4   *Producing Texts*

THE application of ink to paper, whether by quill or movable type, was the most common method of recording and preserving a text during the early modern period. Having determined the kind of paper to be employed and the structure of the document, it was through ink that the printed or manuscript text became a dual witness to the histories of material process and intellectual content. The marriage of form and meaning, whether performed with a casual nonchalance that accepts all the stale pieties of convention, or entered into with an acute sense of the expressive limits and possibilities involved, occurred at the moment a text began its alliance with the page. As a consequence, this chapter is concerned with the methods of textual replication in manuscript and print, from the basic skills of literacy to the ways in which the making of a text left traces that indicate how it was produced.

Not all manuscripts became printed books: most did not. Private and financial documents, personal correspondence and jottings, estate records, legal opinions, administrative and political papers, personal miscellanies, commonplace books, compilations of recipes, and similar items required the primary skills of literacy but not the resources of the press. These documents are as expressive of their origins, and forms of production, as are the more publicly available materials we associate with the commercial manuscript and printed book-trades. The public materials were produced with an eye to profit or, at least, economic survival; some other manuscripts might be written in the course of employment, or to please a patron in the hope of some reward, but the difference is this: their distribution through a network depended on connection, not coin. Manuscripts reserved for private use were the dominant mode of textual production in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and, despite the fact that we have obviously lost vast swathes of what once existed, they remain the single largest and most diverse body of textual evidence that survives.[1]

In production and use, manuscript and print were intimately related. Some manuscripts consciously imitated the layout and conventions of printed texts; whilst every printed book was first a manuscript; and even when a book had been printed, it might well be marked up and

---

[1] Bland, 'The London Book-Trade in 1600', 457–60 attempts to estimate the approximate levels of paper used by the printed book-trade (20 per cent) compared to known import data. That estimate is generous, and allows for lost texts and ephemera: it is unlikely to have so understated the levels of print production that the broad conclusion is invalidated. What was not employed by the printed book-trade was used for manuscript activity.

corrected for a later edition by hand. Readers might annotate or emend, making a book into a composite document and leave their traces, like the inky thumbprint of a pressman, in the margin. On the title-page, or elsewhere, a name, a motto, the price, a date of purchase, or a record that the volume was a gift might be noted. Details like these can be revealing about the production history of a book, as with the Anglo-Saxon gospels edited by Archbishop Parker, who presented a copy to John Savile, the brother of Sir Henry, 'ix Augusti 1571': a date within days of publication.[2] For many, the difference between print as a mechanized form of mass manuscript production, and print as a technology with other aesthetic, technical and socio-economic concerns, was not at first self-evident: that awareness evolved as access to books became more common throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It was the spread of literacy that changed the market for books.

Literacy and Script

There is an intimate relationship between the ability to write and the ability to read; the word in the mouth, and the word in the hand. The coordination of those skills is the prerequisite for literacy whether they were taught by a parent, a tutor, or at school. We first learn literacy by connecting the sounds that have been received as language to their abstract representation, and then we learn how to make those abstract signs for ourselves. From first familiarity with letterforms, through the recognition of semantic units of meaning, to the ability to read in silence together with the gradual mastery of writing, as well as the control and preparation of a quill, the learning of literacy then, as now, developed alongside other forms of moral and intellectual instruction.

Education was not available as a matter of right in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but that does not mean that those who were illiterate had no access to, or were not influenced by, the written culture of the time. In the early fifteenth-century, literacy had been uncommon outside the educated elites; by 1700, it had permeated through much of society. True, small communities, who lived by the agricultural year, had little use for printed or written texts where, for most purposes, custom and gossip prevailed; nor did the servants who cleaned, cooked, sewed,

---

[2] J. Foxe (ed.), *The gospels of the fower euangelistes tr. in the olde Saxons tyme out of Latin into the vulgare toung of the Saxons* (STC 2961; 1571): Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, shelf-mark Howard 25. See also, P. J. Lucas, 'Parker, Lambarde and the Provision of Special Sorts for Printing Anglo-Saxon in the Sixteenth Century', *Journal of the Printing Historical Society*, 28 (1999), 41–69.

or worked in a garden need to learn to read or write. Forms of common wisdom and entertainment, like anecdotes, jokes, riddles, and ballads, required memory but not the written word; proverbs might preserve skills ('a stitch in time saves nine') that required no other instruction.[3] Yet in a world where many did not need to read, almost every village had its parish church (or at least a shared living) with a cleric who was literate in both English and Latin (increasingly often having attended university), and many landed households employed a tutor, secretary, or steward—or perhaps several staff with scribal abilities.

Amongst the gentry, and those who aspired to that rank, as well as those who engaged in commerce and trade, or who owned property, literacy became a means to enhance economic and social mobility. From the late fifteenth-century on, it became more common for men to be given formal education, sometimes at the universities and Inns of Court, whilst more often women might learn how to read and write an italic hand. The spread of literacy amongst women outside the more wealthy households was particularly significant as their children, in turn, might be taught by them. For women, as for men, the crucial issue was the need to manage property, as Billingsley argued when he advocated the acquisition of basic skills:

> Lastly, the practise of this Art is so necessary for women, . . . that no woman suruiuing her husband, and who hath an estate left her, ought to be without the vse thereof, at least in some reasonable manner: For thereby she comes to a certainty of her estate . . . whereas otherwise for want of it, she is subiect to the manifold deceits now vsed in the world.[4]

The growing presence of both manuscript and print, and the spread of grammar schools through the smaller market towns meant that, by the middle of the sixteenth-century, basic skills were being acquired across a broad spectrum of society, especially in urban centres. The spoken and written words were cheek by jowl: the pulpit and the stage could serve as conduits for the communication of complex ideas; whilst the ability of one person to read within a group meant that others might be exposed to a text: communal reading, at home or in a tavern, was a common form of social entertainment.

---

[3] See, in particular, Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England 1500–1700*; also, D. Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge, 1980); F. Schurink, *Education and Reading in Elizabethan and Jacobean England* (University MS DPhil c.19415, 2004).
[4] M. Billingsley, *The pens excellencie* (STC 3062.2; 1618), B4ᵛ–C1ʳ.

   The ability to read some things did not mean that all who did read could read everything; a different level of competency was required for a complex book than a broadside ballad or the catechism, nor did an ability to read imply an ability to write.[5] Writing, and especially writing with clarity and precision, required time and patience: those who wrote the manuscripts that now interest scholars the most, such as verse texts and prose tracts, were either paid for their services (as secretaries or scriveners) or belonged to a relatively small, socially elite group. The copying of letters, advice tracts, and verse from separates and booklets, was not something done in a few minutes. Amongst the elite, the need to control information, and organize access to it as a resource, was not only a political problem, but one that is reflected on a personal level in the practice of keeping a diverse variety of personal compilations.

   The practical evidence for early instruction in the arts of literacy is scarce. Professional writing manuals, such as those by De Beau Chesne and Billingsley, are deceptive in that they present a professional ideal rather than real practice, and the scripts that they exhibit have a clarity and legibility few achieved; nevertheless they were reprinted—perhaps more often than we can now establish.[6] Hornbooks and elementary schoolbooks, as well, are among the rarest of early printed materials because they were used until worn out.[7] The earliest example of an ABC with the Lord's Prayer (STC 21.4), that was first entered to John Wolfe on 6 November 1587, dates from c.1620; whilst the earliest ABC, with the Pater Noster, Ave Maria, and so on, dates from c.1535 (STC 17.4), some 60 years after the introduction of printing in England. In both instances, the evidence is relatively late; what the examples reveal, however, is that the initial steps in reading were oral and memorial: first a person (not always a child) associated a sound with each letter, and then recited a text that they knew by heart to coordinate those sounds with the combinations of letters they saw on the page. In so doing, they professed their faith.

