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## Chapter 2

# MANUSCRIPT TRANSMISSION AND CIRCULATION

HAROLD LOVE AND ARTHUR F. MAROTTI

By 1476 when William Caxton issued the first book from his press at Westminster, England had already experienced considerable exposure to imported print. Caxton himself had printed some Latin during his time at Bruges, as well as a pioneering English text, the *Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye*. Already, we may surmise, printed copies had replaced manuscripts of the same work in progressive libraries. But on the whole, as would remain the case for many decades, most 'publication' of texts was still carried out through writing and voice. The pen of the scribe scratched on regardless of the first creakings of the wooden press. Increasing literacy, the outcome of a modernising business and administrative order, fuelled an expansion of both systems of production: it was not a matter of the new one expanding at the expense of the old. Instead, each came to meet particular needs. While the press dealt best with longer texts and those required in large numbers, shorter ones directed at specialised readerships remained the preserve of the pen. The loss in the late 1530s of the scriptoria in which monks had toiled as an act of communal devotion was compensated for by the Protestant recognition of writing as an exercise of personal virtue and by an expansion of both private and public record-keeping.

It is salutary to remember how, even as late as the early seventeenth century, the activities of the law and Parliament were conducted with hardly any recourse to the printed word. Juridical proceedings were preserved only in tenacious memories and handwritten précis: even law textbooks were as likely to be manuscript copies as printed.<sup>1</sup> Parliament had no Hansard: the only permanent records of debates were in private notes made by members and the barest summaries of decisions in the clerk's book. It is true that by the early seventeenth century a market was developing in unofficially compiled 'Diurnalls', but these,

<sup>1</sup> See D. F. McKenzie, 'Speech-manuscript-print', in *New Directions in Textual Studies*, ed. Dave Oliphant and Robin Bradford (Austin: Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas, 1990), pp. 97-9.

until the eve of the Civil War, were exclusively in manuscript.<sup>2</sup> In scribes' and attorneys' offices, in diocesan chanceries, in counting houses and colleges, and in the 'closets' of the gentry, the quill maintained its primacy. Even the theatres relied almost wholly on handwritten copies and frowned upon the printing of plays for private reading.<sup>3</sup> There was always a huge preponderance of professional scribes and amanuenses over printing operatives.

In particular, a great many shorter literary works, and even a few longer ones, continued throughout to be circulated primarily in handwritten copies. Poets as influential as Sidney, Raleigh, Donne and Carew circulated their verse almost exclusively through the scribal medium.<sup>4</sup> Lengthy prose romances such as Sidney's two *Arcadias* and the second part of Mary Wroth's *Urania* (after the printing of the first part had led to scandal and suppression) and political tracts such as *A View of the present state of Ireland* (long ascribed to Spenser) and Raleigh's *A Dialogue between a Counsellor of State and a Justice of the Peace* were intended by their writers for scribal transmission and only deviated into print years or decades after composition, often in unauthorised editions. Much lyric verse and nearly all topical satire did likewise: the more popular examples of these kinds still survive in dozens of copies. To complement the impressive record of press productivity offered by the two *Short-Title Catalogues*,<sup>5</sup> we need to recognise that the major libraries of Britain and North America preserve a huge heritage of manuscripts written during the first two centuries of print's supposed dominance which were not copies from printed originals, and that these are only a small fraction of what once existed.<sup>6</sup>

Many writers from the gentry and aristocracy shunned print publication as conferring a mechanic, stipendiary status,<sup>7</sup> but for others the decision to promulgate a text in one medium or the other meant no more than an efficient matching of ends to means. Even the professed, print-publishing writer might turn to script for a work whose presentation to a patron would yield a higher

<sup>2</sup> Harold Love, *Scribal Publication in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), pp. 87-109.

<sup>3</sup> Discussed in Harold Love, 'Thomas Middleton: Oral Culture and the Manuscript Economy', in *Thomas Middleton and Early Modern Textual Culture*, ed. Gary Taylor (Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

<sup>4</sup> Ernest W. Sullivan, II, has pointed out in *The Influence of John Donne: His Uncollected Seventeenth-Century Printed Verse* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1993) that more of Donne's verse appeared in print than has previously been suspected, but the proportion is still a very small one of the whole circulating in manuscript.

<sup>5</sup> Bibliographical information is given in full in the headnote to this volume's select Bibliography (p. 879).

<sup>6</sup> Those by canonical authors are exhaustively listed in Peter Beal's invaluable *Index of English Literary Manuscripts*, vol. 1, 1450-1625, and vol. 2, 1625-1700 (London: Mansell, 1980-93).

<sup>7</sup> See J. W. Saunders, 'The Stigma of Print: A Note on the Social Bases of Tudor Poetry', *Essays in Criticism* 1 (1951), 139-64.

return than could be extracted from the booksellers. Scribal circulation might also be chosen for the speed with which texts could be put into circulation. Ten, twenty or more copies of a new 'libel' or parliamentary speech could be produced by a single scribe in the time it would take for it to pass through the more cumbersome processes of print production, and several times that number could be produced by a scriptorium. Once sent on their way, texts would frequently pass from copyist to copyist along chains linked by personal acquaintance and common interest, which were perfectly adapted to bring them to their desired audience. Communities of the like-minded in every field of cultural and intellectual endeavour were created or confirmed through the regular exchange of manuscripts.<sup>8</sup>

A version of the same work from the press (assuming it was allowed to be printed in the first place) would as a rule be censored or supervised – if not directly by a state-appointed licenser, then as a result of self-policing by the Stationers' Company. If, as was often the case, this version came from a copy casually encountered in scribal transmission, it might well be textually inferior to the better manuscripts. By being available promiscuously from booksellers, stallholders and hawkers, it would have lost the 'reserved' character which made it a prized object for collectors of texts circulating only in manuscript. The scribal text carried with it an intimacy arising from script's greater power of projecting the individuality of the inscriber, especially in the days of exuberant secretary and idiosyncratic 'mixed' hands. Having made a copy (often into a substantial personal miscellany or commonplace book), the reader would have made a personal appropriation of the text concerned.<sup>9</sup> Print replaced manuscript with an objectivity that was both a remoteness and a fixity. Even to annotate a printed book was not a simple matter because printing paper contained less sizing than writing paper, and it was usually necessary to rub the surface first with resin.<sup>10</sup>

8 H. R. Woudhuysen, *Sir Philip Sidney and the Circulation of Manuscripts 1558–1640* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 297, for example, discusses the exchange of poetry in the Sidney-Greville-Dyer-Spenser circle. Later, John Donne exchanged some work with Sir Edward Herbert (Arthur F. Marotti, *John Donne: Coterie Poet* (Madison and London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986), pp. 195–202).

9 On the practice of keeping commonplace books, see Mary Thomas Crane, *Framing Authority: Sayings, Self, and Society in Sixteenth-Century England* (Princeton University Press, 1993), and Peter Beal, 'Notions in Garrison: The Seventeenth-Century Commonplace Book', in *New Ways of Looking at Old Texts: Papers of the Renaissance English Text Society, 1985–1991*, ed. W. Speed Hill (Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1993), pp. 131–47.

10 Nevertheless, as the marginalia of such book owners as Gabriel Harvey and Ben Jonson attest, readers of printed books continued older practices that assumed an interactive relationship with texts. On the connections of marginalia, including Harvey's, both to print culture and to manuscript culture, see Love, *Scribal Publication*, 224.

Evidently then, to be an author or a reader in one medium or the other was a significantly different activity. Authorship for the press was public, supervised and divorced from any sense of personal contact with the reader, except insofar as this could be simulated through the tone of the actual writing. Its end product was not the individuality and expressive irregularity of script, but arrays of type impressions which, apart from the deformations of wear, were each indistinguishable products of the originating punches. Arranged in regular, parallel lines with an exactness impossible to achieve in script, they emblematised what Walter Ong has called a 'technologising' of the word, fostering also a spatialisation of thought whose cultural consequences were many.<sup>11</sup> Print required that personal responsibility be taken for what was uttered: the law insisted that a printed text should bear the name of the agents responsible for its physical production. Hideous punishments were prescribed for those who evaded these requirements and, as the case of the Marprelate tracts proves, the government was willing to go to great lengths to track down the authors and printers of illicit texts.<sup>12</sup> Given all these considerations, readers of a printed text could not expect it to address them intimately as individuals; nor did they have any way of altering the condition in which the text was to reach readers of other copies. Thus, they would only have enjoyed a diminished sense of ownership: while they may have acquired a copy, the work itself remained the publicly protected property of the publisher who had entered it in the Stationers' Register.

