

Manuscript Studies and the Eighteenth Century
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It was once a truth universally acknowledged that the proliferation of print led to the death of manuscript during the long eighteenth century. Critics like Elizabeth L. Eisenstein and Alvin J. Kernan, in their discussions of the emergence of print technologies, contend that print superseded manuscript during the period, alongside other social, cultural, and intellectual improvements, such as the growth of literacy and decline of aristocratic systems of patronage in favor of the more democratic publishing environment. But, following the work of Renaissance scholars beginning with J. W. Saunders, there has been an increasing valuation of manuscript transmission during the period. Most researchers today acknowledge that manuscript traditions persisted despite the advent of print; recent scholarship reads them as complementary, where manuscript is no longer subsumed by print culture.

This essay will provide a broad overview of the foundation and development of manuscript studies related to the eighteenth century. Manuscript studies has evolved from the more established fields of bibliography – the systematic description of books as objects – and textual studies – the examination of the production, circulation, and reception of texts in material form. After tracing early methodologies, this essay will discuss critical views, generally from the past thirty years, of the relationship between manuscript and print culture, much of which has grown out of the work of scholars like Margaret J. M. Ezell. Ezell's and others' increased valuation of manuscript culture has shaped our understandings of literary and non-literary genres and even the concept of authorship itself. The final part of this essay will survey some of the recent developments and directions of the field, including the intersecting disciplines of women's studies, genre theory, and readership and authorship practices.

Foundations and Methodologies

The principles and methodologies of the study of eighteenth-century manuscripts can be traced to the more established discipline of bibliography, even though the latter privileges printed texts. R. B. McKerrow's *An Introduction to Bibliography for Literary Students* (1927) is one of the first key overviews of the practice of bibliography that is still influential today. Through McKerrow focuses mainly on printed texts, he gives a brief overview on the manufacture and sizes of paper, and in his discussion of page proofs, he acknowledges that original manuscripts and proofs prepared for printing rarely survived, closing with a few examples of extant copies. Philip Gaskell's *A New Introduction to Bibliography* (1972), which is still valued today by students of bibliography, expands on McKerrow's work on paper, discussing quality, weight, and size, as well as watermarks, all useful attributes for the dating and composition of manuscript texts. Later work in bibliography, such as D. C. Greetham's *Textual Scholarship: An Introduction* (1994), expands the focus to include multiple branches of scholarship, including paleography. Greetham has a chapter on the bibliography of manuscript books, including materials, inks and format, as well as a chapter on paleography describing the evolution of the Latin alphabet over the last two thousand years. Donald H. Reiman's *The Study of Modern Manuscripts: Public, Confidential, and Private* (1993) is a specific overview of the principles of manuscript study, dividing manuscripts into three categories: private, confidential, and public. Reiman argues that the classification of manuscripts into these categories can be determined by studying an author's intentions and the nature of his or her intended audience.

Manuscript scholars are similarly indebted to the field of textual studies and its corresponding methodologies. Michael Sargent's essay on "Manuscript Textuality" (2013) provides a broad and compact overview of the production, transmission, and study of

manuscripts since antiquity and closes with a discussion of the concerns of textual criticism, which has also been an important influence on bibliographical studies. G. Thomas Tanselle's significant lectures on the problem of scholarly editing, published in the later collection *Textual Criticism and Scholarly Editing* (1990), discuss the problem of final intentions and the cases in which a manuscript version may or may not be used as the copy text. His work serves as the foundation for scholars like Jerome McGann, who is still one of the most influential figures in the field. McGann's important *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism* (1983) focuses on the "crisis in editorial theory and practice" (p. 11), namely how to prioritize different versions of a single text. McGann demonstrates how manuscript can problematize the theory of final intentions, especially when competing authorial texts like corrected drafts and proofs exist. Other key studies include D. F. McKenzie's work on the social transmission of texts in *Bibliography and the Sociology of Text* (1999), which provides a different way to connect bibliography and literary criticism, through the knowledge that our understanding of a literary work should not be limited to its textual content, but that its composition and distribution should also be considered.