   Billingsley had some sharp remarks to make about the teaching of writing skills by his contemporaries.[8] Of course, he had his own agenda

---

[5] See, I. M. Green, *The Christian's ABC: Catechisms and Catechizing in England c.1530–1740* (Oxford, 1996); —, *Print and Protestantism in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2000); M. Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories: Popular Fiction and Its Readership in Seventeenth-century England* (London, 1981); T. Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety*, *1550–1640* (Cambridge, 1991).

[6] For Billingsley (publ. 1618–41), STC 3061–2.8 and Wing B2909A; De Beau Chesne and Baildon (publ. 1571–1615), STC 6445.5–50; also, STC 3361.3–.7 and 3363.7.

[7] See, A. W. Tuer, *History of the Horn-book*, 2 vols. (London, 1986); STC 17.7–22.5.

[8] See also, Woodhuysen, *Sir Philip Sidney and the Circulation of Manuscripts*, 29–45.

when he wrote of 'lame Pen Men' who 'onely haue a certaine confused kind of writing, voide eyther of *Life*, *Dexterity*, or *Art* it selfe' (the choice of epithets is instructive) and who pasted bills to posts promising 'to teach anyone (not standing vpon the capacity of the pupill) to write a sufficient hand in a moneth, and some of them doe say in a fortnight'.[9] His qualification about the capacity of the pupil, and the speed at which 'a sufficient hand' was achieved, are a reminder that, for many, literacy was only ever an elementary and partially acquired skill; and that in underemployed urban areas, teaching it was a means of survival. In London, wrote Billingsley, 'a man can goe in no corner of this City, but hee shall see and heare of a world of squirting Teachers, not one of them almost worthy to carry a Pen-mans Incke-horne after him'.[10] For those without secure employment, private teaching allowed little more than a temporary respite from hardship that could be supplemented by love-letters and other personal notes that the poor were too unskilful to compose for themselves. These people were not professional scriveners.

The teaching of writing is intimately linked to the ability to spell, and poor spelling practices (then, as now) only made access to literacy more difficult. Francis Clement, for instance, thought it appropriate for children to have learnt their ABC by the age of four, and to have the basic writing and spelling skills in place by seven or eight. He is frank, however, that these standards were rarely achieved:

> Children . . . almost euerie where are first taught either in priuate by men or women altogeather rude and vtterly ignoraunt of the due composing and iust spelling of words: or else in common schooles most commonly by boyes, verie seldome or neuer by anie of sufficient skill.[11]

Quite what was a 'sufficient skill' is not so clear, even where teachers were available, but the implication is that the children struggled at the moment when they should have learned with the greatest facility:

> For how fewe be there vnder the age of seauen or eight yeares, that are towardly abled, and praysablie furnished for reading? And as manie there be aboue those yeares that can neither readily spell nor rightly write euen the common wordes of our Englishe.[12]

[9] Billingsley, *The pens excellencie*, B1ᵛ–2ʳ.
[10] Billingsley, *The pens excellencie*, B3ʳ.
[11] F. Clement, *The petie schoole* (STC 5400; 1587), A2ᵛ. The preface is dated 21 July 1576.
[12] Clement, *The petie schoole*, A2ᵛ.

For all the vividness of this account, many a 'pen-man' and teacher taught with more art and dexterity than Billingsley and Clement allow. With time, imperfect skills could be improved and the most common errors rectified. Even if some of those who learnt Latin at school later forgot much of what they had been taught, the essential skills that were acquired of reading and writing remained.

Literacy was primarily a written skill and was driven by a mastery of manuscript techniques—something that discussions seeking to connect the spread of literacy to the 'impact of print' usually overlook. Children were taught how to cut and hold a quill. Clement describes the third or fourth quill of the wing of a goose or raven as best, followed by the pinion feather (found at the joint with the terminal section of the wing). These quills were valued for their strength and roundness. They were prepared with a penknife (their original purpose) 'slantwise on the backe-part downeward about the quarter of an inch from the end' and then on the other side cutting from a point slightly higher.[13] The description that Clement offers of the technique is fairly complex: a rift was cut into the mid-back of the quill and, on the other side, a slash was made that was then cut back to form the nib. The quill was then cut in again from both sides. The fineness of the nib would depend on the quality of the quill, the experience of the person cutting it, the firmness of the hand, the sharpness of the blade, and the keenness of their eyesight. As well as quills, students were taught how to make ink. Clement's recipe for this involved leaving a quart of water to stand with a mixture of Arabic gum (two ounces), oak galls (five ounces), and copperas, otherwise known as green vitriol (three ounces).[14]

Children were first taught to write dry (without ink) to conserve paper, or to write in wax so that the blank surface could be recovered through heat: practised repetition was the key to developing ease with a quill and a fluid hand.[15] Clement recommended that in writing 'let not your paper lye to hard' (in other words, that it ought not be in direct contact with a wooden surface) in order to protect the nib and prevent the paper being torn and punctured. Consistency, then as now, was valued as an aid to legibility. Word separation, Clement advised, should be 'the space of the small a'.[16] Pen trials of young children are also

[13] For a full description, see Clement, *The petie-schoole*, D3ʳ⁻ᵛ.
[14] Clement, *The petie-schoole*, D2ʳ.
[15] For an extended treatment of erasable texts, and their use more generally for notetaking, see P. Stallybrass, R. Chartier, J. F. Mowery, and H. Wolfe, 'Hamlet's Tables and the Technologies of Writing in Renaissance England', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 55 (2004), 379–419.
[16] Clement, *The petie-schoole*, D5ᵛ.

sometimes found in printed books on blank pages or around the margins: there are several copies of Jonson's 1616 *Workes* so marked.[17]

The first alphabet taught at school was secretary hand because, as Billingsley noted, 'it is the onely vsuall hand of England, for dispatching of all manner of businesses'.[18] Those who had no need for a business hand (including some aristocrats and many women) wrote, and were presumably first taught, italic; similarly, from the mid-sixteenth-century, italic was practised at university. Otherwise, secretary hand is found throughout a vast range of documents, from parish registers and wills to private papers and accounts. For many people it was the common hand for correspondence and private notes. Hence, Shakespeare preferred secretary hand. Bacon, in contrast, was fully digraphic (he could switch from secretary to italic with ease: figure 4.1), whilst Donne wrote an italic hand, and Jonson mixed some secretary features into his italic script.[19] During the seventeenth-century, the shift towards italic became pronounced, and after the Restoration secretary hand is rare.

There are various formal characteristics that distinguish secretary hand from italic. It is, in all respects, a more elaborate script, although it can be written with cursive efficiency. Most importantly, while many of the letters are recognizably similar to their italic equivalent, several have different forms: most notably miniscule *c*, *e*, *h*, *k*, *p* and, to some extent, *r*. Of these, *c* is written like the left and top side of a square and can be confused with *t*; *e* is written in reverse and can be confused with *o*; *h* has a descending stroke that swings open to the right and is easily confused with *y*; *k* is often an *l* crossed with a raised *ʒ*; *p* begins with a 2 that then circles back anticlockwise and down on the diagonal to form the bowl and descender; *r* is double-sided and may have a stroke at its base. Of the other letters, the open *a* can be confused with *u*. Clement gives quite detailed instructions about the formal aspects of writing various letters, whilst McKerrow provides several examples of each of the letterforms and a discussion of the technical issues.[20] Both sources should be consulted.

---

[17] For instance, University of London, shelfmark B. S. 1272; National Art Library (V&A), shelfmark Forster SF° 4689; Jesus College, Oxford, shelfmark I.Arch.3.6; Pembroke College, Cambridge, shelfmark LC.I.29; Boston Public Library, shelfmark XfG. 3811.5A; Brown University, shelfmark PR2600 1616; Columbia University, New York, shelfmark 822,34; University of Texas, shelfmark Ah J738 +B616 am.

[18] Billingsley, *The pens excellencie*, C2ʳ.

