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The Scribal Circulation of Early Modern Letters

James Daybell

ABSTRACT This essay looks at the scribal circulation of letters in early modern England. Building on the work of scholars such as Mary Hobbs, Harold Love, H. R. Woudhuysen, Arthur Marotti, and Peter Beal, it outlines the range of letter-texts copied and collected, and the manuscript forms and writing technologies that facilitated circulation. It contributes to recent scholarship that has complicated models of epistolarity as a closed two-sided exchange anchored within an historically specific moment, arguing instead for letter writing as a more fluid, multi-agent collaborative process of writing, delivery, and reading, with letters achieving a considerable degree of textual afterlife, generating new meanings and applications in new contexts and conditions. KEYWORDS: letters in manuscript miscellanies; commonplacing; letters as libels; epistolarity and controversy; print publication of political letters

THE READING OF LETTERS in early modern England, like their composition and dispatch, was often collaborative, far from the solitary act of perusal portrayed in traditional conceptualizations of the epistolary process. Letters were often passed around among family and friends; petitionary epistles were read aloud; and newsletters were copied and recycled to be transmitted to diverse audiences. Certain letters enjoyed even wider circulation in manuscript (and print). Notable examples include Philip Sidney's *Letter to Queen Elizabeth*, the Earl of Essex's *Letter of Advice to the Earl of Rutland*, and Thomas Alured's *Letter to the Lord Marquess of Buckingham*. The "scribal publication" of such letters has been treated in large-scale discussions of manuscript transmission by Harold Love, Henry Woudhuysen, and Arthur Marotti, as well as in seminal work by Peter Beal (on Sidney's letter to Elizabeth) and Andrew Gordon (on the circulation of letters associated with Francis Bacon and the second earl of Essex), and in my own analysis of Lady Rich's *Letter to Queen Elizabeth*.[1] These studies

1. Harold Love, *Scribal Publication in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1993); H. R. Woudhuysen, *Sir Philip Sidney and the Circulation of Manuscripts, 1558–1640* (Oxford, 1996); Arthur F.

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have tended to concentrate on individual or discrete groups of letters, or on individual manuscript volumes, rather than on the broader phenomenon of the scribal circulation of letters that developed from the late Elizabethan period well into the 1640s and beyond, coinciding with an increased general interest in news and politics. Indeed, Steven May has argued that "hundreds of private letters with a broader appeal circulated widely" during the early modern period, both as manuscript separates and copied into commonplace books, diaries, notebooks, and manuscript miscellanies.[2] This article examines the scope of this activity, outlining the broad range of letter-texts that were copied and collected and the mechanics of their transmission.

Some scribal copies of letters survive as individual manuscripts or unbound "separates" distinct from larger collections, although separates were also bound or tipped into manuscript volumes, which muddies the distinction between separates and miscellanies. The majority of scribal copies, however, are collected in manuscript miscellanies, a rather broad term denoting volumes containing different genres of writing by several authors compiled from various sources. These volumes form the main source for studying the circulation of letter-texts, and this article is based on an examination of over two hundred such manuscript collections (which were often not originally bound as they are now) alongside numerous separates. The term *miscellany* rather than *letterbook* is employed throughout, in order to distinguish these manuscripts from formal letterbooks.[3] The latter were primarily kept for administrative purposes—to record incoming and outward correspondence—while the practices that led to the compiling of manuscript miscellanies are more akin to the habits of commonplacing, where letters by an individual writer or group, or diverse letter writers, were collected and copied (along with other genres) for purposes of political, reli-

Marotti, *Manuscript, Print, and the English Renaissance Lyric* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1995); Peter Beal, "'Hoping they shall only come to your merciful eyes': Sidney's *Letter to Queen Elizabeth* and Its Transmission," in *In Praise of Scribes: Manuscripts and Their Makers in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1998), 109–46, 274–80; Andrew Gordon, "'A fortune of Paper Walls': The Letters of Francis Bacon and the Earl of Essex," *ELR* 37, no. 3 (2007): 319–36; Gordon, "*Copycopia*, or the Place of Copied Correspondence in Manuscript Culture: A Case Study," in *Material Readings of Early Modern Culture, 1580–1730: Texts and Social Practices*, ed. James Daybell and Peter Hinds (Basingstoke, U.K., 2010), 65–82; James Daybell, "Women, Politics and Domesticity: The Scribal Publication of Lady Rich's Letter to Elizabeth I," in *Women and Writing, c.1340–c.1650: The Domestication of Print Culture*, ed. Anne Lawrence-Mathers and Phillipa Hardman (Woodbridge, U.K., 2010), 111–30.

2. Steven W. May, "Some Renaissance Scribal Communities" (paper, Renaissance Society of America annual conference, Chicago, 2009).

3. For recent work on miscellanies, see *Manuscript Miscellanies in Early Modern England*, ed. Joshua Eckhardt and Daniel Starza Smith (Burlington, Vt., 2014). On letter books, see James Daybell, *The Material Letter: The Social and Cultural Practices of Manuscript Letters in England, 1512–1635* (Basingstoke, U.K., 2012), chap. 7; Giles Constable, *Letters and Letter Collections*, Typologie des sources du moyen age Occidental 17 (Turnhout, Belgium, 1976), 28, 56–62; John Taylor, "Letters and Letter Collections in England, 1300–1420," *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 24 (1980): 57–70 at 62–64; W. A. Pantin, "English Monastic Letter Books," in *Historical Essays in Honour of James Tait*, ed. J. G. Edwards, V. H. Galbraith, and E. F. Jacob (Manchester, 1933), 201–22; E. Rickert, "Documents and Records: A Leaf from a Fourteenth-Century Letter Book," *Modern Philology* 25 (1927): 249–55; and A. E. B. Owen, "Sir John Wolley's Letter-Book as Latin Secretary to Elizabeth I," *Archives* 11, no. 49 (1973): 16–18.

gious, and historical interest, as well as for emulation.[4] The term *miscellany* itself, however, is rather a baggy one that masks the complexity of the ways in which letters were copied. Individual letters circulated as part of discrete collections related to particular letter writers or events, within general compilations of letters, as well as within miscellaneous volumes containing verse and other forms of prose.

This article elucidates the mechanisms by which hundreds of manuscript copies of letters were scribally circulated from the late Elizabethan period onwards. It argues that letters were disseminated in ways broadly similar to other texts, such as libels, verse, recipes and prose (such as sermons, speeches, tracts, treatises, and papers associated with Robert Cotton and the Society of Antiquaries), utilizing the kinds of networks and modes of transmission that have been fleshed out in major studies by scholars including Mary Hobbs, Harold Love, H. R. Woudhuysen, Arthur Marotti, and Peter Beal.[5] The starting point for my analysis is a simplified model of scribal publication of new texts, which is typically characterized by a series of phases that extended from authorially controlled dissemination, through stages of private unrestricted copying, to professional scribal production, and a later phase of print publication. At each of these stages, a work was likely to be incorporated into a larger bibliographic unit: first a linked group of a small number of related works, next the personal miscellany or commonplace book, and lastly the professionally copied anthology or aggregation.[6] This distinctly Loveian model of scribal publication, often used to describe the textual transmission of more straightforwardly literary texts, applies in general terms to certain copies of letters as they moved from private modes of production to more public forms of consumption. Several explanatory models of the nature of manuscript circulation have been put forward: the closely defined coterie, the scribal community, and, more nebulously, the manuscript network. While scholars are becoming increasingly skeptical of coterie circulation as an explanation for manuscript transmission, it remains useful in characterizing certain aspects of the dissemination of manuscript separates. Nonetheless, it hardly explains the wider currency achieved by letters circulating indiscriminately and in genuinely national scribal networks. Individual letter-texts traveled as manuscript separates, as part of larger

4. In practice, the term *letterbook* is employed interchangeably by archivists and scholars to denote both formal letterbooks and miscellanies, and it must be stressed that boundaries between the two are not impermeable. Peter Beal's definition of *letterbook* illustrates the fluidity of the term as applied contemporaneously, as well as by modern scholars: Peter Beal, *A Dictionary of Manuscript Terminology, 1450–2000* (Oxford, 2008), 226–27. See *A Seventeenth-Century Letter-Book: A Facsimile Edition*, ed. A. R. Braunmuller (Cranbury, N.J., 1983). Hybrid forms of manuscript books survive, such as Francis Fane's miscellany (British Library, Add. MS 34218), which collects transcripts of letters and documents relating to him, his family, and estates alongside correspondence of well-known letter writers.