Authorship in the scribal medium was in every sense more intimate. Writers would have written to be read in their own hands or in those of close friends and associates:<sup>13</sup> as the example of Sidney's 'Old' *Arcadia* demonstrates, their readers would have been present to their imagination as they wrote in a way that was difficult if not impossible for the print-publishing author. That many texts transcended these bounds to the extent of becoming generally available can only seldom have been a consideration at the time of writing. Paradoxically the medium also encouraged anonymity: the scribal author, so powerful as a presence, is very frequently without a name. In the manuscript system, the

<sup>11</sup> Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: the Technologizing of the Word* (London and New York: Routledge, 1982).

<sup>12</sup> See H. S. Bennett, *English Books and Readers, 1558-1603* (Cambridge University Press, 1965), pp. 81-6.

<sup>13</sup> In some cases, however, he or she had an amanuensis or professional scribe produce a fair copy for presentation to a particular person, as John Harington of Kelston did with his epigrams. For a discussion of Wyatt's, Greville's and Harington's uses of scribes to make fair copies of their work, see Woudhuysen, *Sidney and the Circulation of Manuscripts*, pp. 103-9.

ascription of particular works to particular writers was less important than it was in print (where an author's name might have had market value). This unascribed presentation resulted from two factors: (1) texts were more social and appropriable in the manuscript system; and (2) in many cases ascription was unnecessary, since those receiving manuscript texts knew who wrote them. Even if a text did carry the initials or the full name of a writer, the contemporary reader had no way of knowing whether the identification was correct.

Scribal transmission encouraged a fusing of the three roles – author, producer and reader – which print kept separate. While it needs to be recognised that professional scribes were at work in the field from its beginnings, most sources were copied for record or further transmission by, or under the supervision of, their readers. Those compilers of personal miscellanies who were not already authors were encouraged by the medium to become so. The beginning might be humble enough, since it was rare for a scribally transmitted text not to require some editorial repair work. Many transcribers went beyond this to reshape the work itself to accord with their own tastes and interests: there was no sense of its being the unchangeable possession of its author or of some intervening capitalist. The manuscript histories of some poems, such as Dyer's 'Phancy' and Raleigh's 'The Lie' testify to the active involvement of compilers in modifying and supplementing the texts they received.<sup>14</sup> In some collections we can observe correction and revision spurring the desire to create fresh works in the same genre. The sense of belonging to a privileged community would inspire the individual to take an active part in its debates. Compilers composed their own alterations, supplements and responses to the texts they received. Competitive versifying was encouraged by the manuscript medium, especially when commonplace-book anthologies issued from a group effort, as they sometimes did in the universities, aristocratic households or the court. Academic exercises in translation and imitation, together with composition in response to the setting of a theme, carried over from the grammar school to the university to aristocratic, courtly and Inns of Court social worlds, producing competitive versifying of various sorts, including the writing of 'answer-poems' and of rival poems on a particular topic.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> On the first, see Ruth Hughey (ed.), *The Arundel Harington Manuscript of Tudor Poetry*, 2 vols. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1960), 2:206; on the second, see Michael Rudick (ed.), *The Poems of Sir Walter Raleigh: An Historical Edition* (Tempe, AZ: Renaissance English Text Society in conjunction with Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 1999), pp. xlii–xlvii.

<sup>15</sup> See E. F. Hart, 'The Answer-Poem of the Early Seventeenth Century', *RES* n.s. 7 (1956), 19–29, and Arthur F. Marotti, *Manuscript, Print and the English Renaissance Lyric* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), pp. 159–71.



Of course, few readers were exclusively wedded to one or the other medium, a fundamental fact obscured by attempts to make hard-and-fast distinctions between print consciousness and script consciousness, although the 'stigma of print' may have tipped the balance markedly in favour of the older medium for those high on the social scale or most of those who sought their patronage. Our model should rather be one of different experiences of readership and authorship undergone by the same individuals at different times and under different circumstances. We can still appreciate that difference today when we turn from a scribal 'separate' in a library to an early printed version of the same text. For a text of our period this will be a very different experience from that of, say, turning from a nineteenth-century author's manuscript to its printed outcome, for that kind of manuscript was never intended to be read except by the author, the publisher and the compositor. The scribal separate, on the other hand, was a communication in its own right which might well pass through dozens of hands and give rise to dozens of copies, and would generally, because of its rarity and the sense of privilege attached to its possession, be read with greater attention and personal involvement than the products of the press.

#### Preservation and circulation of lyric, dramatic and prose texts

Although literary works in a variety of genres were circulated and collected in manuscript in the early modern period, lyrics constitute a high percentage of the total. The manuscript transmission of poetry communicates two contradictory messages: first, that such work was socially occasional and ephemeral, and second, that it was worth preserving. The first indicates a very different attitude towards texts than that found in established print culture. Poems were associated with such social occasions as the paying of compliments, epistolary communication, witty extemporaneous performance, the sending of New Year's greetings, and congratulations on births or condolences on deaths. The connection to social compliment, for example, is evident in personal manuscript-collecting and compiling as well as in the professional copying of individual works or collections used for presentation to patrons. There was, of course, a continuum from manuscript to print, where the collecting efforts of individuals like John Harington of Stepney and Francis Davison often resulted in print publications.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Hughey (ed.), *Arundel-Harington Manuscript*, 1:43-62, points to connections between the Harington manuscripts and the collection that was the main source for *Tottel's*

Since most lyrics were social communications, their initial circulation as individual poems or sets of poems made sense. Their entry into personal commonplace books followed. Group efforts of composition and collection, associated, for example, with the universities and Inns of Court, resulted in the circulation of verse in larger units. So, too, literarily self-conscious poets who released a body of verse into more or less restricted circulation made it possible for individual collectors to transcribe substantial collections that, in many cases, included the work of other writers. Thus copyists down the line of manuscript transmission might have had access not only to individual pieces and collections, but also to collections of collections.

The surviving manuscript documents containing lyric poetry represent a range of circulation and compilation practices: these include the passing-on of a poem or small group of poems on a single sheet or as an enclosure in a letter, the use of a quaternion or quire to hold a group of poems, and the gathering of poems into a booklet.<sup>17</sup> Larger collections were formed either by binding loose manuscript 'separates' or by transcribing single poems and collections of poems into already-bound volumes ranging in size from pocket-sized notebooks to impressive folios. Such collections of verse either constitute manuscript poetical anthologies or become parts of commonplace-book gatherings of various kinds of writing. In the latter case, poetry is found along with personal letters, diaries and journals, household accounts, medical receipts, recipes and other useful forms of information – a sign that literary texts were part of a fabric of social life, not artificially segregated from the everyday world as they came to be in a developed print culture.

The manuscripts containing poetry were mainly associated with the university, the Inns of Court, the court, the aristocratic or middle-class household, and familial or social networks or scribal communities. Some collections belonged to more than one of these milieux, especially in the case of those manuscripts whose owners moved from the university to London, where (perhaps either at court or in the Inns of Court) they continued their transcription of texts. Some social environments, such as the universities, the Inns of Court and the royal court, were especially conducive to transcription and transmission of manuscript separates and collections. Individual networks of

*Miscellany* (1557). Davison, who collected a large body of verse from the late Elizabethan period, produced in *A Poetical Rhapsody* (1602) perhaps the richest of the Elizabethan printed miscellanies.

<sup>17</sup> See J. W. Saunders, 'From Manuscript to Print: A Note on the Circulation of Poetic MSS in the Sixteenth Century', *Proceedings of the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society* 6.8 (1951), 502-28.

transmission associated with particular families (and, sometimes, with their clients), with political factions and with a dispersed religious minority such as English Catholics also account for the production and dissemination of a large body of manuscript texts.