[19] For Jonson and Donne, see P. J. Croft, *Autograph Poetry in the English Language: Facsimiles of Original Manuscripts from the Fourteenth to the Twentieth Century*, 2 vols. (London, 1973).

[20] McKerrow, *Introduction*, app. 8, 341–50; G. Dawson and L. Kennedy-Skipton, *Elizabethan Handwriting 1500–1650: A Guide to the Reading of Documents and Manuscripts* (London, 1968); www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/palaeography.

Figure 4.1 Francis Bacon, 'A proposition for the repressing of singular Combats of Duelloes' (secretary hand with italic marginal text), c.1614: National Library of Scotland, MS Adv. 33.1.14, vol. 31, item 14.
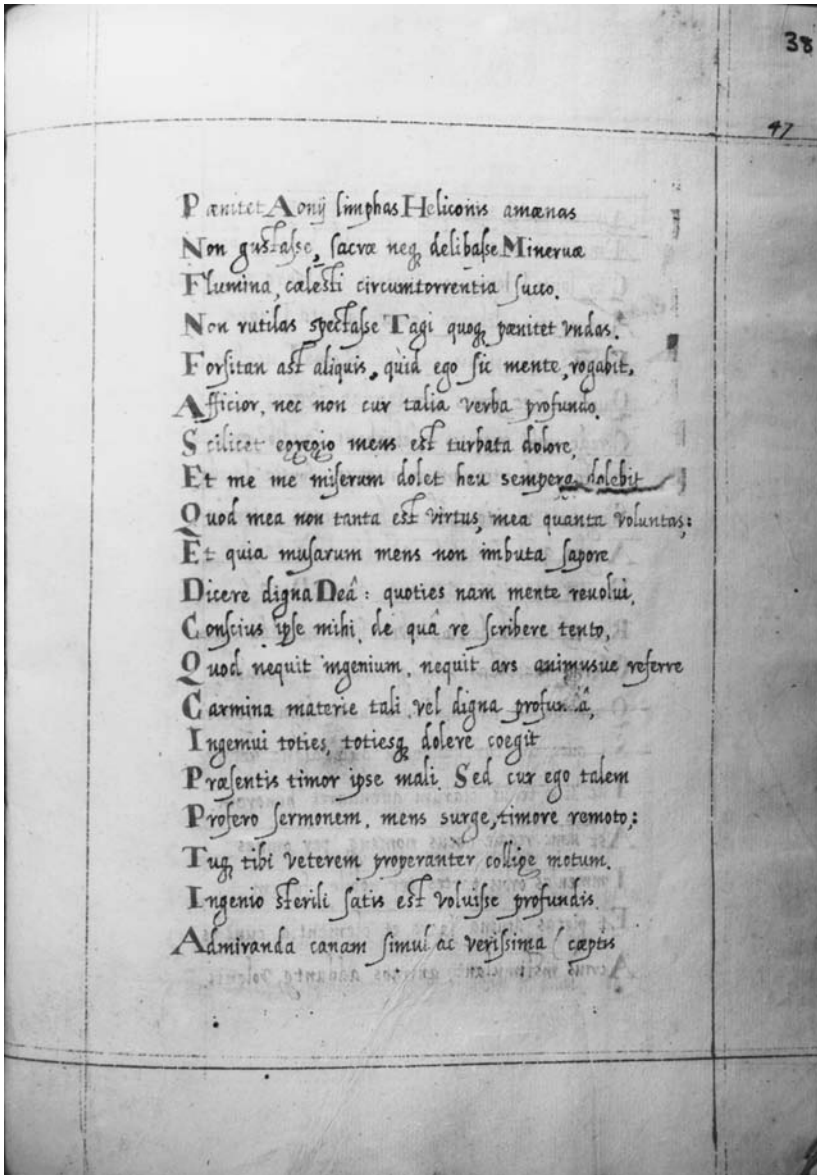
Figure 4.2   Trinity College, Dublin, MS 638, f. 47ʳ: the schoolboy italic of William Gibbins at Westminster School in a presentation manuscript for Queen Elizabeth, 1586.

Figure 4.3   Henry Howard, earl of Northampton, his last letter the day he died, Wednesday 15 June 1614 (Julian Calendar): National Library of Scotland, MS Adv. 33.1.7, vol. 22, item 59.

The italic hand, and training in the finer calligraphic arts, remained at first the preserve of the well educated.[21] By the time a young man had finished at a school such as Westminster, he was expected to display a mastery of writing skills in keeping with later expectations of position and preferment. As part of the ethos, royal visits to the school were celebrated with collections of Latin and Greek verse, with every boy responsible for his own contribution to the manuscript (figure 4.2).[22] Quite intentionally, the hands were expected to be sufficiently similar so as to ensure visual continuity from one poem, and one boy, to the next. In practice, they were not used for everyday purposes, but they do reveal the level of skill developed through formal training. In more personal ways, the practice left its elegant traces in the hands of those who had been taught to write with this mastery, such as Bacon and Jonson.

Clarity of style involved a fusion of thought with the visual elegance conveyed by the written word. A good hand was an expression of good manners, reflecting a courtesy towards those who might have to read the advice, opinion, or ideas of another. Humanistic italic was, in this sense, not only an expression of a cultured mind and classical education (although italic miniscule was, in fact, Carolingian in its origins),[23] but of a Roman civility that found its most acute expression in the letters of Cicero and the younger Pliny, which the boys were expected to read.

The calligraphic skills of those who attended the great schools and the universities were not universally adopted throughout the political and social elite. Whilst Elizabeth wrote a skilled hand, James wrote with neither care nor precision (see figures 6.1 and 6.2; pp. 156–7). Bacon might have been a master of the calligraphic arts, and Northampton (who in the 1590s had worked as a secretary for Essex) measured and chaste (figure 4.3); others, such as Buckingham, cultivated a large scrawl that reflects his power and influence, even if he did sign his letters to the king and Prince Charles as their 'most humble slaue and doge Steenie' (figure 4.4): the character of the hand is revealing of the character of the man. Similarly, Lady Arbella Stuart and Lady Mary Wroth are justly appreciated for their disciplined and elegant script, but the large and laboured hand of Katherine, Lady Aubigny and duchess of Lennox, is a more telling example of the cursive italic common amongst gentry-born women, revealing more care than practice or use, for all of Jonson's praise of the qualities of her mind (figure 4.5).

[21] A. Fairbank and B. Dickens, *The Italic Hand in Tudor Cambridge* (Cambridge, 1962).
[22] C. M. Bajetta, 'The Manuscripts of Verse Presented to Elizabeth I: A Preliminary Investigation', *Ben Jonson Journal*, 8 (2001), 147–206: see esp. pp. 155–6, where Trinity College, Dublin, MS 638 is not listed.
[23] Morison, *Politics and Script*, 266–76 and 290–3.

Figure 4.4   George Villiers, earl (later duke) of Buckingham to King James and Prince Charles: c.1618: National Library of Scotland, MS Adv. 33.1.7, vol. 22, item 75.

Figure 4.5 Katherine, Lady Aubigny (duchess of Lennox) to King James, 1624: National Library of Scotland, MS Adv. 33.1.7, vol. 22, item 80.

The use of script to validate liability or authority lends to each hand a unique legal status. The idiosyncrasies of a signature guarantee loans, wills, marriage vows, treaties, execution warrants, and so on.[24] Then, as

[24] See, P. Beal, *In Praise of Scribes*, 3–5.

now, we recognize individual combinations of palaeographical habits as self-defining: hence the danger and skill of the forger's art. That same individuality of script left its traces across all texts that were copied, as the nature of the hand influenced the ability of others to read what was before them, whether the final product was in manuscript or print.