5. Mary Hobbs, *Early Seventeenth-Century Verse Miscellany Manuscripts* (Aldershot, U.K., 1992); Love, *Scribal Publication*; Woudhuysen, *Philip Sidney*; Marotti, *Manuscript, Print*; Beal, *In Praise of Scribes*; Love and Marotti, "Manuscript Transmission and Circulation," in *The Cambridge History of Early Modern English Literature*, ed. David Loewenstein and Janel Mueller (Cambridge, 2002), 55–80.

6. Harold Love, "Oral and Scribal Texts in Early Modern England," in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain,* vol. 4, *1557–1965*, ed. John Barnard and D. F. McKenzie (Cambridge, 2002), 97–121 at 105–7.

bibliographic manuscript compilations (such as pamphlets of related correspondence, collections of general letters, and miscellanies), and as printed collections. This article attempts to highlight the manuscript forms and writing technologies that facilitated circulation, and to sketch the complex textual afterlives of letters beyond the contemporary contexts of composition, delivery, and reading. As such it contributes to a swath of recent scholarship that has sought to problematize the standard model of epistolarity, which conceptualizes early modern letter writing as a closed two-sided exchange anchored within a historically specific moment.[7] Instead what emerges is a much more fluid, multi-agent collaborative process of writing, delivery, and reading, with letters achieving a considerable degree of textual afterlife, generating new meanings and applications in new contexts and conditions.

In examining the copying and manuscript circulation of letters, scholars are confronted with a series of intractable methodological problems relating to compositional practices; provenance and dating; and the identity of copyists, compilers, manuscript owners, and readers. First, it is difficult to know from the way in which the letters are now preserved—bound into large manuscript volumes or copied into miscellanies—what their original manuscript form was and how they operated initially. Separates have often been bound in large composite volumes alongside other miscellaneous manuscript materials; clusters of letters and other documents are subsumed in larger collections. What now survive as seemingly coherent volumes are often several individual manuscript units assembled in one place. The survival and arrangement of letters in this manner usually reveals more about later habits of collecting and archiving than about earlier circulation. The scribal publication history of separates remains frustratingly elusive except in the most general sense, unless we have indirect evidence that permits reconstruction of the contexts of production and reception. Letters are sometimes mentioned as epistolary enclosures and details of scribal publication occasionally discussed in legal cases.[8] Surviving miscellanies are complex and layered manuscripts, like separates often hard to date or to link to particular individuals or groups, unless ownership marks or annotations survive. Many volumes are now merely catalogued as miscellaneous letters, state papers, or historical papers, or as commonplace books or prose and verse miscellanies, with no indication of ownership. Sometimes the contents themselves offer clues of association with particular circles—such as a particular Inn of Court, an Oxbridge college, or an aristocratic household—or with a geographical region, or at least may indicate a particular political or religious leaning or interest. Volumes were frequently the product of multiple compilers, featuring many different copyist hands. They were passed from one individual, family generation, or group to the next, with new material added (and sometimes excised) throughout their history; they passed into the hands of antiquarians, were purchased

7. See, for example, *Cultures of Correspondence in Early Modern Britain, 1580–1640*, ed. James Daybell and Andrew Gordon (Philadelphia, Pa., 2016); James Daybell, *The Material Letter: The Social and Cultural Practices of Manuscript Letters in England, 1512–1635* (Basingstoke, U.K., 2012); James Daybell, *Women Letter-Writers in Tudor England* (Oxford, 2006); and Alan Stewart, *Shakespeare's Letters* (Oxford, 2008).

8. Gary Schneider, "Libellous Letters in Elizabethan and Early Stuart England," *Modern Philology* 105, no. 3 (2008): 475–509.

by private collectors, and subsequently were deposited in libraries and repositories. The long scribal, working "shelf life" of these volumes means that it is often tricky to know when material was added. When was a separate acquired and collected? If it was copied into a volume, at what stage was this done? At the time the letter was supposedly written, or a later date for some other purpose or reason? Letters, after all, attained different meanings at different stages of their lives. A letter copied at the time of its first writing was operating in a very different context from the same letter copied twenty, thirty, or forty years later.

Letters in Circulation

The range of epistolary materials that were circulated, copied, and collected was wide, reflecting political, historical, and religious interests of the early modern period. The letters that achieved the widest currency were those associated with monarchs (especially Elizabeth, James I, and Charles I); with well-known politicians, public figures, or bodies and institutions (such as Parliament, the Privy Council, and the universities); and with identifiable groups (such as the Catholics of England, whose petition to James I for toleration was widely copied). Of those individuals whose letters were most widely circulated, the most prominent are Walter Raleigh, Robert Devereux, second Earl of Essex, Francis Bacon, and Philip Sidney. Letters connected to what might broadly be called matters of state achieved considerable currency in manuscript before being printed in the *Cabala* (printed compilations of supposedly secret documents) in the second half of the seventeenth century. These include Sir John Perrot's letter to the lords of Privy Council in 1586 on the threat of a Spanish invasion of Ireland; Francis Tresham's letter to William Parker warning him of the Gunpowder Plot; Lord Rochester's letter to Mr. Overbury on the death of his son Sir Thomas; and the Countess of Nottingham's letter to Sir Andrew Sinclair, principal counselor of the king of Denmark, touching on some words uttered by the king against her honor.

Letters of a more overtly religious nature were also copied, circulating alongside prayers, psalms, sermons, deathbed speeches, and religious verse. These include letters of Continental reformers, such as John Calvin and Peter Martyr, and English Puritan divines like Edward Dering and Joseph Hall, as well as the correspondence of English martyrs, which appeared in printed form in editions by John Foxe, Henry Bull, and Miles Coverdale.[9] Such "godly and comfortable" letters, aimed at administering to spiritually troubled consciences, were commonly copied in manuscript form in post-Reformation England. While religious women's letters were rarely printed, a number circulated in manuscript (a more accessible forum for women's writing), including letters of maternal piety from Marie Wither, wife of the Puritan minister George Wither, rector of Danbury, Essex, and a letter from Anne Stubbe, "A notable Barrowist."[10]

9. See, for example, British Library [hereafter BL], Egerton MS 2877, fols. 84r–85v, 89v; Bodleian Library, Oxford [hereafter Bodl.], Rawlinson MS D273.

10. Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, D.C. [hereafter Folger], V.a.321, fols. 23v–24v; BL, Add. MS 29546; Corpus Christi College, Oxford, MS 294; Victoria E. Burke, "Let's Get Physical: Bibliography, Codicology and Seventeenth-Century Women's Manuscripts," *Literature Compass* 4, no. 6 (2007): 1667–82 at 1668.

Catholicism-related letters were circulated among underground Catholic scribal communities as well as for anti-Catholic reasons.[11] Among them were the Babington conspirator Chidiock Tichborne's letter "to his wyfe the night before he suffred" dated September 19, 1586 (which circulated alongside his famous poem, "Tichbornes Lamentation"); and Robert Southwell's letter of exhortation to his father; as well as more anti-Catholic texts, such as alleged Jesuit letters like "A letter found amongst some Jesuits lately take at Clerkenwell London, directed to the Father Doctor at Bruxells," and "A coppye of a letter which the Divell sent to the Pope of Rome."[12]

The kinds of letter-texts that circulated were thus diverse, reflecting wide-ranging interests, tastes, and purposes, from the political and pious to the emulatory and entertaining. In most cases, the ostensibly private nature of the letters that circulated precluded their publication in print. One of the benefits of scribal publication during the early modern period was that it allowed subversive, scandalous, and even erotic and obscene materials to travel under the radar of the censor. Manuscript in this sense acquired a certain aura, a political resonance, associated with forbidden knowledge. Copies of "private" letters were sometimes transcribed, read, and preserved with a degree of care and attention that might not be lavished on a printed pamphlet.[13] In this manner, as demonstrated below, ostensibly personal correspondences—between husbands and wives, family members, monarchs and subjects, spiritual confessors and their correspondents—were in actual fact highly public and political documents that worked in complex ways, at both the time of composition and initial circulation, and over the course of their textual afterlife as they entered informal scribal networks and acquired new meanings in different periods and contexts for subsequent readers.