Along with the fields of bibliography and textual studies, eighteenth-century manuscript studies has been influenced by corresponding work in the early modern period. One of the earliest and most important critical studies to show the primacy of manuscript is J. W. Saunders's essay, "The Stigma of Print: A Note on the Social Bases of Tudor Poetry" (1951). Saunders argues that manuscript was "generally considered the normal medium of publication" for most Tudor poetry, which was published in print posthumously (p. 139). He contends that poets generally avoided print for social reasons and that the poets who chose print publication either did it for economic reasons, or anonymously, or through the "urging" of friends as a way

to attenuate the stigma of print. H. R. Woudhuysen and Arthur Marotti published significant studies in the 1990s that built on Saunders's claims. Woudhuysen's *Sir Philip Sidney and the Circulation of Manuscripts 1558-1640* (1996) evolved from his studies of Sir Philip Sidney and his poems; his initial aim was to create a better edition of Sidney's poetry, but his project became a larger study of literary manuscripts during the early modern period, their transmission, contexts, and authorship. Arguing that Sidney "may have played a decisive part in the development of what might be called 'manuscript culture,'" Woudhuysen claims more broadly that "there was no absolute separation of the handwritten and the printed" and that texts could move from manuscript to print and back to manuscript again (pp. 3, 25). Marotti's *Manuscript, Print, and the English Renaissance Lyric* (1995) also looks at manuscript transmission during the early modern period, especially verse that appears particularly in manuscript, reproductive activities in manuscript, print publication of the lyric and the changing relationship of writers and publishers with "patrons." He focuses on the social ramifications of tensions between manuscript and print, namely their connections to "class conflicts, questions of political empowerment, the commodification of cultural artifacts, and the ideologization of art in the early modern era." (p. 332) In his essay collection with Michael D. Bristol, *Print, Manuscript, and Performance: The Changing Relations of the Media in Early Modern England* (2000), Marotti and Bristol discuss the overlapping of various media during the period, including play texts which passed from manuscript to performance to print. As in Marotti's monograph, social agency is a key theme, though the topics are more wide-ranging, from the speeches of Elizabeth I to posthumous female publication and popular theatricality.

This work related to the early modern period frequently addresses one of the main questions in the field of manuscript studies: how was manuscript culture affected by the

emergence of print? Elizabeth L. Eisenstein's seminal *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early Modern Europe* (1979) gives a broad overview of early printing and the history of the book, linking printing with the spread of literacy and other cultural and intellectual movements during the period. Eisenstein significantly views the relationship of manuscript and print as a "shift" (vol. 1, p. xvi). Alvin J. Kernan's *Printing Technology, Letters, and Samuel Johnson* (1987) also argues that print supplanted manuscript: "An older system of polite or courtly letters – primarily oral, aristocratic, amateur, authoritarian, court-centered – was swept away at this time and gradually replaced by a new print-based, market-centered, democratic literary system" (p. 4). Kernan views the shift as partially a social one, focusing on Samuel Johnson's role in the emergence of print culture. Harold Love, one of the most influential scholars of manuscript studies, similarly interprets the interaction of manuscript and print as a shift in his important *Scribal Publication in Seventeenth-Century England* (1993): while he contends that scribal publication "had a role in the culture and commerce of texts just as assured as that of print publication," he later argues that though "the institution survived the death of Anne, its centrality to the ideological debates of its society did not" because of the expansion of the printing trade (pp. 4, 288). However, Love's later essay on "Oral and Scribal Texts in Early Modern England" (2002) attenuates the shift from manuscript to print that he describes in his earlier book through his discussion of different media in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England: oral texts, manuscript books, and printed works, the three primary means by which a composition could be circulated, and he traces the movements between these three types of print media.