Contrary to what we might expect, at least as far as 'literary' manuscripts are concerned, there are more surviving manuscripts from the seventeenth century than from the sixteenth: of the approximately 230 pre-1640 surviving manuscript collections of poetry that were not single-author collections only 27 belong to the sixteenth century.<sup>18</sup> This may be due to a number of factors, including the increase in manuscript circulation of texts at the university and the Inns of Court, perhaps the two most important centres of manuscript literary transmission and collection; widespread dissemination of materials through professional scribes and scriptoria; and the reliance on manuscript communication by factions and minorities in a period of censorship and political turmoil. Nevertheless, the traces of the social circulation and collecting of texts – including some written by such canonical authors as Wyatt, Sidney and Donne – are numerous enough for us to perceive the workings of this system of literary transmission.

The manuscript poetry collections that survive from the early Tudor period include books of songs and lyrics.<sup>19</sup> The most important manuscripts, however, are those associated with the poetry of Sir Thomas Wyatt. Because of their connection with the publication of the most influential sixteenth-century printed anthology of poetry, *Tottel's Miscellany* (1557), the manuscripts in which we find Wyatt's poetry have received the most scholarly attention. We have not only the Egerton Manuscript of Wyatt's verse (BL, MS Egerton 2711) with its holograph authorial corrections and the 'Blage' Manuscript (Trinity College, Dublin MS 160, pts 2 and 3), which includes a large selection of Wyatt's verse, but also the Devonshire Manuscript (BL, MS Additional 17492), which was a product of a courtly coterie circulation of texts, both Wyatt's and those of other authors, including some of the transcribers.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Woudhuysen, *Sidney and the Circulation of Manuscripts*, p. 157.

<sup>19</sup> For example, these manuscripts in the British Library, hereafter 'BL': the Fayrfax Manuscript (BL, MS Additional 5465), Ritson's Manuscript (BL, MS Additional 5665), Henry VIII's Manuscript (BL, MS Additional 31922) and BL, MS Cotton Vespasian A-25. For the first three, see John Stevens, *Music and Poetry in the Early Tudor Court* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961), pp. 338–425. For the last, see *Tudor Songs and Ballads From MS Cotton Vespasian A-25*, ed. Peter Seng (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1978).

<sup>20</sup> See Richard Harrier, *The Canon of Sir Thomas Wyatt's Poetry* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), pp. 23–54; Elizabeth Heale, 'Women and the Courtly Love Lyric: The Devonshire MS (BL Additional 17492)', *Modern Language Review* 90 (1995), 296–313;

The Devonshire Manuscript is, perhaps, the best surviving sixteenth-century example of a blank book that was used as a medium of social intercourse. It circulated within a group of male and female courtiers connected with the Howard family, accruing texts in that late Henrician courtly circle before moving, with one of its principals, Margaret Douglas, to Scotland, where Lord Darnley (James I's father) added a poem of his own. Apart from a (textually unreliable) selection of Wyatt poems, this manuscript includes pieces by Thomas Clere (to his love Mary Shelton), Richard Hattfield, John Harington, Sir Edmund Knivet and other courtly amateurs. It has a section preserving a run of love poems by Margaret Douglas (Henry VIII's niece) and Thomas Howard associated with their unauthorised, ill-fated marriage.

Margaret Douglas is one of five women of the Howard family who were connected to the manuscript as collectors, transcribers or subjects of the verse. The mixed society of the court and the aristocratic household made it possible for women to be involved in the composition, circulation and compilation of manuscript verse. Given the limited opportunities for women to have their writings printed, it is not surprising that they should have relied strongly on manuscript transmission.<sup>21</sup> Later in the century Ann Cornwallis was associated with a small poetry collection (Folger Shakespeare Library MS V.a. 89) and Lady Ann Southwell kept a manuscript commonplace book in which she inserted her own and others' poems (Folger Shakespeare Library MS V.b. 198).<sup>22</sup> In the mid-to-late seventeenth century the women of the Catholic Aston family composed, circulated and collected texts from their familial and social networks.<sup>23</sup> Given women's involvement in the manuscript circulation and preservation of texts, it is not surprising to read the professional writer Thomas Nashe's complaint about the exclusiveness and relative inaccessibility of manuscript verse 'oftentimes imprisoned in Ladyes casks'.<sup>24</sup>

and Seth Lehrer, *Courtly Letters in the Age of Henry VIII* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 143–60.

- 21 See Margaret J. M. Ezell, *The Patriarch's Wife: Literary Evidence and the History of the Family* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), pp. 62–100.
- 22 See Arthur F. Marotti, 'The Cultural and Textual Importance of Folger MS V.a. 89', *English Manuscript Studies 1100–1700* 11 (2002), 70–92; *The Southwell–Sibthorpe Commonplace Book, Folger MS. V.b. 198*, ed. Jean Klene, CSC (Tempe, AZ: Renaissance English Text Society in conjunction with Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 1997).
- 23 Texts from this circle were published in *Tixall Poetry*, ed. Arthur Clifford (Edinburgh: James Ballantyne, 1813). See *The Verse Miscellany of Constance Aston Fowler: A Diplomatic Edition*, ed. Deborah Larson (Tempe, AZ: Renaissance English Text Society in conjunction with Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2000), which is based on Huntington Library MS HM 904.
- 24 In his Preface to Newman's 1591 edition of *Astrophil and Stella*, in *Elizabethan Critical Essays*, ed. G. Gregory Smith, 2 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1904), 2:224.

One of the most interesting family manuscripts from the Tudor period is the Arundel-Harington Manuscript, the album used by Sir John Harington of Stepney and his son Sir John Harington of Kelston – a rich collection of over 300 poems from a six-decade period (1540–1600) comprising, on the one hand, the work of the elder Harington (who died in 1582), Wyatt, Surrey, Lord Vaux, Churchyard, Richard Edwards and others and, on the other, that of such poets as the younger Harington, Sidney, Oxford, Daniel, Raleigh, Greville, Dyer, Constable and Spenser. John Harington of Kelston continued his father's poetical anthology by adding pieces from the later Elizabethan era: even in its surviving mangled form (the result of an eighteenth-century editor's removing pages while editing *Nugae Antiquae*, an anthology of Harington family writing), the Arundel-Harington Manuscript includes many poetical texts that were prized in Tudor courtly society.<sup>25</sup> Besides transcribing poems to which other collectors had ready access, the younger Harington also, through his connection to the Sidney-Pembroke circle, was able to copy some of the texts of Sir Philip Sidney that were initially quite restricted: these include manuscripts of the *Arcadia*, *Astrophil and Stella*, some of the *Certaine Sonnets*, and the Sidney / Countess of Pembroke translations of the Psalms.<sup>26</sup> Harington translated a salacious section of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, circulating it in manuscript to a courtly readership that included Queen Elizabeth's maids of honour, an act for which he was banished from court until he did penance by translating the whole work – which he put into print in an expensively illustrated, but comically annotated edition. He wrote epigrams for manuscript circulation, which then posthumously found their way into print.<sup>27</sup> Despite his personal eccentricity, the younger Harington is a good example of the gentleman author/collector in late manuscript culture, one who, nevertheless, felt free, as his Ariosto translation and his Menippean *Metamorphosis of Ajax* demonstrate, to move his work into print without fear of social stigma.

Like the collection begun by the elder Harington, George Bannatyne's 1568 compilation contains a large variety of Scottish texts, preserving many pieces that otherwise would have been lost.<sup>28</sup> Although Bannatyne originally planned

<sup>25</sup> See Hughey's description of this manuscript, *Arundel-Harington Manuscript*, 1:3–75.

<sup>26</sup> See Peter Beal, *In Praise of Scribes: Manuscripts and Their Makers in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), p. 122n.

<sup>27</sup> BL, MS Additional 12049 is a copy made for Prince Henry; Beal, *Index*, 1.2.122, notes Harington sent an autographed copy of his epigrams to King James; Harington died in 1612 and the two editions of the poems appeared in 1615 and 1618.

