their Makers in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); Beal and Grace

Ioppolo, eds. *Manuscripts and their Makers in the English Renaissance* (London: British Library, 2003).

7. Margaret J. M. Ezell, *Social Authorship and the Advent of Print* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

8. David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery, *An Introduction to Book History* (London: Routledge, 2005), table of contents.

9. Finkelstein and McCleery, *Introduction to Book History,* 66.

10. Matthew P. Brown, "The Thick Style: Steady Sellers, Textual Aesthetics, and Early Modern Devotional Reading," *PLMA,* 121 (2006): 67–86.

11. Simon Eliot and Jonathan Rose, eds., *The Blackwell Companion to the History of the Book* (London: Blackwell, 2006).

12. Julia Crick, Alexandra Walsham, eds. *The Uses of Script and Print, 1300–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); H. R. Woudhuysen, "Foreword," *Huntington Library Quarterly,* 67 (2004): vii; Cathy Shrank, " 'These fewe scribbled rules': Representing Scribal Intimacy in Early Modern Print" *HLQ,* 67 (2004): 295.

13. Harold Love, *Scribal Publication in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

14. See for example, Ezell, "Ann Halkett's Morning Devotions: Posthumous Publication and the Culture of Writing in Late Seventeenth-Century Britain," in *Print and the Other Media in Early Modern England: The Cultural Impact of the New Technology,* ed. Arthur F. Marotti (Ohio State University Press, 2000): 215–31; and Ezell, "Elizabeth Livingstone Delaval's Spiritual Heroine: Some Thoughts on Redefining Early Women Writers' Manuscript Texts," in *English Manuscript Studies, 1100–1700,* 3 (London: British Museum, 1992): 216–37.

15. Since this piece was completed, Victoria Burke has contributed an important and timely overview of the physical nature of manuscript studies, "Let's Get Physical: Bibliography, Codicology, and Seventeenth-Century Women's Manuscripts," *Literature Compass* 4/6 (2007): 1667–82, 10.1111/j.1741–4113.2007.00492.x; see also studies looking at the conventions of specific genres such as letter writing for examples of the type of attention to textual space I am suggesting, James Daybell, " 'Ples Acsep Thes My Skrybled Lynes': The Construction and Conventions of Women's Letters in England, 1540–1603," *Quidditas* 20 (1999): 207–23 and Jonathan Gibson, "Significant Space in Manuscript Letters," *Seventeenth Century Studies,* 12 (1997): 1–9.

16. In this piece, therefore, I am not concerned with arguing the notion of the concept of "aura" possessed by unique manuscript texts, which Harold Love borrows from Benjamin via Kernan's study of eighteenth-century print culture, nor in debating whether script or print was in fact the "critical, subversive medium" (290–93).

17. Nicolas Barker, "Reflections on the History of the Book," in *Form and Meaning in the History of the Book: Selected Essays,* ed. Nicolas Barker (London: British Library, 2003), 277.

18. Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation,* trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 1. He quickly qualifies this last statement observing "more pertinent, of course, in the eyes of the author and his allies." In his study, Genette is not interested in tracing the evolution of the various forms and formats assumed by printed paratexts, but he does acknowledge when speaking of medieval texts that they "often circulated in an almost raw condition, in the form of manuscripts devoid of any formula of presentation" (3). Again, this is quickly qualified: "I say *almost* raw condition because the sole fact of transcription . . . brings to the ideality of the text some degree of materialization, graphic or phonetic."

He concludes, "one may doubtless assert that a text without a paratext does not exist and never has existed."

19. This is to me a particularly interesting and complicated period for thinking about manuscript volumes because of the presence in an early modern reading household not only of conventional bound printed volumes with their leather covers, but also the proliferation of cheap printed paper pamphlets, news books, and broadsides generated by both sides in the conflict as the means of transmitting not only their values and version of contemporary events, but also, through the medium of print style and formats, attempting to win or hold followers as readers.

20. British Library, MS Add 45196.

21. See for example Sara Pennell, "Perfecting Practice? Women, Manuscript Recipes and Knowledge in Early Modern England" in *Early Modern Women's Manuscript Writing*, 237–58.

22. H. J. Jackson, *Marginalia: Readers Writing in Books* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 5.

23. National Library of Wales, MS 366A.

24. Bill Brown, "Thing Theory," *Critical Inquiry*, 28 (2001): 4.

25. Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, translated by Steven Rendall (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), 169.