Most recent manuscript studies of the long eighteenth century, like Love's essay, view the interaction of manuscript and print as a fluid process rather than a shift and acknowledge that

manuscript traditions existed alongside print culture throughout the period. Like Love, Adam Fox focuses on the interplay of speech, script, and print in his *Oral and Literate Culture in England, 1500-1700* (2000). In his examination of various genres that are particularly receptive to all three forms, including popular speech, proverbs, nursery tales, local customs and records, ballads and libels, and rumors and news, Love argues that “no necessary antithesis” existed between these various forms of textual transmission; instead, “the written word tended to augment the spoken, reinventing it and making it anew, propagating its contents, heightening its exposure, and ensuring its continued vitality, albeit sometimes in different forms.” (p. 5) David McKitterick’s *Print, Manuscript and the Search for Order, 1450-1830* similarly questions the authority of print in his broad survey of the relationship between manuscript and print during the first 350 years after the invention of the printing press, contending that “printing is not necessarily one of fixity, of textual rest or (still less) of stability, but actually implies a process liable and subject to change” (p. 4). His focus on the unstable nature of print undermines earlier notions of the form’s solidity. Perhaps the most influential work on the interaction of manuscript and print during the period is Margaret J. M. Ezell’s foundational *Social Authorship and the Advent of Print* (1999). Ezell exposes the class and gendered assumptions implicit in previous studies of manuscript and print: “print publication takes on the heroic role of the revolutionary force, usually represented by male writers eager to seize new opportunities, while manuscript culture has the role of the villain, the elitist, snobby aristocrat, very often a woman, clinging to long-outmoded forms in a futile attempt to retain control and power.” (p. 11) Ezell instead unpacks the cultural underpinnings of the manuscript author and reader, who are often female. Her argument, “that even after 1710 and the institution of the Act of Queen Anne, script was still a competitive, if not the dominant, mode of transmitting and reading what we term ‘literary’ and

‘academic’ materials” (p. 12), characterizes manuscript transmission and publication as a choice that was not overshadowed by print and forms the basis of recent work in the field.

Research Directions

One of the most fruitful directions of eighteenth-century manuscript studies is its intersections with gender, especially in investigations of literary networks and coterie. Manuscript transmission has often been gendered as female because of its seemingly less public and more isolated nature, though scholars like Ezell and her successors have overturned these notions. Ezell’s earlier *The Patriarch’s Wife: Literary Evidence and the History of the Family* (1987) focuses on systems of manuscript exchange by middle- and upper-class literate women of the late seventeenth century and the networks by which their manuscripts circulated. Ezell describes female manuscript circulation as empowering instead of constrictive: women could cultivate a larger readership “without losing control over their productions” and gain “a reputation as a poet, scholar, or controversialist without a word having been published.” (p. 83) Sarah Prescott’s *Women, Authorship and Literary Culture, 1690-1740* (2003) relies on Ezell’s discussion of early women writers to construct a “pluralist” model of female authorship that extends beyond London and takes religious, political, and regional contexts into consideration. In particular, Prescott interprets print and manuscript as complementary forms like Ezell, using the case study of Elizabeth Singer Rowe to support her claims. Similarly, Kathryn King builds on the work of Ezell and others, arguing that the relationship between print and manuscript was one of “coexistence and complex interplay, offering women of various class positions and regional locations a diversity of publication possibilities to suit a host of different purposes,” which she demonstrates through a series of examples including some on coterie writing (2010, p. 130).

These networks of female authorship can also exist in the public and professional sphere, as Betty A. Schellenberg has shown in her influential *The Professionalization of Women Writers in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (2005). Schellenberg argues for the importance of women writers within British print culture, even though they had previously been dismissed as domestic novelists, and uses personal correspondence as part of an agenda to rewrite “women’s cultural role in the period” (p. i). Schellenberg does similar work in a later essay on “Bluestocking Women and the Negotiation of Oral, Manuscript, and Print Cultures, 1744-1785” in which she blurs the distinction between print, manuscript, and oral forms, arguing that “mid-eighteenth-century media coexistence [was] a fluid continuum rather than a sharp divide” (2010, p. 64). She focuses particularly on members of the Bluestocking circle, such as Sarah Fielding, Catherine Talbot, Elizabeth Carter, Hester Chapone, and Elizabeth Montagu, and argues that they were able to use social spaces and non-print modes to generate “maximum publicity while remaining at arms’ length from the print trade – an achievement that continues to challenge the categories of media and literary histories today.” (p. 80) Similarly, Melanie Bigold’s *Women of Letters, Manuscript Circulation, and Print Afterlives in the Eighteenth Century: Elizabeth Rowe, Catharine Cockburn and Elizabeth Carter* (2013) challenges the print/manuscript binary that existed prior to Ezell’s work in the field. Bigold focuses on the manuscript and print heritage of Rowe, Cockburn, and Carter and their work within the republic of letters, arguing that while they are interested in print publication, “they clearly privilege an older form of literary exchange that is limited, sometimes personal, but always carefully constructed for literary effect or intellectual improvement.” (p. 11)

Women’s use of manuscript publication in the eighteenth century has also been the topic of an important essay collection, *Women’s Writing and the Circulation of Ideas: Manuscript*

Publication in England, 1550-1800 (2002), compiled by George L. Justice and Nathan Tinker.