<sup>28</sup> See *The Bannatyne Manuscript: National Library of Scotland Advocates' MS 1.1.6* (facsimile edn.), ed. Denton Fox and William A. Ringler (London: Scolar Press, 1980). Fox and Ringler point out, for example, that this manuscript is 'the most important single witness for

to include only religious and moral poetry, he revised his plan and grouped the poems in four sections: 'ballatis of theologie', 'ballatis full of wisdome and moralitie', 'ballatis mirry' and 'ballatis of luve'.<sup>29</sup> Linking late medieval and sixteenth-century Scottish culture, this anthology numbers more than 400 items and stands as the most important Scottish literary manuscript from the sixteenth century, including (in addition to Dunbar, Henryson and Scott) such writers as Sir William Alexander, Chaucer, Gavin Douglas, John Heywood, Walter Kennedy, John Lydgate, Alexander Montgomerie and William Stewart.

Four especially interesting Elizabethan manuscript collections shed light on the texts that circulated in both courtly culture and the related university Inns of Court and aristocratic environments: those of John Finet (Bodleian (hereafter 'Bod.') MS Rawlinson Poetical 85), Humphrey Coningsby (BL, MS Harley 7392), Henry Stanford (Cambridge MS Dd.5.75) and John Lilliat (Bod. MS Rawlinson Poetical 148).<sup>30</sup> The first two share a large group of poems by such courtly authors as Sidney, Dyer and Oxford. Finet collected and transcribed verse both at court and at the university, producing both a personal and a culturally symptomatic anthology of poetry from the latter part of Elizabeth's reign, including work by Oxford, Raleigh, Breton, Dyer, Sidney, Gorges, Spenser and Queen Elizabeth as well as student poetry from Cambridge.<sup>31</sup> Coningsby, whose family was related by marriage to the Sidneys, was associated both with Christ Church, Oxford, and with the Inns of Court. His collection, which overlaps considerably with Finet's, in addition to pieces by a number of individuals identified only by their initials, has at its core a substantial anthology of Elizabethan courtly verse by such poets as Oxford, Raleigh, Gorges, Sidney, Breton and Queen Elizabeth.<sup>32</sup> Stanford, who was educated at Trinity College, Oxford, and served as a chaplain or tutor in three aristocratic households, not only collected courtly verse by such accomplished

[William] Dunbar' (p. xli); for six of Henryson's fables, Bannatyne has the only text (p. xli); most of the poems of Alexander Scott it contains are unique texts (p. xlii).

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xiv.

<sup>30</sup> The first has been edited by Laurence Cummings: 'John Finet's Miscellany' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Washington University, 1960); the third by Steven W. May: *Henry Stanford's Anthology: An Edition of Cambridge University Library Manuscript Dd.5.75* (New York: Garland Press, 1988); and the fourth by Edward Doughtie: *Liber Lilliat: Elizabethan Verse and Song (Bodleian MS Rawlinson Poetry 148)* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1985). Fols. 23-63v of Stanford's collection resemble Rawlinson Poetical 85 and Harley 7392, with some riddles and epigrams included.

<sup>31</sup> See Cummings (ed.), 'John Finet's Miscellany', pp. 9-14.

<sup>32</sup> On this manuscript and its compiler, see Woudhuysen, *Sidney and the Circulation of Manuscripts*, pp. 278-86.

poets as Sidney, Dyer, Breton and Gorges, but also transcribed the juvenile efforts of his pupils.<sup>33</sup> John Lilliat, a cathedral musician, compiled a lyrical and musical collection on sheets bound to Thomas Watson's *Hekatompathia* (1582). His compilation includes pieces by such well-known writers as Dyer, Sidney, Essex, Marlowe, Thomas Campion, Raleigh and Sir John Davies, as well as the work of minor or unknown secular and clerical versifiers, including the compiler himself.

Sir Philip Sidney is clearly the most important manuscript author of the Elizabethan period. He severely restricted the circulation of the texts of the (unrevised 'Old' and revised 'New') *Arcadia*, *Certaine Sonnets* and *Astrophil and Stella*: ironically the Sidney text that was circulated most broadly in manuscript was his politically hazardous 'Letter to the Queen', whose publicity damaged his career.<sup>34</sup> If we look at the manuscript remains of Sidney's writings, we can detect the network of family, neighbours and friends to whom they were passed. After his death, however, under the joint literary executorship of his sister, the Countess of Pembroke, and Fulke Greville (whose poetry was printed only posthumously in 1633), Sidney's partially revised prose romance came into print in 1590 - republished in 1593, 1598 and 1617 in a fuller version created by adding the unrevised parts of the 'Old' *Arcadia* needed to complete the story. The older version of the work, which Sidney supposedly had sent in a series of manuscript instalments to his sister and her friends in the early 1580s and whose projected publication was thwarted by Greville and Sir Francis Walsingham,<sup>35</sup> had to wait until the twentieth century for rediscovery and print publication. The printing of the more private *Astrophil and Stella* in 1591 was an unauthorised though fortunate one, since it initiated the Elizabethan vogue for sonnet sequences. Once the *Arcadia* and the sonnet sequence were published, print publication of all of this author's works by one means or another was inevitable.

One change that marks the late Elizabethan era is the elevation of the socio-cultural status of lyric poetry, especially of amorous verse. Before the 1580s and 1590s poets writing secular lyrics had to be especially apologetic about publishing their 'poetical toys' in an age that condemned such work as immature and frivolous: George Gascoigne, for example, had to fight this prejudice. In the last two decades of the century, partly through the cumulative effect of the published poetical miscellanies and partly through the posthumous influence

<sup>33</sup> May (ed.), *Henry Stanford's Anthology*, pp. vii-lxiv.

<sup>34</sup> See Beal, *In Praise of Scribes*, pp. 109-46.

<sup>35</sup> Woudhuysen, *Sidney and the Circulation of Manuscripts*, pp. 224-5.

of Sidney, gentlemen and professional authors had less fear of print publication. Samuel Daniel, for example, felt free to have his poetry printed once the precedent was set by the appearance of Sidney's verse: his sonnet sequence *Delia* appeared in 1592, the initial version of *The Civil Wars* in 1595, and his collected works in 1601 and 1623. Since manuscript circulation and print were both available, some writers chose to exploit both forms of publication. Some late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century authors who aspired to 'laureate' status,<sup>36</sup> most especially Edmund Spenser and Ben Jonson, took care to bring their work into print in impressive forms, while actively participating in the system of manuscript transmission as well – at least by circulating texts to friends and (actual or potential) patrons. Spenser gave manuscript texts of his work to members of the Sidney circle (including Fulke Greville and Sir Edward Dyer), and to friends such as Gabriel Harvey, Lodowick Bryskett and Sir Walter Raleigh; Jonson sent individual pieces to such individuals as the Countess of Bedford, the Earl of Pembroke, John Donne and Sir Robert Cecil – both before and after the production of his self-advertising 1616 folio *Workes*. The ready availability of some of Jonson's lyrics in the manuscript system in the 1630s and 1640s, before their posthumous publication in *Under-Wood* (1640/41), testifies to his continuing involvement in this older system of publication.

Though print was the primary means for their preservation for future eras, some dramatic texts were transmitted in manuscript. We have evidence, for example, of the manuscript circulation of civic and academic drama in the sixteenth century, both Latin and English.<sup>37</sup> Although, for professional drama, the most solid evidence exists for seventeenth-century (post-Shakespearean) examples of the practice, Richard Dutton has made an interesting circumstantial case for Shakespeare's circulation of some of his plays in manuscript and he argues that between 1590 and 1642 this was a common practice.<sup>38</sup> Dutton infers from the circulation of manuscript texts of plays, which usually were

<sup>36</sup> See Richard Helgerson, *Self-Crowned Laureates: Spenser, Jonson, Milton and the Literary System* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983).

<sup>37</sup> See Woudhuysen, *Sidney and the Circulation of Manuscripts*, pp. 134–45. See the list of manuscript plays in E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, 4 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923, 1951), 4:404–6. G. E. Bentley indexes manuscript copies of early Stuart plays in *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*, 7 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1941–68).