Authorially Controlled Dissemination

The scribal circulation of letters in the first stage of copying could be associated with the nominal author or signatory, who controlled, orchestrated, or oversaw initial dissemination of manuscript separates. There is concrete evidence of a restricted and closed circulation of letters among narrowly defined groups, or coteries. It was common practice throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries for letters to be passed around trusted circles of family and friends as a way of distributing news, and individuals often circulated to third parties copies of personal letters for advice and information. In 1587, Edward Stafford sent Walsingham a copy of a letter he had written to Queen Elizabeth; while Lady Margaret Hawkins sent Robert Cecil a copy of "her rude letter" of solicitation to Elizabeth I in 1596.[14] Diplomatic correspondence also

11. Nancy Pollard Brown, "Paperchase: The Dissemination of Catholic Texts in Elizabethan England," *English Manuscript Studies* 1 (1989): 120–44.

12. BL, Add. MS 44848, fols. 153v–55r; Bodl., Tanner MS 82, fols. 210r–14r; BL, Add. MS 4108, fols. 95v–98r; BL, Add. MS 22587, fol. 20v.

13. Pauline Croft, "Libels, Popular Literacy and Public Opinion in Early Modern England," *Historical Research* 68 (1995): 266–85; Steven W. May, "Manuscript Circulation at the Elizabethan Court," in *New Ways of Looking at Old Texts: Papers of the Renaissance English Text Society, 1985–1991*, ed. W. Speed Hill (Binghamton, N.Y., 1993), 273–80 at 278.

14. The National Archives, Kew [hereafter TNA], SP 78/17, fol. 118 (April 4, 1587); Hatfield House, Hertfordshire, Cecil Papers [hereafter HH], CP42/81 (July 24, 1596).

produced multiple copies of correspondence. As ambassador in attendance to France from May 1559 to the early 1560s, Sir Nicholas Throckmorton regularly dispatched three letters home: one to the queen, one to the Privy Council, and one to William Cecil. The structure of these letters was almost identical in each case, with different information and detail added according to the addressee.[15] The letters sent to the Council tended to be more detailed, and were necessarily circulated, as were those addressed to the queen, which sometimes survive in multiple copies.[16] Letters directed to Cecil included added materials, and Throckmorton's letters to Robert Dudley might well include discussions of policy.[17] Multiple copies of circular letters were similarly sent by the Privy Council. In other words, it was commonplace throughout the period for letters to be read by persons other than the addressee.

An extension of this widespread social practice is the controlled dissemination of multiple manuscript copies of letters. An instance of the tight control possible over the initial dissemination of individual letters is the careful circulation of copies of a letter from the Earl of Essex to the Privy Council in June 1596. Written prior to the Cadiz expedition, the letter outlined Essex's plan to seize a permanent base in Spain, contrary to the queen's wishes. Delivery of the original was carefully delayed until the fleet had reached the point of no return. Indeed, Essex entrusted its dispatch to his secretary Edward Reynoldes: "yow shall deliver butt nott till the wind hath so served us att least a weeke as yow may judg us to be in Spayne."[18] A small number of copies was circulated at the time among a close circle of trusted friends; dissemination at this stage was intentionally private and limited. A correspondent sent a copy to Sir Thomas Kitson at Hengrave in Suffolk on July 23, 1596, writing in an accompanying letter, "I beseeche you kepe yt very private & ret[urn] yt safe enclosed in a sheete of paper when your worshippe may conveniently. It may be you have seene yt before, but I am sure there ar very few copies thereof & I came by this by great chance."[19] The circulation of this letter was part of a much wider policy of circulating letters for propagandist purposes orchestrated by Essex and his secretariat. His letter of advice to the Earl of Rutland, his secretary Henry Cuffe's "Trve Relation" on the Cadiz affair, Essex's exchange of correspondence with

15. On Throckmorton's career, see *ODNB*, s.v. "Throckmorton, Sir Nicholas (1515/16–1571)," by Stanford Lehmberg, last modified 2004, doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/27394; Gary M. Bell, *A Handlist of British Diplomatic Representatives, 1509–1688* (London, 1990), 85, 88–89. For Throckmorton's correspondence from France, see TNA, SP 70. I am grateful to Fritz Levy for drawing to my attention this aspect of Throckmorton's diplomatic correspondence.

16. A letter to the queen of October 15, 1562 survives in three copies (TNA, SP 70/43, fols. 3r–6v, SP 70/43, fols. 7r–10v, SP 70/43, fols. 18r–22v) along with a deciphering of certain of its passages: SP 70/43, fols. 11r–14v.

17. The tailoring of standardized letters for different parties is illustrated by three letters Throckmorton sent from Paris on September 8, 1560: TNA, SP 70/18, fols. 18r–22v (to Queen Elizabeth), 24r–26v (to Cecil; SP 70/18, fols. 27r–28v is a corrected partial copy), 29r–33v (to the Privy Council).

18. Copies include Devon Record Office, Exeter, 3799M-3/0/1/6; TNA, SP 12/259, fols. 33r–37r, 38r–43v; Folger, V.b.214, fols. 103r–105r; Folger, V.b.142, fols. 15r–v, 45r–v; Society of Antiquaries, London, MS 200/201, no. 56; Bodl., Tanner MS 77, fols. 89r–92v. The original letter is TNA, SP 12/259, fols. 30r–31v. Paul E. J. Hammer, "Myth-Making: Politics, Propaganda and the Capture of Cadiz in 1596," *Historical Journal* 40, no. 3 (1997): 621–42 at 629–30.

19. Bodl., Tanner MS 77, fol. 93v.

Lord Keeper Egerton, his *Apologie* published in epistolary form to Anthony Bacon, and his penitent letters to Queen Elizabeth all appeared in manuscript, and occasionally and unsuccessfully in print.

"Casting Abroad" and Enclosures

A letter to Queen Elizabeth from Philip Howard, the Catholic Earl of Arundel, explaining his flight from England in 1585 introduces another dimension to the circulation of separates. The letter was apparently left with the earl's sister, Margaret Sackville, to be delivered once he had reached France. It was alleged at his Star Chamber trial, however, that "a coppie" was provided to a priest called Bridges,

> whereby they might be by him delivered abrode also. Whereupon they were published and dispersed in manner of a slaunderous libell after his departure. For the said Bridges caused divers coppies there of to be made by scrivenors and to be published and dispersed in sondrie partes of the realme to divers and sondrie persones.

Once the earl's capture was known, Bridges made public the letter, which was in fact never intended to be private, divulgating it among "Catholickes" and "discontented men." In 1589 at his arraignment it was further asserted by the attorney-general, Sir John Popham, that "500 coppies" were made of the "factious & traiterous letter of purpose for policye . . . which Bridges scattered abroad." Doubtless this figure is inflated for effect; nonetheless the survival of so many scribal copies in a wide range of miscellanies indicates the degree of its circulation beyond any Catholic scribal community.[20]

In the case of Arundel's letter, and to a lesser extent Essex's, it is thus possible to discern distinct phases of dissemination: an initial controlled circulation, followed by a less discriminate "casting abroad" of multiple scribal copies. In this rather more haphazard approach, copies of notorious letters were scattered for ad hoc transmission ("thrown abroad," "cast into the street") or posted up in public places in the same manner as verse satires or libels—an early modern equivalent of fly-posting.[21] Such

20. *The Venerable Philip Howard, Earl of Arundel, 1557–1595*, ed. John Pollen and William MacMahon (London, 1919), 99–100, 338; *The Lives of Philip Howard, Earl of Arundel, and of Anne Dacre, His Wife*, ed. the Duke of Norfolk (1857), 30–31, 61; Earle Havens, "Notes from a Literary Underground: Recusant Catholics, Jesuit Priests, and Scribal Publication in Elizabethan England," *Publications of the Bibliographical Society of America* 99, no. 4 (2005): 505–38 at 505–7.