The collection focuses on female authors not necessarily centered in London who circulate their works by manuscript instead of publishing them in print. Justice reads women's use of manuscript as an empowering act, "even if their adoption of manuscript circulation was influenced by external social and political conditions." (p. 8) Five of the essays in the collection have ramifications for manuscript studies of the long eighteenth century. Using a large number of examples, Margaret J. M. Ezell discusses posthumous scribal publication of women's verse and the circumstances under which this verse would be published. Leigh A. Eicke focuses on Jane Barker, arguing that her works, *A Patch-Work Screen for the Ladies* (1723) and *The Lining of the Patch-Work Screen* (1726), are presented as manuscript, which excuse their political content and print publication. Kathryn R. King examines the career of Elizabeth Rowe, who moved from manuscript to print to manuscript again, interpreting her return to manuscript as a savvy career decision rather than a retreat. Isobel Grundy discusses Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and her daughter, comparing the writings of both generations and their use of manuscripts. George L. Justice concludes by focusing on Frances Burney's suppressed play *The Witlings*, arguing that it rejects the aristocratic and private practice of manuscript circulation of verse in favor of print and performance, a view she also espoused in her first novel *Evelina*.

In addition to and alongside its complementary work in gender studies, manuscript studies has opened new doors for the interpretations of various genres, providing new interpretations and texts for eighteenth-century scholars. Some of this work has bearing on the field of poetry, which often circulated in manuscript during the period. This scholarship is often recovery work, introducing new texts or lesser-studied authors to researchers. Laura Runge's examination of two verse miscellanies by Mary Capell and Elizabeth Marriott shows the cultural

transition from manuscript to print and reveals the reading habits of these women. Jennifer Keith's overview of work on the poet Anne Finch discusses among other things "the literary, social, and political relations that guided her uses of manuscript and print publishing" (2018). Manuscript studies has also been helpful in understanding preexisting modes and canonical authors. Harold Love's *English Clandestine Satire, 1660-1702* (2004) focuses on the genre of "clandestine satire" that predominantly circulated in manuscript (or orally or in surreptitious print), offering a number of contexts and examples of lampoons over a forty-year period. Stephen Karian's *Jonathan Swift in Print and Manuscript* (2010) provides a new understanding of Swift's processes of composition and revision by looking at the simultaneous use of print publication and manuscript circulation of three of his later poems. A comparison between these two forms shows "the extent to which Swift accommodated himself to the limits of the printed word and how he found alternative ways to disseminate his strident political rhetoric using the manuscript medium." (p. 4) Jennie Challinor's recent recovery of a verse miscellany containing Rochester's "Upon Nothing" supplies not only a new understanding of the extended reception of Rochester's poem, but also a better awareness of its transmission through its inclusion in Sir John Bridgeman's miscellany.

Manuscript studies also has ramifications for work on the eighteenth-century novel, and as with poetry studies, provides new contexts or texts that can shape our understanding of long-studied works. D. Gilbert Dumas's article on the original ending of William Godwin's *Caleb Williams* (1794) is one of the earliest and best examples of manuscript discovery. His finding leads to transformative interpretative possibilities about Godwin's political agenda: "while the new ending adroitly sidesteps the political issues set up by the intellectual and fictional framework of the novel, the current of injustice which runs throughout is not by any means

dissipated and Caleb, though vindicated, has little cause to exult in his triumph over Falkland.” (1966, p. 584) Karen Harvey more recently reads Laurence Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* (1759-67) alongside men’s domestic manuscript writings. By interpreting *Tristram Shandy* through that lens, Harvey shows how much it is indebted to manuscript culture and linked to Sterne’s personal writing practices. In *Revising the Eighteenth-Century Novel: Authorship from Manuscript to Print*, Hilary Havens recovers and analyzes material from novel manuscripts and post-publication revisions, contending that “networked authorship” shaped the compositions of eighteenth-century novels. Havens focuses on four authors – Samuel Richardson, Frances Burney, Jane Austen, and Maria Edgeworth – who participated in a form of networked authorship that can be detected through their acts of revision, which reveal the influence of familial and literary circles, reviewers, and their own previous material on their novels.