For many texts that interest literary scholars a holograph is wanting. Hence, when source documents are irrecoverable, other papers in the hand of an author or scribe may afford an insight into textual issues. At all times, it must be understood that for every fair copy, there were many other forms of less legible document that might impact upon the intelligibility of a text. Indeed, one of Greg's arguments for ascribing the manuscripts of Heywood's *The Captives* and *The Escapes of Jupiter* as autograph was that 'no sane person would have employed a scribe who wrote such an atrocious hand'.[25] More generally, it helps to know whether a source document, from which subsequent copies derived, was written in secretary or italic, by a skilled or less accomplished hand, and whether the script was disciplined or highly cursive. The cultural and pedagogical conditions under which writing was first learnt, as well as the purposes for which a manuscript was prepared, will have shaped the characteristics of the hand in which it was written.

Manuscripts and Their Uses

The vast range of manuscript material poses descriptive problems both of classification concerning its purpose and use, and of determining its circumstances of production.[26] The idea that a manuscript is simply the result of pen put to paper does not get one very far: documents were created for a wide variety of reasons, and that context determined potential access to the material as well as influencing the script that was used. The distinction is not one of subject classification as such: literary papers, for instance, might include private notes or presentation copies; what helped to shape the format and script of a document, in the first place, were the circumstances under which it was created and to what end. At the risk of being a little glib, it might help to distinguish seven broad groups that, in certain respects, will inevitably overlap.

First, there are private documents that were never intended for any eyes other than the person responsible for compiling them or, at most,

---

[25] Greg, 'The Escapes of Jupiter', *Collected Papers*, 156–83, esp. 158; similarly, Beal in the *Index of English Literary Manuscripts*, I: ii, 219–21.

[26] See also, H. Love, 'Oral and Scribal Texts in Early Modern England', *The Book in Britain . . . 1557–1695*, 93–121.

members of the family, whether spouses or siblings. These papers might include ideas jotted down on a loose sheet, entries in a private diary, records of events and dreams, jokes and anecdotes, collections of mottos, calculations, nativities and horoscopes, notes, drafts of letters or other compositions, as well as annotations in the margins of books and manuscripts. The character of these materials does not require that they be legible to others, so care in writing is more a matter of personal habit and preference than good manners. The types of document involved include loose papers as well as table-books and small pocket volumes sold pre-bound; small cursive hands, whilst not universal, are common.

Second, educational materials form a closely related group of semi-private papers. These manuscripts may have been reviewed by a teacher or tutor, but were not usually intended for a life beyond their immediate instructional value. At one extreme, the group might include private copies of texts in Greek, Hebrew, or Arabic, as well as mathematical calculations; and, at the other end of the scale, basic exercises that might be categorized as juvenilia. In its most social form, this material includes the presentation manuscripts of Latin and Greek verse prepared by the schoolboys at Westminster and Eton. Generally, these manuscripts were written with greater care than private papers.

Third, there are documents that were intended to circulate through personal and scribal networks as socially communicated texts, including letters to family and friends, works of scholarship,[27] and separates or booklets of verse and prose from which copies were to be taken. Private correspondence might cover a great many issues, and it is sometimes difficult to draw a line between the political and the personal as both might be touched on in the same letter; likewise, letters by scholars and antiquaries provide a rich source of information about the book-trade as well as intellectual and political matters in Britain and Europe. These exchanges were not always confined to the recipient: for instance, the boys at Westminster knew of Camden's European friends.[28] The writing of letters between women, as well, was a sign of status as writer and recipient could maintain familiarity at a distance owing to their skill.

As with letters, social connections were the link that enabled access to the separates and booklets that formed the underlying documents for the private compilations that were clearly put together from disparate sources. Some of these loose items survive. Usually, manuscripts of this kind are more carefully written in slightly larger script than the private

---

[27] See, Woudhuysen, *Sir Philip Sidney and the Circulation of Manuscripts*, 116–33.
[28] G. Goodman, *The Court of King James the First, to which are added letters*, 2 vols. (London, 1839), 126.

copies (although there will always be exceptions) because they were intended to be passed from hand to hand. The material was most often written on single folio, and sometimes quarto, sheets.

Fourth, local archives, record offices, and some private owners, hold considerable quantities of estate papers that document the household and business transactions of a family: accounts, rentals, leases, marriage contracts, inventories, and much else besides. Some of this material was written by the family, other items were prepared by stewards and notaries, generally in table-books, or on quired sheets, with property transactions written on parchment. Often in the same collections as these records are other personal papers and correspondence. Family archives have been of greater interest to economic and social historians than literary scholars, but they provide much contextual information: the management of an estate required literacy, numeracy, and a clear hand, as details about property, assets, or finances might be required at any time. Hence, an employee who wrote regularly, such as a steward or tutor, might be asked to help with other transcriptions. Estate papers, therefore, record the activities of a household and its staff, and thus the identity of those who might compile other documents for the family.

Fifth, collections of political, professional, and administrative papers were prepared by secretaries and other trained professionals.[29] This material includes assize, customs, and tax records; the acts, speeches, political papers, and correspondence of government and its officials, some of which was scribally circulated; chancery proceedings; parish records, including the minutes of parish wardens, and ecclesiastical visitations, inquisitions, and interrogations; wills, probates, wards and prerogative court of Canterbury administrations; the documents of city corporations; bills, and business papers; records of the guilds and companies as well as the schools, universities and Inns of Court; legal opinions, advice tracts; and so on. These papers are vitally important for our understanding of early modern society, and some have been edited. The modern printed record, however, emphasizes the information they contain over the people who kept them; the lives of secretaries, lawyers, physicians, clerks, and clergy involved more than their professional duties: Eleazar Hodgson, for instance, was a physician who circulated copies of poems by Donne.[30] Along with the country gentry, students, and scholars, the professional elite were the primary consumers of written and printed material. In order to understand their involvement

[29] See Woudhuysen, *Sir Philip Sidney and the Circulation of Manuscripts*, 66–87.
[30] Beal, *In Praise of Scribes*, 92: Beal incorrectly identifies Hodgson as a law student; the list by Francis Davison that identifies him is British Library Harley MS 298, ff.159^r–160^r.

in manuscript activities, we have to locate them back to their working environments and the documents that they produced.

Sixth, manuscripts were produced, whether as a record of events or as works of imagination, belief, or knowledge, with the intent that they be the principal copy to be preserved, to be presented to another, or else to serve as the source document for later publication in manuscript, print, or through performance as plays, speeches, or sermons. These papers might be authorial, scribal, or secretarial, but in most cases they were not the work of a professional scrivener. With these manuscripts, terms such as fair or foul papers are not particularly helpful in describing documents that vary from those prepared with immaculate care to others that were replete with deletions, insertions, interlineations, and marginal additions. In most cases, the usual format for this material was quired folio sheets, but other formats are not unknown depending on the context for which the manuscript was prepared. For printed books, most manuscript copy does not survive, and we do not usually know in what condition the papers were before text was set, though comments by printers suggest that sometimes the copy was less than satisfactory.[31]

Seventh, and finally, there are the manuscripts that were prepared by professional scriveners for clients and customers. Like members of the Stationers' Company, scriveners belonged to a guild that was originally known as the Writers of the Court Letter in the fifteenth-century, and that was incorporated as the Company of Scriveners from 1617.[32] Members were apprenticed and trained in the calligraphic arts, as well as in the preparation of financial, legal, and other documents. They had a dual function: first, a scrivener was like an early modern copy shop producing manuscripts to order, and sometimes in advance; second, they prepared legal documents and were moneylenders. It was this latter function led to their eventual mutation into merchant banks. Hence, a scrivener might copy or make public a wide array of material, including much that has been outlined above, such as compilations of verse, correspondence, speeches, presentation copies, advice texts, and legal documents like indentures, bonds, bills, and wills: Milton's father was the scrivener who prepared William Camden's testament in 1623.[33]

---

[31] See, McKitterick, *Print, Manuscript and the Search for Order*, 117–23; J. K. Moore, *Primary Materials Relating to Copy and Print in English Books of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Oxford, 1992: OBS 24). Sometimes, as well, private documents (such as Laud's *Diary*) served as copy for the press: a use for which they were never intended.