<sup>38</sup> Richard Dutton, 'The Birth of the Author', in *Texts and Cultural Change in Early Modern England*, ed. Cedric C. Brown and Arthur F. Marotti (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan; New York: St Martin's Press, 1997), pp. 153–78. On the authorial publication of play-texts in manuscript, see Love, *Scribal Publication*, pp. 65–70.



well over the average length designed for performance (2,500 lines), that authors deliberately produced longer versions of their dramas for private reading. Harold Love observes: "The six surviving manuscripts of Middleton's *A Game at Chess* . . . are not just the product of unusual political topicality, but rather a sign of an alternate means of publicising dramatic writing – in which Beaumont and Fletcher, for example, certainly participated."<sup>39</sup> In addition, as the Dering Manuscript's conflated and altered text of Shakespeare's *Henry IV*, parts I and II, indicates, dramatic texts, like lyric poetry, could be altered within the manuscript system of transmission.<sup>40</sup> Edward Pudsey's commonplace-book collection of citations from the drama (Bod. MS English Poetry d.3) demonstrates how printed dramatic texts could be excerpted and compiled in manuscript form.

The numerous fictional and non-fictional prose texts circulated in multiple manuscript copies include, in addition to Sidney's *Arcadia* and his 'Letter to Elizabeth', prose lives of Cardinal Wolsey and Sir Thomas More; political libels such as *Leicester's Commonwealth*; Robert Persons's 'A Memorial for the Reformation of England'; the letter from the Catholic Philip Howard, Earl of Arundel, to Queen Elizabeth; Robert Southwell's apologetic letter to his father; Edmund Campion's *Historie of Ireland*; and papers associated with Robert Cotton and the Society of Antiquaries.<sup>41</sup> Apart from his *Discoverie of . . . Guiana* (1595) and his monumental, but abortive, *History of the World* (1614), all of Sir Walter Raleigh's prose works circulated in manuscript during his lifetime and for some time after his death, reaching print only in altered political circumstances and, therefore, bearing new topical meanings.<sup>42</sup> Letters by important individuals and excerpts from trials of prominent figures like Raleigh and the Earl of Essex were sometimes included in manuscript miscellanies. Of course, newsletters and reports of proceedings in Parliament proliferated, especially in the first four decades of the seventeenth century.<sup>43</sup>

39 "Thomas Middleton: Oral Culture and the Manuscript Economy", Woudhuysen, *Sidney and the Circulation of Manuscripts*, p. 142, notes that "Jonson exchanged plays in manuscript with Beaumont and Fletcher".

40 Barbara Mowat, "The Problem of Shakespeare's Text(s)", in *Textual Formations and Reformations*, ed. Laurie E. Maguire and Thomas L. Berger (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1998), pp. 131–48, 145n.

41 See Love, *Scribal Publication*, pp. 83–9.

42 See Anna R. Beer, *Sir Walter Raleigh and His Readers in the Seventeenth Century* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan; New York: St Martin's Press, 1997).

43 See Love, *Scribal Publication*, esp. pp. 9–22, 124–6, 134–7; Richard Cust, 'News and Politics in Early Seventeenth-Century England', *Past and Present* 112 (August 1986), 60–90; and F. J. Levy, 'How Information Spread Among the Gentry, 1550–1640', *Journal of British Studies* 21 (1982), 11–34. For a general discussion of prose texts in manuscript circulation, see Woudhuysen, *Sidney and the Circulation of Manuscripts*, pp. 145–53.

Manuscript circulation – authors' choices,  
collectors' connoisseurship

From the end of the sixteenth and through most of the seventeenth century manuscript circulation of their literary texts remained a preferred medium for most gentleman authors. Among those who deliberately chose to restrict their texts to this medium, John Donne is the most prominent case. Except for the carefully staged performances represented by his published polemical and devotional prose – *Pseudo-Martyr* (1610), *Ignatius His Conclave* (1611) and *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* (1624) – and his public sermons (some of which were printed in his lifetime), Donne was basically a coterie author. Throughout his erratic career – from his Inns of Court days,<sup>44</sup> to those of his courtly employment as secretary to the Lord Keeper, Sir Thomas Egerton,<sup>45</sup> to his three-year social exile in the country following his elopement and its disastrous consequences, to the period of his renewed search for patronage and courtly employment, to, finally, his life as a minister, then Dean of St Paul's – Donne addressed his poetry and much of his prose to various special and restricted audiences of friends, patrons and patronesses, keeping some pieces (such as 'A Nocturnal upon S. Lucies Day' and the prose treatise on suicide, *Biathanatos*) quite close. As the manuscript evidence indicates, they reached a wider audience only some years after their original limited circulation. Among Donne's poems, the striking exceptions are the two *Anniversaries*, whose publication the author deeply regretted. The story of how Donne's poetry finally (after 1615) began to be circulated widely in university, courtly and aristocratic circles is a complex one, demanding both textual and social-historical analysis, but the important thing to note is that, as Peter Beal has indicated, with some 250 surviving manuscripts containing his verse, Donne is the poet who was most widely disseminated in manuscript in the seventeenth century.<sup>46</sup>

Although Donne severely restricted the circulation of some individual pieces – particularly the lyrics grouped under the heading *Songs and Sonets* in the 1635 edition – he released some of his work more freely: for example, the set of his *Satires*, which his friend Ben Jonson transmitted with a cover poem to the

44 Other writers, including Sir John Davies at the Middle Temple and Thomas Campion at Gray's Inn, also circulated their work in manuscript in the Inns environment before allowing it to reach print.

45 Woudhuysen, *Sidney and the Circulation of Manuscripts*, pp. 67, 79, notes that other secretaries who produced writing of their own include Edward Dyer, Edmund Campion, Edmund Spenser, John Lyly, George Turberville, Thomas Lake, John Finet, Robert Naunton, Sir Thomas Smith, Roger Ascham, James Howell, Frances Quarles and John Milton.

46 Beal, *Index*, 1.1.245.

Countess of Bedford. Some or all of Donne's *Elegies* probably circulated as a group. The *La Corona* sonnets and some of the *Holy Sonnets* were presented to friends and social superiors. Donne's close friend Rowland Woodward compiled (probably for his patron the Earl of Westmorland) a manuscript collection that includes the five satires, thirteen elegies, the Lincoln's Inn epithalamion, a selection of the verse letters, nineteen Holy Sonnets, *La Corona*, prose paradoxes, epigrams and one lyric, 'A Jeat Ring Sent' (New York Public Library, Westmorland MS, Berg Collection). Examining the manuscript remains of both Donne and Henry King, Margaret Crum has convincingly argued that both poets probably originally circulated their work in loose sheets and quires or booklets, rather than in large collections – though, of course, eventually their work was gathered by compilers.<sup>47</sup>

Most of the surviving manuscript remains of the broad circulation of Donne's poems date from about 1620, so that the full impact of work he wrote much earlier was considerably delayed, reaching its widest audience only with the 1633 and subsequent printed editions. We know that at least twice in his life, Donne deliberately collected his poetry: in 1614, with a thought of producing only a few printed copies for presentation to patrons; in 1619, to entrust his verse to his friend Sir Robert Ker on the occasion of going abroad on a diplomatic mission. The surprising thing is that, in the first case, the poet had to ask his good friend Sir Henry Goodyer to return to him a manuscript book of his poems since he did not have a collection in his possession. Donne risked the loss of all or much of his poetry by letting such a manuscript out of his hands; apparently a unique collection of the poems of John Hoskyns, larger than Donne's collected poems, was lost by such means.<sup>48</sup> The manuscript system, evidently, could either imperil or preserve texts.

In the proliferating seventeenth-century manuscript collections, Donne's poetical texts and, to some degree, Jonson's and Raleigh's connect the Elizabethan and early Jacobean literary world with that of the late Jacobean, Caroline and Interregnum periods. Many university, Inns of Court, aristocratic and courtly anthologies from the 1620s through the 1650s contain substantial numbers of lyrics by these older poets alongside the work of a younger generation of writers strongly influenced by Donne and Jonson. One of the motives for preserving older verse was political. Texts such as the collaboratively written 'Parliament Fart' and Wotton's 'Dazel'd thus, with height of place' could be

47 'Notes on the Physical Characteristics of Some Manuscripts of the Poems of Donne and of Henry King', *The Library* 16 (1961), 121-32.