21. Tiffany Stern, "'On each Wall / And Corner Post': Playbills, Title-Pages, and Advertising in Early Modern London," *English Literary Renaissance*, 36, no. 1 (2006): 57–85. On libels, see Pauline Croft, "The Reputation of Robert Cecil: Libels, Political Opinion and Popular Awareness in the Early Seventeenth Century," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 1 (1991): 43–69; Adam Fox, "Ballads, Libels and Popular Ridicule in Jacobean England," *Past & Present* 145 (1994): 47–83; and Alistair Bellany, "The Embarrassment of Libels: Perceptions and Representations of Verse Libeling in Early Stuart England," in *The Politics of the Public Sphere in Early Modern England*, ed. Peter Lake and Steven C. A. Pincus (Manchester, 2007), 144–67. See also BL, Cotton MS, Caligula C.VIII, fol. 227; TNA, SP 80/1, fol. 40, SP 84/7, fol. 77, SP 84/25, fol. 54, SP12/247, fol. 15; HH, CP14/53, CP125/175.

separates were produced in multiple copies, either by an individual penman, by an informal group of scribes, or (less likely) by a professional scriptorium. An example of this procedure involves the Jesuit priest John Gerrard, who in the aftermath of the 1605 Gunpowder Plot sought to clear himself from charges of collaboration by writing an "open letter in the form of a letter to a friend" declaring his innocence; he had copies of the letter made and "scattered about the London streets in the early hours of the morning," one of which was shown to the king by a member of the Privy Council.[22] Further testimony of this style of distribution comes from August 1599, when "A letter of the pretended earl of Desmond to the King of Spain" condemning Elizabethan actions in Ireland was found in the street by a justice of the peace and passed on to the secretary of state, Sir Robert Cecil, for examination. The letter had first been discovered by two bricklayers dwelling in the London parish of St. Clement Danes, who assumed by the way it was folded that it was a handkerchief. Discovering instead that it was writing, the two men took it to the scrivener John Harwood to have it read, who upon realizing its seditious nature advised them to carry it to John Morley the constable, who in turn acquainted the justice of the peace with it. Justice Grange informed Cecil that he knew not whether the letter was only a copy, whether "the true letter itself be already known," or "whether of purpose this and like copies be by evil-affected persons thrown abroad."[23] This illustrates not only the range of literacies associated with early modern correspondence but also the vigilance with which authorities policed seditious materials.

The copies of letters considered thus far have all been associated with particular individuals, though in some cases the lack of an autograph "original" makes attribution difficult. This method of casting multiple scribal copies abroad was, however, also used for anonymous letters. In 1606 a copy of an anonymous libelous letter complaining that the Earl of Salisbury was "still as violent agaynst the Catholicke cause, as ever he was" was "found in the street, at one Lees dore, ouer against St. Clement's church."[24] In February 1627, the mayor of King's Lynn forwarded to Lord Keeper Coventry a letter critical of the Forced Loan—"a scandelous and pernicious paper" directed "To all English Freeholders, from a well wisher of theirs tendinge to the discouraginge and withdrawinge of the peoples harts from agreinge to any payment of his maties loan"—which had been found in the street in King's Lynn by one Robert Symmes. Unable to read or write, Symmes had shown it to a friend who "perceyvinge the dangerous contents" sent it to the mayor. The copy of the letter itself was signed from "London Grayes Inn" by one "A. B.," who described himself as "your countries frend," claiming legal connections.[25] In 1628, a forged letter purported to have been "found amongst some Jesuits lately taken at Clerkenwell London, directed to the Father Doctor at Bruxells"

22. John Gerard, *The Autobiography of an Elizabethan*, trans. and ed. Philip Caraman (London, 1951), 203.

23. HH, CP72/7 (August 2, 1599); TNA, SP 63/203, fols. 273, 275, 276; HH, CP72/6, CP68/98. See Croft, "Libels, Popular Literacy," 270–71.

24. TNA, SP 14/216/2, fol. 89 (January 8, 1606).

25. TNA, SP 16/54, fols. 145 (February 23, 1627), 146.

was slipped among the papers of a Jesuit enclave discovered in March of that year.[26] These were effectively anonymous open letters that used the epistolary form as a vehicle for subversive political ends. In practical terms, letters of this nature functioned as "libels." Andrew McRae argues that this term was broadly understood at the time to refer to "unauthorised and controversial texts," "generally" but not exclusively "in poetic form," that assailed or defamed the character of a person or satirized political events; the circulation of copies of letters in this manner was referred to as "libeling" by contemporaries.[27] Importantly here, the circulation of these kinds of letters was less discriminate. This was not the careful, targeted garnering of support but some sort of attempt to influence public opinion. Often copies were dropped in prominent places or at particularly busy times in order to maximize their impact and readership. A letter dated 1627, which forecast imminent danger in May, was found in Norwich Street during the Lent assizes. A further copy of the same letter was endorsed, "This noate was found in one Mr Ozburns shoppe in Norwitch and wrapped vpp in a peece of browne paper and one mr Agard preacher of windon tooke this Coppie & sent it to one Mr Beale at westminster for great news."[28] The place in which letters appeared was clearly significant. As Andrew Gordon has shown, the act of public posting of seditious materials "conscripted" public spaces traditionally associated with official communications, such as proclamations, a spatial transgression that lent them a sharpened political edge.[29] In developing our understanding of the reception of copies of letters, we should therefore attend to the material conditions of their circulation.

The letter itself was a key mechanism for the circulation of copies of letter-texts, which traveled via the standard early modern postal networks, dispatched as enclosures alongside other topical materials. Individual copies of letters were exchanged by hand and so passed around in a more targeted manner. Writing from Paris in 1580, Sir Henry Cobham enclosed to Burghley "copies of "the King of Navarre's letter to his Queen," the Prince of Condé's letter "directed" to the "King," and "a copy of a letter from the great Turk."[30] Edward Lord Zouche sent to Sir Thomas Laighton "a copie of a letter from the Pope to the kings sister" that he had found in a packet of letters dispatched to him in Guernsey, having already made a copy of it for himself.[31] In February 1622 Thomas Locke sent Sir Dudley Carleton a copy of a letter from James I to the Lords.[32]

26. John G. Nichols, "The Discovery of the Jesuits' College at Clerkenwell in March 1626–28, and a Letter Found in Their House," *Camden Miscellany* 2 (1852): 1–64 at 10–11, 31–40; Martin J. Havran, "Parliament and Catholicism in England 1626–1629," *The Catholic Historical Review* 44, no. 3 (1958): 273–89 at 281.

27. Andrew McRae, "The Literary Culture of Early Stuart Libelling," *Modern Philology* 97 (2000): 364–92 at 367–68.

28. TNA, SP 16/60, fols. 43, 44. These two copies were enclosed in a letter from John Rychers to Thomas Locke (TNA, SP 16/60, fol. 41 [April 12, 1627]) along with a second inflammatory letter supposedly given to his son Henry Rychers by his schoolfellow, Edward Lombe (TNA, SP 16/60, fol. 42).

29. Andrew Gordon, "The Act of Libel: Conscripting Civic Space in Early Modern England," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 32, no. 3 (2002): 375–97 at 385–90.

30. TNA, SP 78/4A, fols. 65 (May 3, 1580), 86 (June 9, 1580), SP 78/4B, fol. 185, SP 78/4B, fol. 185 (December 10, 1580).

31. BL, Egerton MS 2812, fols. 5r–7r, 10v–11r (August 18 and 19, 1600).

32. Birch, *Court and Times*, 2:290.

The Cambridge scholar Joseph Mead transcribed letters that circulated as separates, including "a copy of the earl of Arundel's letter to the Upper House, and the words of his submission," which he sent to his friend Sir Martin Stuteville on June 16, 1621.[33] Copies of politically noteworthy letters were circulated along with other kinds of topical materials and of course accompanied digests of news. Professional newsletter writers such as John Pory enclosed serial copies of "excellent discourses," including letters, in regular correspondence with clients.[34] Fundamentally, then, the letter acted as a kind of textual or cultural portmanteau, facilitating the broader transmission of other manuscript texts (prose, verse, libels, and recipes) as well as the wider dissemination of news, information, scientific knowledge, and ideas. As a result, early modern postal conditions and networks are central to understanding scribal circulation. Copies of letters traveled as enclosures with letters carried via royal post and carrier, but given the sometimes seditious or secretive nature of certain texts, it is highly likely that many were conveyed by trusted servants or messengers (or even conveyed by clandestine means) for fear of interception. This kind of activity illustrates a significant overlap between networks of correspondents and "scribal communities."[35] As a method for the transmission of texts, private correspondence directed to individuals or groups is a more targeted manner of scribal publication, at least in the first instance, one that preceded, but also accompanied and facilitated successive and wider textual transmission.