[32] See, F. W. Steer (ed.), *Scriveners' Company Common Paper 1357–1628: With a Continuation to 1678* (London, 1968). For a survey of the London scriveners, see: Woudhuysen, *Sir Philip Sidney and the Circulation of Manuscripts*, 52–66 and 174–203. See also, p. 184 below.

[33] Camden's will is PROB 11/142, ff.351^v–2^r.

We know very little about the organization of a scrivener's business, or of their relationship with the printed trade.[34] Beal has reproduced an image of a German shop in the mid-sixteenth-century that shows a master and three assistants, one perhaps an apprentice, at work.[35] There are a variety of documents—an indenture, bound volumes, rolls, and loose sheets hung up to dry; there are different working areas, including a sloping desk, a counter and a desk of the more usual kind. There is an hourglass to keep time, and various writing implements. It is likely that these circumstances are not too different to those found in the late medieval period, or the early seventeenth-century.[36] It is possible, of course, that the scriptorium may have offered other services, such as the retailing of paper and writing materials, including precut quills.

When a customer wanted a manuscript to be copied, several things could happen. A scrivener would want to establish what kind of copy was required, whether it was to be on ordinary or higher-quality paper, or else parchment, whether special pen work was necessary, the number of copies required, and the time available for the work to be done. If it was to be a single copy of a short document then it might prepared by a single scribe; but if it was lengthy, or if multiple copies were required, then the work might be divided. One way of doing this was for one scribe to copy the first and another the second part of a document, and for them to then exchange parts. Equally, if a single copy of a larger document was wanted quickly, it might be broken into booklets with each scribe responsible for a section. The important point about these arrangements was their flexibility: sometimes a scribe would simply take over from another in the middle of a page, or even in mid-sentence.[37]

Professional documents have a distinctive appearance: the layout of the page is consistent, the handwriting regular, level (not sloping upwards or downwards), and fair; if there are several hands, they will be highly skilled. Typical manuscripts were usually prepared in folio gatherings, and they are frequently found bound as a sammelbände.[38] Common texts available by scribal copy include political letters and papers, relations of events and proceedings, parliamentary speeches, views of contemporary political issues, discourses on marriages and the arraignments of nobles, treason reports and Star Chamber proceedings,

[34] For a survey, see Woudhuysen, *Sir Philip Sidney and the Circulation of Manuscripts*, 58–9.
[35] Beal, *In Praise of Scribes*, 12–13.
[36] See, Rouse, *Illiterati et uxorati*.
[37] Beal, *In Praise of Scribes*, 77–90 with illustrations.
[38] See the catalogue of the Feathery scribe: Beal, *In Praise of Scribes*, 211–68.

negotiations of state, historical synopses, observations on privileges and ancestry, and similar matters of antiquarian and political interest. These texts were not generally available through the printed book-trade. The people who acquired these items would employ the services of a scrivener for their will and other personal documents, and they were also those who were most likely to seek a scrivener's services as a moneylender.

The reason for having made distinctions by the types of manuscript and their context in this way is to shift the emphasis from a concern with content towards the appearance of the page. It is only possible to develop a sense of how manuscripts look and differ in their scribal and formal characteristics if a wide range of material is examined. In many cases, the context will make it obvious as to the origins of the document involved: a personal compilation of verse in a small pocketbook in what is else a collection of estate papers would indicate that the manuscript is a private copy of socially circulated texts by a member of the family who is probably identifiable from other items such as correspondence. There are, however, many manuscripts that lack the immediate associative evidence in which to situate them. For these items, the appearance of the page will suggest something about the original context.

The question 'Who was responsible for this manuscript?' is one that is often insolvable, but that does not mean that the manuscript does not leave a trail of clues and an indication of its likely origins. The paper, format, script, and textual history all reveal something about when and by whom a manuscript was prepared. For instance, British Library Harley MS 4064 is a quarto sammelbände that was brought together at the end of the seventeenth-century. In its midst is a verse compilation that was copied c.1610–12 by two scribes: scribe A, was responsible for the miscellany of items by Jonson, Roe, Edward Herbert, and others with which the collection begins; whilst scribe B stepped in to help with the copying of one of Jonson's poems (figure 4.6), before resuming later to copy the poems by Donne. The quarto format and rough-hewn hand of scribe B, suggests that this was not a professional copy, but rather a document prepared by the members of a household.[39] In comparison, National Library of Wales Peniarth MS 444C, includes a genealogy of Venetia Digby and Jonson's poem to her sons. It is a professional manuscript with a single autograph correction in Jonson's hand (figure 4.7): he engaged a professional scrivener because by the 1630s his tremor made calligraphy difficult.

[39] The Donne material is part of the Group One tradition: I have discussed the relation of the manuscript to the tradition and the dating in my forthcoming *Jonson and Donne: Manuscript Traditions, Connections, and Revisions.*
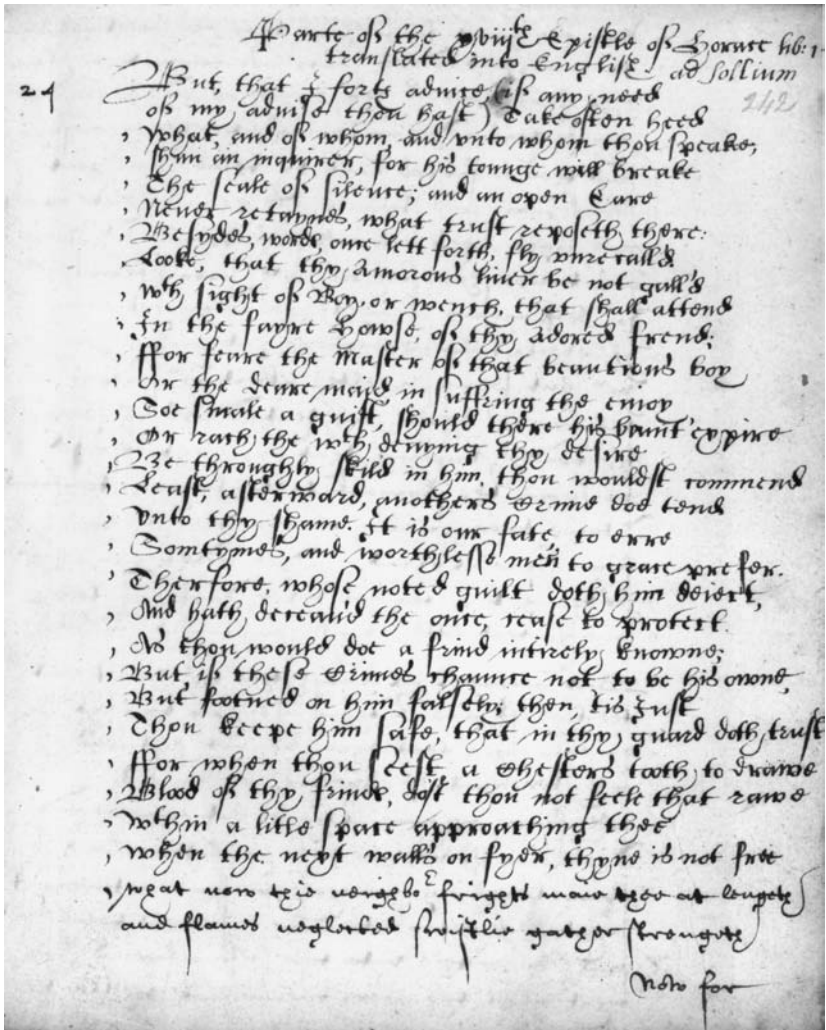
Figure 4.6   British Library, Harley MS 4064, p. 238; c.1612: the page is principally in the hand of scribe B, with the final two lines and pagination by scribe A.