48 Mary Hobbs, *Early Seventeenth-Century Verse Miscellany Manuscripts* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1992), pp. 9-10, citing John Aubrey as source.

retranscribed (and, in the case of the former, expanded) at times removed from their immediate contexts to convey new political meaning.<sup>49</sup> Especially during the period before, during and just after the Civil War, manuscript collections registered the political tensions and alienation of the compilers and their contacts.<sup>50</sup> Royalists in the Interregnum, like Catholics<sup>51</sup> from the Elizabethan period through to the later Stuart era, and Jacobites after the Glorious Revolution (1688), used manuscript communication to foster group solidarity.

Some of the manuscript collections of the seventeenth century, especially in the period between 1620 and 1660, are impressively large and varied: the practice of anthologising represented by a late Elizabethan printed anthology such as Francis Davison's *A Poetical Rhapsody* (1602) was redirected back into the manuscript system, for, after Davison's collection, few new, respectable poetry anthologies were printed before the Restoration. Some of these large manuscript compilations were made for aristocrats, some (for themselves) by individual connoisseurs. Characteristically, they recovered texts from as far back as the late Elizabethan era, but also included major and minor verse from their own times. Often these anthologies were compiled by combining separate smaller collections of poems: the Skipwith MS (BL MS Additional 25707), for example, conflates five separate collections and some loose papers.<sup>52</sup>

Many of these documents trace their origin to a circle of poets and friends formed in the 1620s at Christ Church, Oxford. In her study of the literary culture of the university, especially the poets and collectors at Christ Church, Mary Hobbs traces the collecting efforts that were continued beyond the university when some individuals moved into other environments, such as that of the Inns of Court, and either personally, or through professional scribes or amanuenses, compiled large anthologies of manuscript verse. Christ Church poets such as William Strode, Richard Corbet and Henry King (the last named by Donne as his literary executor) wrote and exchanged verse as well as passed around

49 On the first, see Baird W. Whitlock, *John Hoskyns, Serjeant-at-Law* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1982), 283-93; on the second, see Ted-Larry Pebworth, 'Sir Henry Wotton's "Dazel'd Thus, with Height of Place" and the Appropriation of Political Poetry in the Earlier Seventeenth Century', *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 71 (1977), 151-69.

50 See, for example, Bod. MS Malone 23, which is almost entirely a political collection from the 1620s and 1630s. Bod. MS Rawlinson Poetical 26 is a large collection of political verse assembled over a long period of time, from about 1615 to 1660 (Beal, *Index*, 1.2.379). See the discussion of manuscript poetry and the political world in Marotti, *Manuscript*, pp. 82-133.

51 Catholic manuscripts include the Wellys anthology (Bod. MS Rawlinson C.183), BL, MS Additional 15225, Bod. MS Ashmole 48, Edward Bannister's manuscript (BL, MS Additional 28253) and the yeoman Thomas Fairfax's manuscript (Bod. MS English Poetry b.5).

52 See Hobbs, *Miscellany Manuscripts*, pp. 62-7.

growing collections of miscellaneous verse. Despite the (inadequate) editions of Corbett of 1647 and 1648 and the eventual printing of Henry King's lyrics in 1657 with their author's consent, Strode, Corbet and King should be regarded as fundamentally manuscript authors, whose work circulated first among fellow academics, then in a somewhat wider social sphere as former students and colleagues moved into environments outside the university.<sup>53</sup> In Caroline England, writers like Thomas Carew and Robert Herrick also functioned as manuscript poets. Carew wrote an elegy on Donne that is a sympathetic response of one manuscript poet to another.<sup>54</sup> Before and after their printing in *Hesperides* (1648), many of Herrick's poems found their way into manuscript compilations. Richard Crashaw circulated scribal copies of his poems at Cambridge in the 1630s.<sup>55</sup>

Though dozens of manuscript collections of poetry survive from the late Jacobean period to the Restoration (and beyond), several are especially rich in their contents. One of them, the first part of the large Haselwood-Kingsborough Manuscript (Huntington Library MS HM 198, pt 1), was transcribed for Edward Denny, Earl of Norwich, before his death in 1630. In addition to sixty-five poems by Donne, this 205-page folio anthology contains verse by Jonson, Beaumont, Carew, Herrick, Corbet, Strode and Randolph – that is, the work of both Jacobean and early Caroline poets – as well as numerous political poems from the Jacobean period. Many of the pieces are answer-poems, including eight lyrics by William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, and Sir Benjamin Rudyerd – one of the largest groups of their poems to be found in manuscript before the 1660 printed edition of their work. Like so many other manuscript collections, this anthology documents its interest in socioliterary relationships and political topicality.<sup>56</sup>

In the 1640s and 1650s, Peter Calfe and his son of the same name assembled, in turn, two large quarto collections of verse (BL, MSS Harley 6917 and 6918).<sup>57</sup> The first, with over 213 poems on some 106 leaves, was compiled in

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 116–29.

<sup>54</sup> Printed in the second edition of Donne's poetry (1635). See John Kerrigan, 'Thomas Carew', *Proceedings of the British Academy* 74 (1988), 311–50, for a discussion of Carew's functioning as an early Stuart manuscript poet.

<sup>55</sup> Love, *Scribal Publication*, p. 52.

<sup>56</sup> See C. M. Armitage, 'Donne's Poems in Huntington Manuscript 198: New Light on "The Funeral"', *Studies in Philology* 63 (1966), 697–707, and Herbert Berry, *Sir John Suckling's Poems and Letters from Manuscript* (London, ONT: University of Western Ontario Press, 1960), pp. 33–8.

<sup>57</sup> See Hobbs, *Miscellany Manuscripts*, pp. 67–71, for a discussion of these manuscripts and of the relationship of Peter Calfe Sr to a London literary circle that included Thomas Manne, Henry King's amanuensis, who would have had a large body of poetry from Christ Church, Oxford.

the 1640s, ending with a poem mourning the executed Charles I; the second, made in the next decade, has a comparable number of poems on 200 pages. The first collection, which numbers its items and, where possible, notes authorship, is prefaced with a first-line index of 198 of the poems: it represents a deliberate act of poetical anthologising that might, in the late Elizabethan period, have resulted in a printed poetical miscellany. Among the forty or so identifiable authors, Carew, Henry King and other members of the King family are most strongly represented. The second collection is a typical Cavalier anthology that emphasises anti-Puritan and anti-Parliament pieces as well as Royalist exhortations. Here Cleveland's work looms large (15 poems), but there is also verse by Donne, Cowley, Randolph, Herrick, King, Felltham, Strode, Fanshawe, Carew and Lovelace, as well as poems by the compiler himself (fols. 96–102). Because Calfe Sr, according to Hobbs, 'evidently copied wholesale other people's collections' and, through a neighbour, Thomas Manne, had access both to poetry from Christ Church, Oxford, and to King family texts, these anthologies represent an extended process of manuscript anthologising that began at Oxford and continued in London in new socioliterary and historical circumstances.

From the 1630s to around 1660, Nicholas Burghe, a Royalist captain in the Civil War, amassed a huge folio anthology of verse and some prose (Bod. MS Ashmole 38).<sup>58</sup> On some 243 leaves he recorded hundreds of poems by dozens of poets, both the well-known and the obscure or unknown, some from printed editions.<sup>59</sup> Burghe, who included a number of his own poems in the volume, seems to have avoided copying many poems by any one writer, the poets most strongly represented being Constable, Jonson, Carew and Herrick. This collection reflects a strong interest in political poetry – including pieces on the scandalous Somerset–Howard marriage and the couple's trial for Sir Thomas Overbury's murder, on Francis Bacon's fall, on the Duke of Buckingham and on Puritans. But the most remarkable feature of the collection is the group of over 200 epitaphs and funeral elegies, a feature that highlights the importance of elegiac and funerary poetry in the social life of the time.