Private Unrestricted Copying

Typically, after an initial phase of controlled dissemination, we witness "a second stage of unrestrained private copying," prior to profit-based volume copying by commercial scriptoria, and also before later print publication (although certain letters appeared in print close to the time of the letter's original writing). Thus, after a letter had entered the "public" world of informal scribal networks (a phrase that implies a national, interpenetrating web of communications and exchange), circulation took place within and between scribal communities, based around individuals, within institutions (the universities, Inns of Court, or the court), within the family and household, and between friends, business associates, local communities, or county neighbors. Circulation achieved a more global dimension through diplomatic channels of communication, mercantile networks, and the Republic of Letters. Unlike print publication, scribal publication, as Harold Love reminds us, "took place not simultaneously, but consecutively," and "the activity of production was dispersed, not centralised."[36] Letters were disseminated as separates, as single bibliographic units that survived as loose papers and were absorbed into larger groupings, circulating as part of a small number of related texts; for example, letters and other materials associated with Essex, Bacon,

33. Ibid., 2:259, 382.

34. William S. Powell, *John Pory, 1572–1636: The Life and Letters of a Man of Many Parts* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1977), 56.

35. Jason Scott-Warren, "Reconstructing Manuscript Networks: The Textual Transactions of Sir Stephen Powle," in *Communities in Early Modern England*, ed. Alexandra Shepherd and Phil Withington (Manchester, 2000), 18–37 at 19.

36. Love, "Oral and Scribal Texts," 106–7.

Ralegh, and the Spanish match crisis survive as discrete manuscript clusters. Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson D.180 is a composite volume that contains within it a separate manuscript pamphlet (fols. 24r–52v, produced on paper with a distinct watermark and with its own numbering sequence, 1–56) of Raleghiana, including letters, his apology, and his scaffold speech. Lady Rich's letter to Queen Elizabeth on behalf of her brother in late January 1600 survives in more than thirty variant manuscript copies, often packaged with texts associated with Essex.[37] Copies of letters enjoyed a peculiar afterlife, finding their ways into personal notebooks, paper books, commonplace books, diverse manuscript miscellanies, as well as latterly into professionally produced anthologies.[38]

Copying itself was connected to commonplacing, a practice at the heart of Renaissance pedagogy, which encouraged the habit of noting down items of interest in commonplace books under alphabetical headings for retrieval and later use.[39] Most miscellanies are much less strict in their organizational principle, sometimes grouping texts by author, genre, theme, or event, often leaving blank spaces, as Jonathan Gibson has shown, for additions at a later date. Others were more randomly organized, with texts copied as they were received.[40] Miscellanies were constructed in various ways. They were formed from blank paper books (which could be purchased ready-made or fabricated by binding together separate sheets) into which texts were copied; they might also be assembled from manuscript separates, small gatherings of individual manuscript pages, paper booklets, or pamphlets, which were then collected together in a larger volume. Miscellanies sometimes bore the hand of a single scribe; alternatively, composite volumes feature wide-ranging materials and hands; some volumes were professionally copied by scribes working from loose papers or rough copies. Letters were transcribed from manuscript and print sources, as well as transmitted orally, copied down as they were read out or from memory. The professional letter writer John Pory, writing in July 1610 to Sir Ralph Winwood, quoted "some fragmentes wherof I remember" from a letter from King James to the Lords that he had heard read aloud by the earl of Salisbury.[41] The lawyer and diarist John Manningham recorded in April 1603 that "A letter gratulatory to the Lord Maior, Aldermen, and Citizens, was read in their court, which letter came from his Majestie, dated at Halliroode House, 28 March 1603; it conteined a promise of his favour, with an admonission to continue their course of government for matters of justice."[42]

The process of copying can occasionally be pieced together from marginal annotations in miscellanies. A collection of letters of historical interest dating from 1618 and 1628, containing among other items Ralegh's letter to King James before his

37. Daybell, "Women, Politics and Domesticity."

38. Love, "Oral and Scribal Texts," 105–7.

39. On commonplace books, see Peter Beal, "Notions in Garrison: The Seventeenth-Century Commonplace Book," in *New Ways of Looking at Old Texts*, ed. Hill, 131–47.

40. Gibson, "Casting Off Blanks: Hidden Structures in Early Modern Paper Books," in *Material Readings*, ed. Daybell and Hinds, 208–28.

41. Powell, *John Pory*, 28, 67.

42. *The Diary of John Manningham, of the Middle Temple and of Bradbourne, Kent, Barrister-at-Law, 1602–1603*, ed. John Bruce, Camden Society (Westminster, U.K., 1868), 160.

trial, Philip Sidney's letter to Queen Elizabeth, and the Earl of Bristol's letter to the upper house of Parliament, is associated with the Puritan minister Robert Horn. Notes in the margins of this small quarto volume reveal something of the copying process, indicating that transcripts were made from disparate papers kept at residences at Clunbury, Ludlow, and Westhope in Shropshire: "the last of my writings at Clunbury: they that follow are since my remove to Ludlow"; "all the following were written at westhope." Separate notes also sometimes identify the copyist and date of transcription, occasionally with additional comments or glosses. At least two of the articles, according to annotations, were "copied out by the hand of Mr Herbert Jenks of the New Hall," including a letter from the archduke of Palatine to the king dated 1622. In several instances the scribe notes when a letter was subsequently printed, as with "The Kings letter to the Speaker in the Commons house printed since."[43]

Beyond the mechanics of copying and compilation, evidence of compilers, owners, scribes, and readers, although patchy, nonetheless offers clues about the mechanics of circulation, elucidating the circuits, pathways, and networks of transmission.[44] It maps in general terms the kinds of environments in which the circulation of letters flourished and the sorts of social groups actively engaged within manuscript culture. Among those miscellanies containing copies of letters that can be identified either with an individual, or a particular group, family, or community, are: the commonplace book of Gilbert Frevile, of Bishop Middleham, country Durham; the historical collections of Kentish MP Sir Peter Manwood; the commonplace book of the Cheshire gentleman Sir William Davenport; the entry-book (or regular memorandum book) of Henry and Richard Wigley of county Derby; a collection of transcripts of political letters and papers compiled for Sir Francis Fane; a volume containing political pamphlets, prose and verse dating from approximately 1620 to 1625, owned by John Rous, the rector of Stanton Downham in Suffolk; a mid-seventeenth-century volume of letters copied by the Cheshire antiquary Sir Peter Leycester; the Farmer–Chetham MS, which dates from the 1620s and is traditionally associated with London legal circles; the commonplace book of the parliamentary official John Browne; and a collection of sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century historical letters and papers relating to Sir Humphrey Ferrers of Tamworth, Norfolk, and his brother Thomas.[45] Another miscellany connected to groups of lawyers in the capital in the 1620s, containing letters of political notoriety, is that associated with the Welsh lawyer Richard Roberts, who was associated with the group of wits sometimes referred to as the "Mermaid Club."[46] The "Waferer Commonplace Book" is associated with the Buckinghamshire gentleman Richard Waferer and his son Myrth Waferer, canon of Winchester; in addition to poems, medical recipes, lists of books, it includes the much copied "A trewe coppy of

43. Bodl., Rawlinson MS B151, fols. 83r, 95r, 54r, 41v.

44. Woudhuysen, *Philip Sidney*, 157; Scott-Warren, "Reconstructing Manuscript Networks," 20.

45. BL, Egerton MS 2877; BL, Add. MS 38139; Cheshire RO, CR 63/2/19; BL, Add. MS 6704; BL, Add. MS 34218; BL, Add. MS 28640; Cheshire RO, Ms DLT B8; Chethams Library, Manchester, MS Mun. (Farmer–Chetham Manuscript) A.4.150; Beinecke, Osborne FB155; BL, Stowe MS 150.