Presentation manuscripts, such as Peniarth 444C or *The Masque of Queenes* typically bear signs of the care with which they were prepared. As well as the script, superior paper and either a gilt vellum or gilt goatskin binding are indications of a special status.[40] Manuscripts like these might either be prepared by the author, or by a professional on their behalf.

[40] British Library, Royal MS 18.A.xlv: *The Masque of Queenes* has been rebound.

L. Somery.	The L. Rumolly.
L. Brewer of Torbey.	The L. Meschines.
L. Baffet.	Henry, L. Teys, a Baron 17: Ed. J.
L. Gobion.	Keble.
L. Bedelsgate.	Harbotle.
L. Monthale, Bar.ⁿ of Howe.	L. Abtot.
L. Auenel.	
L. de la Pipe.	L. Aueringes of Folkftone in Kent.
L. Treanton.	L. Dursnale. &c.
L. Salborne, or Hodnet.	L. Spernow.
The L. Fitz-Geffrey, Bar. of Kirkling.	L. Creuecure of Leeds-Caftle.
The L. Berkley of Berkley	With many others, whose Faith is preferu'd in the Heraulds Office, & their Monum.
The L. Touy Baron of fflamſted.	
L. Lifley of Rugemount in Bedfordſhire.	
Warren, Fitzgerard, Bar. of Harmood Caftle in Yorkeſhire.	

 fflamsted

Figure 4.7 National Library of Wales, Peniarth MS 444C, p. 16; c.1633: a professional copy by a scribe with a single correction in Jonson's autograph.

One particularly unusual presentation manuscript was clearly never finished: Glasgow University Hunter MS U.8.27 is a six-sheet quarto, bound in gilt vellum that was intended as a presentation copy for Prince

Henry. It is unclear whether this copy of Richard Kellie's *The Tragedie of Lord Boroscho of Poland*, a poem written as a single stanza per page, is authorial or scribal, and no other witness survives. Although the poem itself is complete, each page was then intended to be finished with light decoration, including double rules above and below the text: it is this rubrication that is unfinished. What marks the manuscript out as the intended royal presentation copy, however, is another feature: it is written throughout in gold (figure 4.8).

As with printed books and pamphlets, manuscripts do not exist in isolation. Their production can be as various, and the network of their connections as complex, as any printed text. The script that they are written in can veer from the Petrarchan ideal of chasteness and clarity to a kind of visual chaos. To assume that the source documents for book production, whether manuscript or printed, were prepared to make life as easy as possible for those who followed defies logic, life, and the rich diversity of evidence. Hence, where statements about the nature of the copy for printed books exist, they usually indicate difficulty if only to excuse the faults.[41] It is only through recognizing the vicariousness of manuscript activity, and the specificity of its production, that we can begin to recover the life of the page and the interconnections between the written word and the printed book.

An Early Modern Printing-House: The Plantin-Moretus Museum

Before the practical aspects of printing are discussed, mention should be made of the Plantin-Moretus Museum in Antwerp, as it is the only sixteenth- and seventeenth-century printing-house that survives, and for that reason alone it offers a glimpse of the way in which such a business operated. The museum has very large archives, relating to all aspects of the book-trade, which again make it unique.[42] It is rather larger than most London printing-houses would have been, and has some features (a type foundry, a courtyard garden, paintings and designs by Rubens, and a large library) that a London business is unlikely to have shared; but with a little imagination, it is easy to make allowances and understand what a smaller business would have looked like.[43]

[41] McKitterick, *Print, Manuscript and the Search for Order*, 97–138.
[42] See, L. Voet, *The Golden Compasses: A History and Evaluation of the Printing and Publishing Activities of the Officina Plantiniana at Antwerp*, 2 vols. (Amsterdam, 1969–72). The museum has a useful website: http://museum.antwerpen.be/plantin_Moretus/index_eng.html. The St Bride's Library also has early printing material and a website: http://stbride.org.
[43] See also, D. F. McKenzie, *The Cambridge University Press 1696–1712: A Bibliographical Study*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1966), which includes much primary detail in the second volume.

> The Tragedie. of. the Lord. Boroscho.
> . of Poland.
>
> Borosro. to. Fruellin. Neece. to
> Sigismond. kinge of Poland.
>
> FROM. one that languissheth in discontent
> Deare faire receaue this greeting. to thee sent
> And still as oft as it is read by thee
> Then with some deepe sadd sighe remember mee
> When bee thou sure I will this order keepe
> my hart shall bleed as fast as thou canst weepe
> So iff in sheddinge teares thou dost not fame
> with droppes of blood Ile pay those teares againe
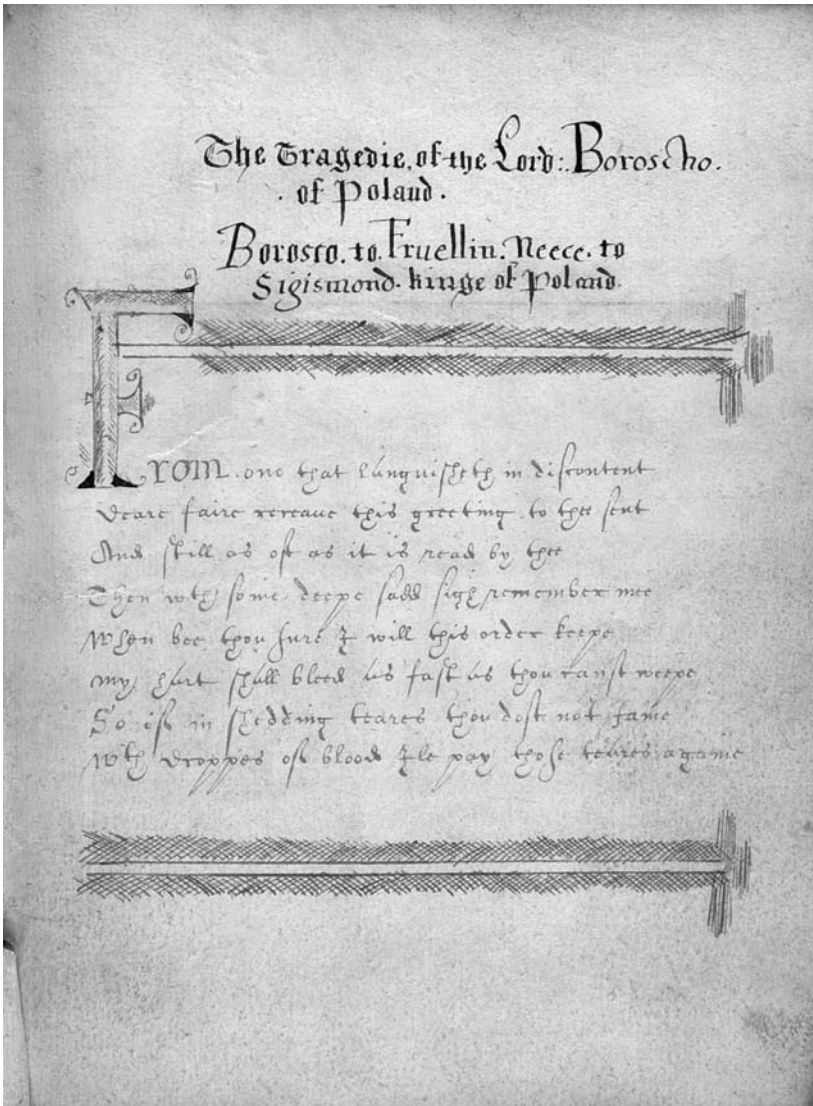
Figure 4.8   R. Kellie, *The Tragedie of Lord Boroscho of Poland*: University of Glasgow, Hunter MS U.8.27.