By the time that the two Calfes and Burghe assembled their poetry collections, manuscript anthologising had developed widely as a connoisseur activity among literary amateurs. Manuscript circulation was still valued for its social cachet, but printed books were drawn on for some of the contents of manuscript collections – as they had served earlier as sources of quotes for personal commonplace books. Especially after the publication of Donne's poems in 1633 and

<sup>58</sup> See Beal, *Index*, 1.2.10, and Marotti, *Manuscript*, pp. 72–3.

<sup>59</sup> Earlier manuscripts copied largely from printed editions include BL MSS Harl. 6910 and Additional 34064.

of a series of (mostly posthumous) volumes by Cavalier poets in the 1640s and 1650s, the social boundary between the two systems of literary transmission was blurred. The next change, in the Restoration period, was for booksellers to set up modern scriptoria to produce, on demand, collections of verse for socially elite customers who preferred restricted-circulation handwritten documents to the products of the press.

### The political underground of manuscript circulation

At a certain point which can conveniently be identified with the closing years of Elizabeth I, the manuscript text acquired a new function which many found liberating but others deeply threatening. In September 1599 Lord Treasurer Buckhurst fulminated that 'viperous and secrete Libello[s] doe much more in my opinion deserue death, then those wch Committ open rebellion agaynst the state . . . I protest yf there weare a Parliament, I should more willingly give my voyce to establish a lawe of death agaynst them than agaynst the Theife or Murderer.'<sup>60</sup> The medium had become a vehicle for the free circulation of 'libels', 'satyrs' and what were later to be called 'state poems'. In the same year Archbishop Whitgift banned the publication of printed satires and epigrams, but there was no effective way of preventing the transmission of similar pieces by means of manuscript and voice. Indeed, as Whitgift's body lay in state in 1604, a Puritan satire was surreptitiously pinned to his hearse.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, while the printed satire, priding itself on its classical lineage and moral intention, had observed the precedent of the older tradition of verse 'complaint' by attacking the sin rather than the individual sinner, the scribal satire was normally an invective against a named living individual or group of individuals.<sup>62</sup> An important study of the political impact of this underground verse identifies the increase in the number and readership of these pieces (many containing uninhibited commentary on court scandals and unpopular ministers) as variously 'a crude adult education' and even 'as close to a mass media as early Stuart England ever achieved'.<sup>63</sup>

60 PRO, Kew, SP 12/273, 64; discussed in M. Lindsay Kaplan, *The Culture of Slander in Early Modern England* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 24.

61 Alastair Bellany, 'A Poem on the Archbishop's Hearse: Puritanism, Libel and Sedition after the Hampton Court Conference', *Journal of British Studies* 34 (1995), 137-64.

62 For 'complaint' see John Peter, *Complaint and Satire in Early English Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956).

63 Thomas Cogswell, 'Underground Verse and the Transformation of Early Stuart Political Culture', in *Political Culture and Cultural Politics in Early Modern England: Essays Presented to*

There is much evidence to support this claim. So far there has been no attempt at a comprehensive study of this material or to enumerate the corpus of surviving topical satire from the period 1600–60.<sup>64</sup> Historians still routinely quote from Frederick W. Fairholt's *Poems and Songs relating to George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, and his Assassination by John Felton* which appeared as long ago as 1850. But much can be learned from its more closely studied successors of the succeeding half-century. The seven-volume Yale *Poems on Affairs of State 1660–1714* presents a selection of political poems from both manuscript and printed sources, annotated and carefully placed in their historical contexts. The earlier part of the seventeenth century could easily support at least as impressive a collection. That the sources for this body of verse have been less studied for the earlier than for the later period may be the consequence of a relative absence of contributions from the major poets of the age, whereas Rochester, after 1660, was the very model of a scribally publishing 'Libellor'.<sup>65</sup> Thus Peter Beal's listings for Restoration poets in his *Index of English Literary Manuscripts* include many more collections devoted to topical satire than do his entries for Donne and his contemporaries.<sup>66</sup>

The poetic forms employed in the libel (as we will call it for convenience) were generally straightforward, requiring no great literary sophistication. The most common kind is written in stanzas to some well-known broadside ballad tune. (The shape of the stanza will often reveal the intended melody even when this is not declared in the title.) This form was frequently used to pick off a different victim in each stanza, a subgenre sometimes described as the 'shotgun' libel, though its method is closer to that of a sniper despatching target after target in succession. Alternatively, different aspects of a single target might be explored in successive stanzas or a narrative pursued. In all these respects the stanzaic libel reveals its affinities with abusive folk libels, which mostly take the form of a string of crude verses directed at an unpopular authority figure or figures

David Underdown, ed. Susan D. Amussen and Mark A. Kishlansky (Manchester University Press, 1995), pp. 278, 287.

- <sup>64</sup> However, Andrew McRae has commenced such a study. See his 'Renaissance Satire and the Popular Voice', in *Imperfect Apprehensions: Essays in English Literature in Honour of G. A. Wilkes*, ed. Geoffrey Little (Sydney University Press, 1996), pp. 5–17; also the valuable specialised studies by Alastair Bellany, Thomas Cogswell ('Underground Verse'), Pauline Croft, Adam Fox (n. 67 below) and Timothy Raylor listed in the Bibliography.
- <sup>65</sup> See in particular his verse duels with Mulgrave and Scroope in *The Works of John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester*, ed. Harold Love (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), pp. 92–108.
- <sup>66</sup> It must also be acknowledged that there has been no single enthusiast corresponding to James M. Osborn, who assembled the enormous collection of manuscripts of post-1660 state satire and libertine verse now at the Beinecke Library, Yale, and was the initiator of the Yale University Press series.



in a village or small town. We know about the circumstances of composition of several of these pieces because they were narrated in the records of court cases for slander, which sometimes also contain texts.<sup>67</sup> The same form in the hands of a Suckling or some competent Inns of Court versifier was obviously going to be a much more polished production, but as long as it was written to a broadside ballad tune it still acknowledged its popular roots.

Another predominant form of satire was written in pentameter or tetrameter couplets and divided irregularly into paragraphs. While methods of development vary, such a piece will often follow a perfunctory introduction with a series of epigram-like attacks. Here folk influences are supplemented by those of the classical satire and epigram, in some cases as mediated through the experiments of Donne, Hall and Marston. The classicising satirists of the 1590s had also established a concept of satire as abstruse in its vocabulary and harsh in its rhythms. This was not on the whole to prove a lasting influence on the libel, though elements of it survive in Cleveland. It is often difficult to tell whether roughness of rhythm and oddities of language in a scribally circulated libel arise from the demotic, colloquial roots of the genre or are a conscious tribute to the 'satyr-satirist' of the 1590s. Some such features must also result from the compromised textual condition of the surviving sources of these much-copied texts.

Libels also appear in the form of acrostics, characters, emblems, mock epitaphs, railings, epistles, dialogues and parodies of all kinds. The sung stanzaic genre is particularly fruitful in parodies since it was already the practice for the standard broadside melodies to be supplied over and over again with new words.<sup>68</sup> As with the lyric, a pattern of poem and answer-poem is frequent, the two (or more in longer series) often circulating as a single work. In the tradition of Dunbar and Skelton, a poem of pure personal invective may be directed in the second person as though its victim were actually present. One subgenre allowed a text to be read with two opposed meanings, either by ambiguous punctuation or by lining up the stanzas in two parallel columns which could be read either horizontally or vertically. An immediately apparent aspect of the libel is its sexual grossness. In libels directed at Buckingham in the period of the proposed Spanish marriage for the future Charles I, innocent friendships become torrid love affairs and political opponents are graphically characterised as

67 See Adam Fox, 'Ballads, Libels and Popular Ridicule in Jacobean England', *Past and Present* 145 (1994), 47-83, and Love, *Scribal Publication*, pp. 232-4.

68 Here Claude M. Simpson's *The British Broadside Ballad and its Music* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1966) is an indispensable resource.

adulterers, cuckolds and sodomites.<sup>69</sup> These squibs undoubtedly struck home, and late in 1622 Buckingham offered a £1,000 reward for the identity of the author of one song.