46. Bodl., MS Don. C.54. See I. A. Shapiro, "The 'Mermaid Club,'" *Modern Language Review* 45 (1950): 6–17; and I. A. Shapiro and Percy Simpson, "'The Mermaid Club': An Answer and a Rejoinder," *Modern Language Review* 46 (1951): 58–63.

Sir Walter Rawleigh his letter vnto the king" and the letter of Francis Tresham to William Parker warning him of the Gunpowder Plot.[47] A collection of documents relating to Sir Walter Ralegh contains the ownership inscription, "Cha[rles] Kemeys," possibly Sir Charles Kemeys (ca. 1614–1658), second Baronet of Cefn Mably, county Glamorgan.[48] While much of the circulation activity was centered on the universities, Inns of Court, Parliament, and the court as well as gentry and aristocratic households, the geographical diversity of these owners and compilers indicates dissemination of these materials beyond the London orbit and metropolitan centers into the provinces. Wider circulation of manuscript letters is further suggested by the involvement of women, who were active as compilers of manuscript miscellanies containing verse, prayers, recipes, prose, and libels.[49] Elizabeth Lyttelton's verse and prose miscellany included "Sir Walter Rawleig's letter to his wife after his condemnation."[50] The late-seventeenth-century commonplace book of Sarah Cowper contained transcripts of various letters, including examples from William Lord Russell to Charles II and the Duke of York, and the Earl of Clarendon to Duke and Duchess of York, on the latter's conversion, a letter that also occurs in Jane Truesdale's commonplace book (1672–94).[51]

Altogether more difficult to reconstruct are the precise details of how the copies of letters transcribed into miscellanies were garnered, the source or provenance of materials, and the networks through which they traveled. Indeed, Harold Love notes, "the fact that most personal miscellanies rarely record the circumstances of receipt of particular items, and almost never those of further transmission, disguises their dynamic quality as points of transit within networks of copying."[52] A notable exception is the Elizabethan Chancery official Sir Stephen Powle, whose manuscript networks have been painstakingly reconstructed by Jason Scott-Warren. Powle documented "the date, provenance and even, on occasion, the onward circulation of the texts he copied," revealing a manuscript community based upon his workplace, family, household, and neighborhood.[53] Manuscript materials were thus borrowed, shared, and given by friends and acquaintances, circulated among interrelated and overlapping scribal networks that were cemented by ties of kinship, friendship, neighborhood, a sense of shared educational experience or common profession, and by factional association or ideological persuasion.

Another owner who noted the provenance of copy texts is the antiquarian and Kentish MP Sir Peter Manwood, whose example presents another type of circulatory network, that generated by scholarship and antiquarianism. Manwood's miscellany of

47. BL, Add. MS 52585, fols. 41v–42r, 73v (ca. 1591–1627).

48. BL, Add. MS 73086.

49. *Early Modern Women's Manuscript Writing*, ed. Victoria E. Burke and Jonathan Gibson (Aldershot, U.K., 2004); Anne Denton's prose miscellany, ca. 1550–ca. 1590, Folger, MS E.a.1, fols. 6v–22v; miscellany belonging to Margaret Bellasys, ca. 1630, BL, Add. MS 10309.

50. Cambridge University Library, GBR/0012/MS Add.8460, 173 rev. to 171 rev. (ca. 1655–1714).

51. Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies, D/EP F37, 168–69, 183–84, 171, 281–293; Beinecke, Osborn MS b.188, fols. 47r–63v.

52. Love, *Scribal Publication*, 80, 79–83.

53. Scott-Warren, "Reconstructing Manuscript Networks," 22, 27. Bodl., Tanner MSS 168, 169.

transcripts of state papers was helpfully glossed in the margins. A copy of James I's letter to the House of Commons of June 26, 1604, "in the matter of subsidy," was appended with the note that it had been "wrytten oute of ye printed coppy."[54] As with other manuscripts, this volume was produced by an anonymous scribe.[55] However, throughout the miscellany explanatory notes are appended in Manwood's hand, and most documents are labeled "examinat" or "examined," signaling his habit of checking transcriptions against a copy-text. An entry entitled "A replicacion against ye clayme of the Duke of Yorke" was, according to a marginal annotation, "out of a great booke of ye recordes of state pertayninge to ye Counsell," suggesting that Manwood may have had access to official records, conceivably through his father, Sir Roger Manwood, chief baron of the Exchequer.[56] Manwood clearly enjoyed access to state papers, since in 1612 the State Paper Office lent him correspondence of English ambassadors to Constantinople dating from 1588 to 1611 for a history of the Turks. Manwood's example is not unique, and the public records were an important source of manuscript copying. While the first keeper of the records, Thomas Wilson, sought to gather, stabilize, and impose order on state documents, private individuals could gain access for scholarly, personal, and political purposes. Having lost copies of letters he had sent to the Earl of Essex between 1596 and 1598, Sir Robert Naunton requested to borrow the originals from the State Paper Office; lists survive of papers which Robert Cotton "perused and transcribed at divers times." Moreover, Wilson himself utilized the state papers for service to the government, making transcripts of diverse documents for Sir George Calvert and Sir Edward Conway when they were secretaries of state, and for the treasurer, James Ley, among others.[57]

Furthermore, Peter Manwood was also well connected in antiquarian circles. In the 1590s he exchanged collections of notes on English history with John Stow; in July 1606 Robert Cotton lent him "Henry VIII's Life with certain notes." Manwood was a patron of scholars and translators and was well respected by William Camden.[58] Such connections offer another likely source for acquiring copies of correspondence. The scholarly activities of antiquarian collectors like Cotton and D'Ewes represent a major factor explaining the preservation, copying, and circulation of letters of political and historical interest.[59] Various individuals borrowed from D'Ewes's library, including William Dugdale, Roger Dodsworth, John Selden, and James Ussher.[60] The most extensive evidence for the exchange and copying of manuscripts from a private collection,

54. BL, Add. MS 38139, fol. 64v (June 26, 1604). TNA, SP 13/8/77 and 78 (printed copies); *The Copie of His Maiesties Letter, sent . . . to the Commons House of Parliament, in the matter of subsidie* (London, 1604).

55. Woudhuysen, *Philip Sidney*, 130–31.

56. BL, Add. MS 38139, fols. 266v, 267r.

57. *Thirtieth Annual Report of the Deputy Keeper of the Public Records* (1869), 217, 225, 237, 238–39.

58. BL, Lansdowne 89, fol. 185. *ODNB,* s.v. "Manwood, Sir Peter (1571–1625)," by Louis A. Knafla, last modified January 2008, doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/18013.

59. C. E. Wright, "The Elizabethan Society of Antiquaries and the Formation of the Cottonian Library," in *The English Library Before 1700,* ed. Francis Wormald and C. E. Wright (London, 1958), 175–211 at 195–97.

60. Andrew G. Watson, *The Library of Sir Simonds D'Ewes* (London, 1966), 9.

however, relates to the library of Robert Cotton. Kevin Sharpe has argued that the "list of those borrowing" from Cotton's library "reads like a *Who's Who* of the Jacobean administration."[61] Cotton lent materials to, among others, Ralph Starkey, Simonds D'Ewes, James Ussher, Sir Walter Ralegh, Francis Bacon, and the Earl Marshal, Thomas Howard, Earl of Arundel. Loan lists for Cotton's manuscript collections show that Hugh Holland was lent "a booke of letters of Learned men to Mr Camden bound upp in lether and Clasped"; in 1608 Richard Bancroft borrowed a collection of "royal and noble autograph letters."[62]

Professional Scribes and Print Publication

Antiquarian and scholarly interest, when considered alongside information about miscellany ownership, suggests a ready-made market for copies of politically interesting letters. During the early seventeenth century, the Cheshire MP Sir Richard Grosvenor collected various manuscript separates concerned with contemporary politics, which included "Letters of Sir Francis Bacon uppon severall occasions" and "The Lord Norris letter to the king having slayne a servant of the Lord Willoughbies."[63] There is considerable evidence to suggest that these kinds of materials were readily available. Writing in April 1623, John Chamberlain informed Sir Dudley Carlton that he had seen "a letter of Lord Digby's to the King."[64] Shortly after Sir Walter Ralegh's death in 1618, John Holles asked his son to "gather up as many of Sir W. Rawlies verses and letters as yow can."[65] A fragment in the hand of Francis Davison entitled "Manuscripts to gett" indicated his desire to procure "Letters of all sorts. especially by ye late E[arl] of Essex."[66] Among the papers catalogued in the study of Thomas Norton in April 1584 were "l[ett]res of submission written by John Stubbes," "a l[ett]re from the Q. of Scotts to the Erle Bothwell," and "A l[ett]re from k. henrie the viiith to the Bushoppe of London his Ambassador w[i]th the Emperor."[67] Copies of letters were easy to come by and routinely exchanged in London at least, in environments such as the Inns of Court and Parliament. The collecting of manuscript separates produced by scribes or scriptoria, however, was a relatively expensive activity: estimates of the cost of purchasing manuscripts range from three quarters of a penny to fivepence per page.[68] Accounts for Richard Grosvenor record the purchase in 1637 of "manuscripts"

61. Kevin Sharpe, *Sir Robert Cotton 1586–1631: History and Politics in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1979), 78.