The printing-room is long and rectangular with compositor's cases, face to face, running three wide in rows along the courtyard side of the room (for natural light), with the presses on the other side. With seven presses, as well as a rolling press for engravings, the room is larger

than one that would have housed two–three presses, but even so the Plantin establishment must have been crowded at full capacity. At the far end of the workshop is a second smaller room housing the other cases of type that were not in use, and pages of typeset material that have been tied up, rather than distributed, in expectation that they will be needed again. To the side of this room, there is a small antechamber and then the room where the corrector could read proof away from the noise of the workshop. There are other rooms, including a parlour, hall, storerooms and, upstairs, living rooms, the type foundry, and the library.

Distributed between the rooms, are various books, manuscripts, and other materials from the archives and library: medieval manuscripts and incunabula as well as other important items illustrating the history of the book; various portraits by Rubens and others of the family, and another of Seneca painted from a bust now in the Rubenshuis; an autograph manuscript by Justus Lipsius marked up for composition; a rough draft of a title-page; bills for type; ledgers of book sales; a finished drawing (again by Rubens) to be engraved; original woodcuts and copperplates for illustrations placed alongside the books in which they appeared.[44] These are but a few of the many hundreds of items displayed across more than 30 rooms. In the process, what is mapped is every stage possible in the production of a printed book as well as the cultural and economic context of the business. For the London trade, these records were comprehensively destroyed in the Great Fire.

The importance of the Plantin-Moretus Museum goes beyond the integrity of its buildings, materials, and documents: important as these aspects of the display are. It is evident that the curatorial focus provides an account of every aspect of an early modern printing-house at work. What is also evident, and it is a fact often overlooked by more abstract considerations of hand-press book production, is the sheer range of materials to do with manuscript and illustration that are present, and of the volume of written documents present in a printing-house. In almost every room, there is evidence of the connection between the media.

Print obscures manuscript. Faced with important literary texts whose histories have remained a source of speculation, scholars have tended to focus on the end product, the printed book, and so have simplified the processes though which they were produced and the materials that went into their making. The emphasis is often placed upon the presses, chases, type, cases, reglet, ornament stock, sheets, and so on, that were used to make a printed book, whilst 'the manuscript' from which a text

---

[44] See also, K. L. Bowen and D. Imhof, *Christopher Plantin and Engraved Book Illustrations in Sixteenth Century Europe* (Cambridge, 2008).

was set is treated as a necessary adjunct to the discussion. It is sometimes also assumed that any manuscript was destroyed through its use as copy. The first thing to remember, therefore, is that just because something does not survive does not mean that it did not once exist, or that it was discarded as soon as it ceased to be used: the Plantin-Moretus Museum demonstrates that the printed book is the consequence of a complex process of manuscript activity, and that manuscripts, whether for copy or commerce, were vital to the running of such printing-houses and the publishers with whom they sometimes worked.

Patterns of Production

In July 1586, following the decree of the Star Chamber, the Company of Stationers set a limit to the number of printing-houses and presses that were permitted. Up to that point, the printed book-trade had grown over the previous 80 years from the businesses of Wynkyn de Worde and Richard Pynson, to the 25 printing-houses and 53 presses that were accounted for under the new regulations, as well as those in Oxford and Cambridge. Subsequently, there were attempts to limit the number of presses to two for the more important businesses, and one for the remainder. These limits were adjusted from time to time, but they were not repealed (apart from for a short period during the Civil War), until 1695. It is also evident from the records that these limits were observed more in spirit than to the letter as many houses had an extra press, although it should perhaps be assumed that these generally served for proofing and small jobs rather than on a full-time basis.[45]

A London printing-house of the early seventeenth-century was a slightly larger establishment than one might at first expect. The smaller houses might easily employ eight to ten people; the larger houses, like the one run by William Stansby, as many as 15 to 17.[46] As well as the master, compositors, pressmen, apprentices, and a corrector, there would be someone responsible for the warehouse where the sheets were stored and copies made up. It is possible that some printers offered binding as an option for customers, as did some publishers. A larger business might have an overseer as well as the master; and with a smaller business some of the jobs might be performed by the same person. In addition, a cat served to protect the paper from rodents.

[45] E. Arber, *A Transcript of the Registers of the Company of Stationers of London 1554–1640 A.D.*, 5 vols. (London, 1875–94), II, 807–12 and V, lii; W. A. Jackson, *Records of the Court of the Stationers' Company 1602 to 1640* (London, 1957), 75; also, McKenzie, 'Printers of the Mind', 54–6.
[46] Bland, 'William Stansby and the Production of *The Workes of Beniamin Jonson*, 1615–16', 6.

The detailed accounts of the Cambridge University Press over the 16-year period 1696–1712 provide a day-to-day picture of a two-press printing-house at work.[47] They reveal a business that was at once more complex and less productive than had commonly been imagined. In his magisterial study, McKenzie analyzed, in detail, the daily work vouchers for pressmen and compositors, as well as all other material including the books that were printed. It was this analysis that led to his seminal article 'Printers of the Mind' that critiqued then-current assumptions about how the work in a printing-house was organised.[48] In the type, equipment, scale of activity, and working practices, Cambridge was not particularly different to the larger London houses (such as the Cross-Keys under Stansby) a century earlier.[49] If anything, the scale of the London trade allowed for greater complexity, not less.

What we now know from the Cambridge press is what an ordinary workman might have been expected to do in the course of a day. The second and third most efficient compositors averaged between 5,600 and 5,700 ens, whilst the average pica quarto sheet varied between 11,520 and 13,376 ens.[50] Hence an experienced compositor would have set half a sheet or one forme a day. Similarly, the average weekly output at the press was 13,200 impressions, with considerable variation, for a full crew of two pressmen.[51] This is equivalent to 22 formes (the equivalent of four compositors) at an average rate of output of 600 impressions, or 11 formes (two compositors) and an average of 1,200 impressions. For general purposes, many items, such as sermons and plays, would have been printed in runs of c.500 copies or a ream a sheet; reprints of godly pocketbooks, psalm-books, and schoolbooks were printed in runs of 1,200–1,500 copies. It should be emphasized that these figures are highly approximate, but they may serve as a useful guide when attempting to estimate the size of a business.

The essential point about the organization of a printing-house is that the distribution of resources will depend on the kinds of publication involved. Some businesses produced large quantities of a few titles, other houses many books with more limited print-runs, and still others a mix of the two. The first kind of establishment would tend to emphasize print-runs and presswork over composition; the second type would tend to require a greater number of compositors for the same volume of

---

[47] See, McKenzie, *The Cambridge University Press 1696–1712*.

[48] McKenzie, 'Printers of the Mind', 1–75.

[49] Bland, 'William Stansby and the Production of *The Workes of Beniamin Jonson*, 1615–16', 1–34.

[50] McKenzie, 'Printers of the Mind', 8–9.

[51] McKenzie, 'Printers of the Mind', 10–11.

presswork. The master's job was to balance all this out, not on a book-by-book basis, but according to the resources required and available.

By 1600, the average printing-house had anywhere from 15 to 25 or more cases of type. The three standard faces were roman, italic, and black-letter. As well as titling fonts, these faces were usually available in double pica (20 lines of text measuring 144 mm in depth), great primer (111–17 mm), english (94 mm), pica (82 mm), and long primer (67 mm). Other common sizes include small pica (72 mm), brevier (54 mm) and pearl (42 mm) for roman and italic. In addition, a printer may have had Greek, normally in a pica or english font, music, and possibly Hebrew or Anglo-Saxon,[52] Of these, the pica and english cases were in regular use, with the great and long primer availed upon with some frequency. Italic was typically used as a support font rather than as the principal face for composition, although there are exceptions. Thus, even if a printer had only one set of cases available per face and size, several compositors could be at work on different books at the same time.