Novels by Jane Austen and Samuel Richardson are particularly ripe topics for manuscript studies. Brian Southam explores Jane Austen’s surviving manuscript fictions – from her *Juvenilia* to her unfinished *Sanditon* – in his *Jane Austen’s Literary Manuscripts: A Study of the Novelist’s Development through the Surviving Papers* (1964; rev. ed. 2001). Southam uses this material to trace Austen’s development as an author, a process he argues has been neglected in favor of viewing her novels as final, complete texts. Jocelyn Harris’s *A Revolution Almost beyond Expression: Jane Austen’s Persuasion* (2007), a book-length study of Austen’s final finished novel, has a narrower scope than Southam’s study. Harris performs a careful, sustained comparison of the 1817 published novel with its partial manuscript draft and discusses Austen’s earlier deletions. Harris’s analysis compares Austen’s stylistics with her portrayal of female agency, aligning Austen’s initial “act of drudgery” or “much feebler idea” alongside her early depiction of “Anne as inarticulate, without agency,” which is transformed into the “genius”

revision containing Anne's "eloquence." (pp. 38, 43, 47) Kathryn Sutherland's *Jane Austen's Textual Lives: From Aeschylus to Bollywood* (2005) approaches Austen from a textual perspective, especially using manuscript to explore "Austen's practices as a writer," "which included alongside new ventures the mining over time of manuscript fragments and the revision of earlier completed writings." (pp. vii, 127) Work on Austen's predecessor, Samuel Richardson, has also been shaped by manuscript studies. Tom Keymer's *Richardson's Clarissa and the Eighteenth-Century Reader* (1992) surveys Richardson's vast correspondence, especially that related to *Clarissa*, "to illustrate the kinds of activity in which *Clarissa* (1747-48) involves its reader, the kinds of challenge and choice with which the reader is faced, and the variety of ways in which actual historical readers came to terms with the demands of their role as 'Carvers'" (p. xx). These records of reader response demonstrate the extent to which Richardson fostered the active participation of his readers.

Samuel Richardson is also linked to another direction in manuscript studies: letters and correspondence. Louise Curran's recent *Samuel Richardson and the Art of Letter-Writing* (2016) examines the interaction of manuscript and print in Richardson's writings, though she focuses particularly on the epistolary form and how letters "play a leading part in the construction of his own authorship" and "interplay with his novels and other literary works with which he was concerned in a range of productive ways." (p. 16) There have also been more general surveys of the epistolary form and its connections with manuscript studies. Eve Tavor Bannet's significant work, *The Empire of Letters: Letter Manuals and Transatlantic Correspondence, 1680-1820* (2005), focuses on the "overlooked" though highly popular manuals that taught letter-writing practices during the long eighteenth century and looks beyond England to issues of cultural transference within America and Scotland. Bannet's work shows, as others have done with

different genres, that “Letter manuals belie the modern opposition between the manuscript environment where ‘texts are malleable and social’ and the print culture where texts are ‘fixed and possessively individualistic’” (p. xi). Clare Brant’s *Eighteenth-Century Letters and British Culture* (2006) aims to be the most comprehensive study of eighteenth-century British letters, finding similarly that there is overlap between print and script forms. Her book is thematically organized by letter-writing roles, such as the character of lover, of criminal, of traveler, etc., which are focal points of the chapters. Letters play a central role in interactions between manuscript and print, as Rachael Scarborough King argues in *Writing to the World: Letters and the Origins of Modern Print Genres* (2018). King contends that letters formed a “bridge genre,” or a means of connecting manuscript and print, within the eighteenth century. Navigating a range of scribal and printed texts, King explores the significance of the epistolary form upon four new kinds of print media: newspapers, periodicals, biographies, and novels.