Much satire was addressed to specialised audiences or communities, though it would frequently migrate beyond these. Erudite libels (often in Latin) were written for dons; anti-Popish and anti-prelatical libels for Puritans; and anti-Protestant libels for Catholics. Inns of Court satire numbered the court among its targets, as the (non-topical) work of Donne and Sir John Davies shows: it is also likely that much satire on state themes originated at the Inns. At court we may assume that much transmission took the form of the passing of separates from hand to hand during tedious periods of 'waiting'. Since much court satire was factional in origin, a new libel would often be dropped in places of assembly or posted up in some prominent place. In iv. i of *Valentinian*, Fletcher introduces a letter 'Scatter'd belike i'th Court' into his ancient Roman setting where it is an obvious anachronism. Archbishop Laud noted in 1641 that libels were 'continually set up in all places in the city'.<sup>70</sup> Among the wider circle of educated metropolitan readers, we have references to the reading of verse over or after dinner: John Hoskyns composed one famous example for a meeting of the wits at the Mermaid, while Ben Jonson mentions the practice in poems to Camden and Lady Digby. On one occasion when Jonson was the guest of Sir Robert Cotton, the poem read was a libel praising Felton, Buckingham's assassin.<sup>71</sup> This episode links the transmission of contemporary libels to that of antiquarian manuscripts, of which Cotton was a famous accumulator. Antiquarian historical scholarship as practised by Cotton was highly politicised, since his collections were regularly quarried for legal and parliamentary precedents which could be used to embarrass the crown or a rival officeholder. This activity became so provocative that in 1629 Charles I seized the collection. Cotton's own historico-political essays, later printed in *Cottoni posthuma* (1651), had already by that date been widely distributed in manuscript.

Libels (usually town productions) travelled regularly to the shires, sometimes by the still primitive mail services or the carrier's cart but probably more often in the pockets of masters or their trusted servants moving between a family's London and country houses. From the latter they would move into

69 Thomas Cogswell, 'England and the Spanish Match', in *Conflict in Early Stuart England: Studies in Religion and Politics, 1603-1642*, ed. Richard Cust and Ann Hughes (London and New York: Longman, 1989), pp. 124-5.

70 Cogswell, 'Underground Verse', p. 288.

71 Kevin Sharpe, *Sir Robert Cotton 1586-1631: History and Politics in Early Modern England* (Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 212.

transmission through local networks already established for the exchange of other kinds of manuscripts and of correspondence.<sup>72</sup> Much still remains to be discovered about the geography of such transmissions. The simultaneous existence of regional, familial and wider-ranging interest-based networks of exchange, all frequently overlapping with one another, meant that texts could travel with astonishing speed throughout the country. A libel might travel from one antiquarian to another with the transcript of a charter, or from one collector of viol music to another with a new fantasy by Coprario or Jenkins. Writers of newsletters were particularly important for the circulation of libels. We have no clear evidence as yet for the commercial copying and sale of libels which is such a feature of textual circulation in general between the late 1670s and 1700. However, the scriptoria which later produced so many copies of parliamentary proceedings or which dealt in forbidden prose texts such as Thomas Scott's *Vox populi* (1620) were so well adapted to turn to libels in slack times that it seems unlikely that there was not an unofficial trade in such highly sought-after documents.

The material vehicles of these texts were the same as those of other forms of scribally transmitted verse. After circulating orally, as separates or as posted notices, they would be transcribed either in 'linked groups' of verse on a common theme, or into larger collections: the personal miscellany or the scribal anthology. In the miscellany they would take their place in the manner previously described, alongside whatever other materials interested their owners. The Burghes Manuscript, mentioned earlier, is an example which mingled satirical material with lyrics and occasional verse of various kinds. The scribal anthology might devote itself entirely to a single genre. When that genre was satire, these were dangerous books to possess, and it is likely that many were deliberately destroyed during the Civil Wars, and others after the deaths of their original compilers.

The oral transmission of verse libels has been documented in connection with the folk libel, which was generally sung. Other sung libels are also likely to have been transmitted memorially. In 1655 Robert Overton, the radical military leader, was caught in possession of a libel against Cromwell. Overton's servant revealed that his master had copied the verses down after 'hearinge a fidler's boy singe them'. Timothy Raylor notes that 'Differences between it and the version later published in *Cleveland Revived* suggest the possibility that distinct versions of the poem were in circulation, one for singing and one for

<sup>72</sup> Love, *Scribal Publication*, pp. 177-230; Woudhuysen, *Sidney and the Circulation of Manuscripts*, passim; and the articles by Cust and Levy, cited in n. 43, above.

reading . . . While the former is written in a rollicking ballad meter, suitable for singing, the latter adopts a more stately iambic form.<sup>73</sup>

The sense of a change in the very nature of political culture brought about by the explosive growth in the writing and discussion of such material was widespread. The Elizabethans had been familiar with satire as a genre, at least in its classical or neo-classical form and in the demotic insult poetry of their own day. The licensed fool kept in many households as late as 1600 enjoyed a fairly complete liberty of jeering. The medieval flyting in which two participants competed in invective still had occasional successors, while academic and Inns of Court life sustained a culture of disputation and declamation which was also hospitable to outrageous travesties, such as the Latin speeches of the Oxford *terrae filii*.<sup>74</sup> But personal invectives of this kind, often associated with seasonal festivities, did not give rise to social anxiety because they were seen as communally contained. Only the dissident productions of militant Catholics on one side and the more extreme Puritans on the other gave any real cause for concern. Since it was hard to disguise one's membership of these communities and even possession of such a text might be judged treasonous, fear inhibited their free circulation. Exceptional public outbreaks of abuse in print such as the Nashe-Harvey controversy and the satires of Hall and Marston could easily be dealt with through the recognised disciplines of church and state: we have no evidence of any surreptitious reprintings of these books or of manuscript transmission after they ceased to be available. Yet, from the 1590s onward, with the appearance and wide circulation of manuscript libels directed at leading figures in the state, we become aware of a generational gap: texts that delighted many of the young were resented and deeply distrusted by most of their elders.

An early example, which may well be the crucial one, was the body of libels that appeared following the death of Robert Cecil, Earl of Salisbury, in 1612. Pauline Croft's study of the attacks (chiefly in manuscript) and the defences (chiefly in print) to which Cecil's reputation was subject points to the astonishing power of the verse libel to influence public opinion. Cecil had been a loyal servant to Elizabeth and James; he had done much good work in reforming the royal finances; and, apart from being an enthusiastic encloser, he was not excessive, for his time, in his rapacity. Many of the policies for which he was blamed were the King's, not his own. Some had been adopted against his

73 Timothy Raylor, *Cavaliers, Clubs, and Literary Culture: Sir John Mennes, James Smith, and the Order of the Fancy* (Cranbury, NJ, and London: Associated University Presses, 1994), pp. 205, 290.

74 For flytings see Douglas Gray, 'Rough Music: Some Early Invectives and Flytings', *Yearbook of English Studies* 14 (1984), 21-43.

advice, though, once they were adopted, like a good civil servant, he considered himself obliged to implement them as effectively as possible. That he had assisted in bringing down the popular Earl of Essex made him many enemies; but even these, if pressed, would have conceded that the abortive rebellion of 1601 was an act of sublime political folly. Little of this was of interest to the anonymous libellers, however. To them Cecil was simply an embodiment of every aspect of royal policy which they disliked. From this they created an image of the archetypal disloyal statesman, diminutive and misshapen (he had a spinal deformity), ruthless in sacrificing others, insatiate in his greed, a betrayer of his country and, needless to say, consumed by the pox (his actual ailments seem to have been scurvy and cancer). His friendships with the Countess of Suffolk and Lady Walsingham were represented as lustful depravity. This image, which is illustrated by Croft with extensive quotations from the libellers, took such a powerful hold that it could be dusted off and revived almost without alteration for representations of the first Earl of Shaftesbury in the 1670s. Those who knew and admired Cecil were shocked by the attacks of the libellers but could do little to soften them, any more than they could with numerous libels later directed at Northampton, Somerset, Buckingham, Strafford and Laud. There was a disturbing awareness that the terms of public discourse had changed in a way that pointed towards wider kinds of disruption. These were not to be long coming. The Civil Wars were being fought through the quill long before the first cannons barked at Edgehill.