62. Colin G. C. Tite, *Early Records of Sir Robert Cotton's Library: Formation, Catalogue, Use* (London, 2003), 68, 46, 157, 189, 195; *Sir Robert Cotton as Collector: Essays on an Early Stuart Courtier and His Legacy,* ed. C. J. Wright (London, 1997), 8–9.

63. *The Papers of Sir Richard Grosvenor, 1st Bart. (1585–1645)*, ed. Richard Cust, Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire 134 (Chester, U.K., 1996), 43–51.

64. Thomas Birch, *The Court and Times of James the First*, 2 vols. (London, 1848), 2:385.

65. *Letters of John Holles, 1587*–1637, ed. P. R. Seddon, Thoroton Society Record Series, 3 vols. (1975–86), 2:219.

66. BL, Harleian MS 298, fol. 159v.

67. HH, CP140/51 (April 1584).

68. On scriveners' charges, see Beal, *In Praise of Scribes*, 69–72, note 12; Woudhuysen, *Philip Sidney*, 176, passim.

for 2s. 6d., and a payment of 6d. for the "King of Moroccoes letter."[69] Readers, however, often borrowed, circulated, and copied others' letters for free, so that this kind of material achieved a much wider degree of currency than among purchasers only.

Nonetheless, the ready market for political letters was readily catered to by professional scribes, such as Peter Beal's "feathery scribe," who copied a broad range of texts, including "A Lre written by the Lordes: of the Councell, to kinge James" and "A Lre wrytten by Sir Philip Sidney, to his Brothe Robte Sidnye."[70] British Library, Additional MS 73087, which was probably owned by the Hampshire MP and Royalist Sir Richard Tichborne (ca. 1578–1652) was a volume of state letters, the table of contents and first thirty items (and part of the thirty-first) of which are transcribed mostly in a hand identified by Peter Beal as that of the "feathery scribe." Evidence of ownership of these manuscripts, although problematic in that it does not necessarily correlate with direct clients or original owners, nonetheless suggests a geographically far-flung clientele that extended well beyond London, throughout England, and occasionally to Wales, Scotland, and Ireland.[71] In the case of Philip Sidney's letter to Elizabeth, there is some suggestion of a more proactive and directed form of copying, galvanized around a particular issue. Indeed, of the surviving copies of Sidney's letter to Elizabeth, eleven (nearly a third) are associated with the "feathery scribe" and his scriptorium, which Beal argues may well represent an orchestrated attempt to represent Sidney as a champion of Protestantism during a period of anti-Catholic sentiment.[72] Professional scribes or scriptoria were therefore instrumental in producing single and multiple separates for targeted and wider dissemination, as well as small pamphlets of related texts; and they were also active in producing bespoke miscellanies of letters for personal consumption.

Finally, copies of letters appeared in printed form, which enjoyed a complicated relationship with manuscript versions. Letters might be printed close to their appearance in manuscript, sometimes as a part of official or "authorial strategies" of wider dissemination or by enterprising printers with an eye to profit. These include *The Copie of the K. Maiesties Letter to the L. Maior of the Citie of London and to the Aldermen and Commons of the Same* (1603) and *Letters from the Great Turke* (1606), which commonly occur in personal manuscript miscellanies, either copied in by hand or as print versions bound in. Lady Rich's letter to Queen Elizabeth was printed with Essex's *Apologie* in 1600.[73] Appearance in popular cheap printed pamphlet format ensured a text's widespread dispersal in manuscript, highlighting the intertextuality between these two media. Letters first appearing in handwritten form were seized by printers, whose own published versions were then read and copied by hand into manuscript books, while printed copies were read, digested, and compiled into miscellanies. From the early sixteenth century onward, there was a well-established tradition of print publications employing the generic title "letter" for political tracts and religious treatises.

69. *Papers of Sir Richard Grosvenor*, 77.
70. Beal, *In Praise of Scribes*, 229–31, 256–57.
71. Ibid., 77, 94–96.
72. Ibid., 132–34.
73. Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, [*An Apologie of the Earle of Essex*], [1600].

Early examples include Henry VIII's *Copy of the Letters. . . . Made answere vnto a certayne letter of Martyn Luther* (1527) and John Knox's *A godly letter sent too the fayethfull in London, Newcastell, Barwyke* (1554). By the mid-sixteenth century, the printed letter form was an established medium for the reporting of news, claiming to offer intimate, firsthand accounts: *A copye of a letter contayning certayne newes, & the articles or requestes of the Deuonshyre & Cornyshe rebelles* ([1549]) and *The Copy of a Letter Sent by One of the Camp, of the Prince of Conde* (1569).[74] Although these were not always "real" letters in the sense that they were sent in manuscript, they nevertheless suggest a series of expectations that people had about the ways in which letters worked. Letter-texts that had long circulated in manuscript often appeared much later in printed form, confirming the reapplication of texts within different sociopolitical circumstances. In particular, from the civil war period onward, the kinds of letters previously regarded as state secrets (*arcana imperii*) were produced for consumption by a popular audience eager to read or own such historical documents. The politically charged atmosphere of 1645 witnessed the confiscation and subsequent publication "by special order of Parliament" of a number of the king's "private" letters under the title, *The King's Cabinet Opened*, which in turn spawned a series of propagandist pamphlets.[75] More generally, letters were published in different periods from their initial composition, as with those of the second Earl of Essex to the Earl of Southampton "in the time of his troubles," which were published in 1642 and 1643, reigniting the memory of Essex's martial values and nostalgic image as the defender of Protestantism at a time when Essex's son became a leader of parliamentarian forces.[76] Letters of this nature thus acquired different meanings within different contexts. A copy of "A letter found amongst some Jesuits lately take at Clerkenwell London," dating from 1628, was "published for general information" in 1679 at the height of popish plot hysteria as *A copy of a letter written by a Jesuite to the Father-Rector at Bruxels.* The correspondence of noteworthy individuals (such as Francis Bacon, Henry Wotton, John Donne, and Tobie Matthew) was collected together for publication.[77] There were general collections of state papers such as *Cabala*, *Scrinia Sacra, Scrinia Ceciliana,* and *The Compleat Ambas-*

74. Paul J. Voss, *Elizabethan News Pamphlets: Shakespeare, Spenser, Marlow and the Birth of Journalism* (Pittsburgh, 2001). The tradition of letters from "a gentleman" or some such generic individual was a standard trope in early modern print: *A Copie of a Letter Lately Sent by a Gentleman, Student in the Lawes of the Realme, to a Frende of his Concernyng. D. Story* ([1571]); Francis Bacon, *A Letter VVritten Out of England to an English Gentleman Remaining at Padua Containing a True Report of a Strange Conspiracie, Contriued Betweene Edward Squire* (1599).

75. Derek Hirst, "Reading the Royal Romance: Or, Intimacy in a King's Cabinet," *Seventeenth Century* 18, no. 2 (2003): 211–29.

76. *The Earle of Essex His Letter to the Earle of Southampton* ([1642]); *A Precious and Most Divine Letter from that famous and ever to be renowned Earl of Essex . . . to the Earl of South-Hampton, in the latter time of Queen Elizabeths Reigne* (1643); *ODNB,* s.v. "Devereux, Robert, second earl of Essex (1565–1601)," by Paul E. J. Hammer, last modified October 2008, doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/7565.