Manuscript studies thus has implications for different literary and non-literary genres, and it correspondingly affects our knowledge of reading practices during the period. James Raven, Helen Small, and Naomi Tadmor’s essay collection on *The Practice and Representation of Reading in England* (1996) aims to create a history of reading from the twelfth century to the Victorian period: the essays on the eighteenth century include conceptions of the construction of knowledge during the Restoration; women readers and household life; circulating libraries; servants’ reading; and the case study of Anna Margareta Larpent. While some of these essays discuss readers’ marks, marginalia is the sole focus of H. J. Jackson’s *Marginalia: Readers Writing in Books* (2001), the product of Jackson’s examination of more than two thousand annotated books. Jackson’s work is largely archival, spanning the period 1700-2000, and describes physical features of annotated books, the history of annotation, and reasons for

annotation. Stephen Colclough's *Consuming Texts: Readers and Reading Communities, 1697-1890* (2007) relies heavily on manuscript sources that reveal "a range of varied reading practices and communities that studies based on the examination of print can easily overlook." (p. 27) Colclough's chapters are divided by various sources, such as commonplace books and personal miscellanies, reading diaries and annotated books, private journals, manuscript books, and autobiographies, which enable him to construct the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century quotidian reader. Studies on reading are also linked to commonplace books, which reveal readers' engagements with and arrangements of selected texts. Earle Havens's *Commonplace Books: A History of Manuscripts and Printed Books from Antiquity to the Twentieth Century* (2001) provides a broad overview of commonplace books from antiquity to the twentieth century arranged by genre and time period with a number of examples and illustrations. David Allan's *Commonplace Books and Reading in Georgian England* (2010) is a sustained examination of commonplacing during the Georgian era; it is also a way of approaching the history of reading by tracing a reader's relationship with texts.

Conversely, manuscript studies has ramifications for work on authorship and the networks that comprise it. While Mark Rose's *Authors and Owners: The Invention of Copyright* (1993) focuses primarily on printed texts, he argues that manuscripts trouble notions of authorship and ownership since the manuscript text was unalienably within its authors' rights, which ceased upon its transfer to a publisher. Peter Beal's *In Praise of Scribes: Manuscripts and Their Makers in Seventeenth-Century England* (1998) looks at the figure of the literary scribe, arguing that he was as important to a text as its printers and publishers and that scribes shaped the transmission and production of texts in a way that has not been previously acknowledged. Manuscript studies has also revealed networks of authorship that was previously invisible within

print culture. Michelle Levy's *Family Authorship and Romantic Print Culture* (2008) uncovers the practice of family authorship at the intersection of manuscript and print culture and between the public and private sphere. Through her discussions of educational writing, poetry collections, children's literature, travel narratives, and memoirs and editions, Levy argues that family authorship is common in manuscript culture, though familial contributions during the Romantic era are still little acknowledged. And Betty A. Schellenberg's recent *Literary Coteries and the Making of Modern Print in England, 1740-1790* (2016) discusses four important coteries in the latter half of the eighteenth century that were groups that encouraged each other to compose texts and exchanged and critiqued those texts. Schellenberg argues that the existence of coteries not only demonstrates the pervasiveness of scribal culture during the eighteenth century, but also reveals that these "manuscript exchanging coteries" were "an integral and influential element of literary culture in eighteenth-century Britain." (p. 3) Schellenberg and Levy's work has ramifications for the study of multi-authored manuscripts and also for conceptions of authorship itself within the eighteenth century.

These recent works in the field of eighteenth-century manuscript studies generally acknowledge that manuscript culture thrived alongside print during the period. Some of the most fruitful research has emerged following intersections with women's studies and studies of poetry, the novel, and other genres. Manuscript studies has also changed previous notions of readership and authorship during the period. Although this essay – which, in the interest of space, is limited to critical discussions of eighteenth-century manuscripts – has omitted the mention of manuscript databases and digital resources, these technological developments are becoming essential tools for manuscript studies, paradoxically effective at reconciling the ancient with the avant-garde.

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