77. Bacon, *The Remaines of the Right Honorable Francis, Lord Verulam* (1648); *The Mirrour of State and Eloquence Represented in the Incomparable Letters of the Famous Sr. Francis Bacon* (1656); *Resuscitatio* (1661); Wotton, *Reliquiae Wottonianae* (1651); Donne, *Letters to Severall Persons of Honour* (1651); Matthew, *A Collection of Letters, Made by Sr Tobie Mathew* (1660 [i.e., 1659]).

sador, which produced letters and documents from the reigns of Henry VIII, Elizabeth I, James I, and Charles I,[78] as well as historical collections like John Rushworth's (1659), Thomas Fuller's *The Soveraigns Prerogative* (1660), and John Nalson's *An Impartial Collection of the Great Affairs of State* (1682). The contents of several manuscript volumes closely resemble those of the *Cabala*, though the difficulty of precisely dating these manuscripts makes it hard to tell whether they in fact predate the printed artifacts.[79] The textual relationship between these printed volumes of "state secrets" and their manuscript counterparts, and the emergence of a distinct corpus of early modern letters, require substantial further research and promise to shed important new light on the circulation of letters and manuscript networks in general.

~ Conclusion

Individual letters thus had a peculiar afterlife beyond their initial application and reception, moving from a supposedly private epistolary moment to a more public outing, circulating among related letters and non-epistolary texts, and gathering bibliographic units as they snowballed and were read in different contexts. This gathering together of separates with new materials into larger units is a process that Harold Love has termed "rolling archetypes." One letter that achieved wider circulation in this manner, in manuscript (and posthumously in print), was that of the administrator Thomas Alured to the Duke of Buckingham. Alured's missive is a letter of advice in which he urged the royal favorite to block the proposed Spanish match for Prince Charles.[80] Written in June 1620, the letter warned that marriage to the Infanta would "neither be safe for the Kings person, nor good for this Church and Commonwealth because that thereby may be an in-let to the Romish locusts." The letter set forth numerous precedents of disastrous Anglo–Spanish marriages (including Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon and Mary and Philip II) and counseled Buckingham to promote an English bride for the royal heir. Alured's letter was widely circulated in manuscript as a part of anti–Spanish match propaganda and was doubtless consumed as current news.[81] Despite suggestions that Alured was not in fact the author of the letter—it has been speculated that it was drafted by the Puritan divine John Preston

78. *Cabala, Mysteries of State* (1654 [1653]); *Scrinia Sacra* (1654); *Scrinia Ceciliana* (1663); Sir Dudley Digges, *The Compleat Ambassador* (1655).

79. BL, Add. MS 4108; Bodl., Tanner MS 82.

80. On Alured's life and letter to Buckingham, see *ODNB,* s.v. "Alured, Thomas (*bap.* 1583, *d.* 1638)," by Simon Healy, last modified January 2008, doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/70628. On verse relating to the Spanish match, see Joshua Eckhardt, *Manuscript Verse Collectors and the Politics of Anti-Courtly Love Poetry* (Oxford, 2009), chap. 4. On the history of the match, see Thomas Cogswell, "England and the Spanish Match," *Conflict in Early Stuart England: Studies in Religion and Politics, 1603–1642,* ed. Richard P. Cust and Ann Hughes (London, 1989), 107–33.

81. Among the copies I have examined are Bodl., Tanner MS 299, fols. 44r–45v; Bodl., MS Eng Hist c319, fols. 35r–40v; Bodl., Tanner MS 205, fols. 1–3; Bodl., Ashmole MS 830, fols. 135r–36v; BL, Add. MS 44848, fols. 131v–38v; BL, Add. MS 4108, fols. 78v–83r; BL, Add. MS 40629, fol. 117; BL, Sloane MS 1455, fols. 20–23; BL, Sloane MS 1710, fol. 307v; BL, Add. MS 34217, fol. 18; BL, Add. MS 22473, fol. 74; BL, Add. MS, 28640, fol. 63; BL, Add. MS, 18201, fol. 13; BL, Add. MS 72387, fol. 71; BL, Add. MS 48044, fols. 223r–36v; BL, Add. MS 4149, fol. 158; BL, Add. MS 37999, fol. 52; BL, Egerton MS 2882, fol. 208; BL, Harley MS 6021, fol. 137.

and that Alured claimed responsibility in order to ingratiate himself with the anti-Spanish court faction—he was arrested and consigned to the Fleet prison, and only released after issuing an apology. While this letter may have been read by MPs and legal antiquarians as a letter of advice, a legitimate mode of informal counsel in the sense of David Colclough's argument about epideictic rhetoric, viewed from the perspective of the state censor, it was seditious.[82] The polemic had greatly angered the Privy Council, who considered it an infringement of royal prerogative.[83] The letter was copied by several individuals who can be identified from their miscellanies, including Francis Fane, Earl of Westmoreland, Archbishop Sancroft, and the antiquarian Ralph Starkey, and a contemporary separate was tipped into a register of the Council of Wales and the Marches for the period circa 1586 to 1634, presumably because of Alured's connection to the council both as secretary to Ralph Lord Eure until 1617, and thereafter through numerous administrative posts.[84] The letter was also collected by John Rous, rector of Stanton Downham in Suffolk, alongside other materials relating to the Spanish match, including satirical verses against the match.[85] It was also later printed—the text finding reapplication as anti-Royalist, hispanophobic propaganda (condemning Charles and Henrietta Maria) during the early 1640s at the outbreak of the civil war—when it was twice published in 1642 and 1643 under the titles *The Coppie of a Letter Written to the Dvke of Bvckingham Concerning the match with Spaine* and *The Humble Advice of Thomas Aldred to the Marqvesse of Buckingham Concerning the Marriage of Our Sovereigne Lord King Charles*. By 1659 it found its way in truncated form into John Rushworth's *Historical Collections*.[86] It also features prominently in later seventeenth-century manuscript collections of *Cabala* letters. Clearly, then, Alured's letter had a contemporary purpose as anti-Spanish propaganda, circulating as a separate, was then copied and collected as a polemical political tract throughout the 1620s and 1630s, and resurfaced in popularity in the early 1640s, printed as part of a series of political pamphlets published at the outbreak of the civil war before its later consumption for antiquarian interest.

In conclusion, the scribal circulation of manuscript copies of letters operated in a series of stages extending from controlled dissemination of separates, through widespread private copying in miscellanies, to professional scribal production, and finally to print publication. This Loveian model of scribal publication, often used to describe the textual transmission of more straightforwardly literary texts, also broadly fits what happened to certain copies of letters as they moved from private modes of production to more public forms of consumption. Once copies entered manuscript networks,

82. David Colclough, "Verse Libels and the Epideictic Tradition in Early Stuart England," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 69, no. 1 (2006): 15–30.

83. See *Calendar of State Papers Domestic, James I, 1619–1623*, 150.

84. BL, Add. MS 34217, fol. 18; Bodl., Tanner MS 299, fols. 44r–45v; BL, Add. MS 4149, fol. 158; BL, Egerton MS 2882.

85. BL, Add. MS. 28640, fol. 63.

86. Rushworth, *Historical Collections* (1659), 91.

their textual journey was complex and varied. They were circulated as separates or as part of discrete bibliographic collections of related correspondence in pamphlet form, often with other manuscript materials. They formed part of larger accumulations of general letters, as well as being included in miscellaneous manuscript volumes of assorted textual genres. Alongside this broad interpretive framework, what emerges is the high degree of intertextuality between oral, print, and manuscript media: letters written to be read aloud were scribally recorded or memorized for later transcription; printed correspondence was written out by hand and copied into miscellanies or notebooks; manuscript copies were published by printers. Various manuscript forms and writing technologies facilitated scribal circulation: the letter, as an important conduit for transmission, intimately connected with postal and communication networks; the miscellany, as a storehouse and clearinghouse for texts, allowing copies received to be transcribed and then passed on to friends and acquaintances; the professional scriptorium, which catered to consumer demand by paying clients; and finally the personal manuscript collection, library, or State Paper Office, which acted as repositories from which to borrow, and archives in which to preserve. Moreover, the complex textual afterlives of letters generated new meanings as they were gathered together with new materials and consumed by new readers in contexts disconnected from those of their initial applications.

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