The ability to work by concurrent composition was important for the press because print-runs would differ from one item to another: a small piece of jobbing work or a private commission might be required in only 200 copies, whereas an oft reprinted godly pocketbook might have a run of 1,500. By having more than one project on the go, these differences could be accommodated because a compositor could be reassigned: whether to read proof, or work from another text and case in order to set something else while the previous forme was waiting to be printed off, or else to distribute and sort type. The more cases in use, the more type available in any given size, and the more presses at work, the more complex this pattern of working activity could become.

Before 'Printers of the Mind', it had been assumed that books were produced one at a time, and that printing was organized in order to maximize productivity in relation to each and every book. Thus, calculations were made about how much type could be set in an hour in order to determine the speed with which a book was printed, and print-runs were estimated based on the number of impressions that might be perfected during a day.[53] These theories proved to be wildly inaccurate and far removed from the evidence provided by the Cambridge archives. Whilst Hinman demonstrated that the first Shakespeare folio was set by forme (that is the side of a sheet of paper), many books were assumed to be set seriatim, or page by page. Seriatim setting was then

[52] See, Gaskell, *New Introduction*, 9–56 and 108–117. A case weighed c.50 kg (116Ibs).
[53] For instance, Hinman, *The Printing and Proof-Reading of the First Folio of Shakespeare*, I: 39–51.

used to explain conspicuous type shortages and other anomalies in the production process.

The advantage of the book-by-book model was its convenience, as it allowed an item to be studied in isolation from the rest of the output, without requiring a thorough investigation of everything produced by the relevant printing-house. Hence conclusions were drawn that, inevitably, reinforced existing assumptions about the popularity of the early modern drama. The problem is that the theory did not reflect the practical day-to-day realities where several items were going through the press at the same time. Of course, some of the analytical methods had their usefulness (for instance, the study of running-titles), but they were often applied without understanding the connections between all the output being produced at a given time. Hence any generalization made from the analysis could not be sustained, such as exact production runs, or in their use as evidence relating to specific stop-press interruptions.

In studying the organization of a printing-house, two sources had informed the traditional model. The first was the first English manual, Moxon's *Mechanick Exercises for the Whole Art of Printing*, published in 1683.[54] Moxon explained how a book was printed, and the activities involved in hand-press production: hence, the *Mechanick Exercises* offers a contemporary account of the practices of the trade, the materials used, and the concerns of the people involved. It is filled with sage advice about best practices. What it does not do is explain how such activities were integrated in a busy daily production schedule, or the variety of responsibilities that any one individual might encompass: composition, presswork, proof correction, oversight, and warehousing were all treated as separate functions of the business.

The second model for book-by-book production was the private press movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which celebrated printing as an artisan craft. The private presses, which set themselves against industrialized mass-market methods, used small-scale methods to publish deluxe volumes of famous texts in limited print-runs: their source of inspiration was William Morris's Kelmscott Press, which in turn had drawn upon fifteenth-century books including those of Nicolas Jenson.[55] The private press hand-printed books remain collector's items and have been studied in their own right, but they were not produced on the same scale, or for the same reasons, as early

[54] See chapter 1, n. 42 (p. 16).
[55] See, W. S. Peterson, *The Kelmscott Press: A History of William Morris's Typographical Adventure* (Oxford, 1991); also, M. Tidcombe, *The Doves Press* (London, 2002); R. Cave and S. Manson, *A History of the Golden Cockerel Press 1920–1960* (London, 2002).

modern texts.[56] What the private press did ensure was the survival of craft knowledge that could be applied in practical ways, and much of the best bibliographical work reflected this. McKenzie, for instance, composed and printed classroom texts for his students at the Wai-te-Ata Press in Wellington.[57] The period of greatest success for the private press, however, coincided both with the advent of journals with an interest in the history of typography, such as *The Dolphin* and *The Fleuron* (the latter edited by Stanley Morison), and the publication, in 1927, of McKerrow's *An Introduction to Bibliography*.

Drawing on Moxon, and practical knowledge, McKerrow explained the activities of an early modern printing-house in simplified terms.[58] His concern was to separate the various aspects of book production in order that students of early modern literature could understand the components of the printing process, and describe what they saw. His primary example for book production was that of a quarto, as many literary texts, such as plays, were printed in this format. He did not, at any point, suggest that books were printed one at a time—that was a later assumption made by Bowers.[59] McKerrow's *Introduction* became the modern Moxon, and focused the definition of bibliography on print, rather than on all forms of textual production. As a consequence, it occluded the connections between manuscript and print.

The kind of flexibility in working practices that is clearly visible in manuscripts prepared by professional scriveners must be equally true of work in a printing-house: there is no reason why one compositor might not take over from another mid-page, mid-line, or mid-word if that was required: all a compositor had to do was pass the composing stick to a colleague, or complete the line and let another take over. Equally, the second compositor might only set a few lines before the first resumed. If two cases of the same type were in use at the same time, then that could lead to the mixing of sorts when the type was redistributed after the forme had been printed and washed. Similarly, while one forme was

---

[56] See, R. Cave, *The Private Press*, 2nd edn. (New York and London, 1983).
[57] The press also issued small volumes of poetry including Bill Manhire's *How to Take Your Clothes Off at a Picnic* and Alan Lonie's *Courting Death*, and published an occasional journal *WORDS*. At that time, it was housed in a garage in Waiteata Rd, just below the library at Victoria University of Wellington. Students in the 'Literary Scholarship' course were taught hand-press book production; a class that McKenzie continued to teach at Oxford.
[58] R. B. McKerrow, *An Introduction to Bibliography for Literary Students* (Oxford, 1927): Bodleian Library, Oxford, 258 d. 352 is the copy of Falconer Madan and James McManaway, with their annotations.
[59] Although not directly stated, it is implied in the discussion of printing-house procedure: see, F. T. Bowers, 'Notes on Running-Titles as Bibliographical Evidence', *The Library*, IV: 19 (1938), 315–38.

opened up for stop-press correction at the press, another might have
a proof pulled, so that the corrector could continue with his work.
Naturally, the pattern of work one day might be rather different from
the next because no two days were exactly the same: a small piece of
jobbing work, like a playbill or ballad, might interrupt some other item
at the press, or some funeral verses might be needed rather more quickly
than the large folio that several of the compositors were working on.
These details are almost impossible to reconstruct, particularly as many
single-sheet broadsides have not survived.

The survival of the printed evidence is a significant issue because,
in truth, we do not know how much has been lost. This is not a mere
matter of there being a gap in the record; it makes the reconstruction of
printing-house activity inherently less reliable. Sometimes there are clues:
reprinted books might state that they are 'the seventh edition', and if they
do then a gap in the sequence is suggestive. Many ballads, broadsides,
and hornbooks have perished without trace. Schoolbooks and almanacs
were reprinted annually, but survive sporadically. These gaps are difficult
to place in context. In at least one case, however, we can link a lost
pamphlet with another alongside of which it was printed. Owing to the
sheets still being wet, an offset image of the title-page *A Proclamation
touching the K. of Spaine* has left its trace on the back of an account
of James VI's entry into Edinburgh with his new wife in 1590. No copy of
the offset pamphlet is known to survive (figure 4.9).

If lost output poses one kind of problem for reconstructing the evi-
dence of a printing-house, shared work poses another. Some items were
printed for publishers, others were printed for the house, or as a private
commission (these can usually be identified by the pagination being
within parentheses at the top centre of the page), and some items were
shared with other houses to expedite a book. Shared printing is a more
common phenomenon than most bibliographers realize and many
entries in the main catalogues fail to identify the involvement of printers
whose names are not on the title-page.[60] The difficulties that shared
printing pose are twofold: first, some of the known output of a press will
contain the work of other houses; and second, some of a printer's output
will not be identified. This is a problem that will be returned to in the
following chapter where the methods of analysis and identification will
be described. For now, what it is important to realize is that, day to day,
compositors and pressmen may have been at work on more items than
the imprints alone might have one expect.

[60] P. W. M. Blayney, 'The Prevalence of Shared Printing in the Early Seventeenth Century',
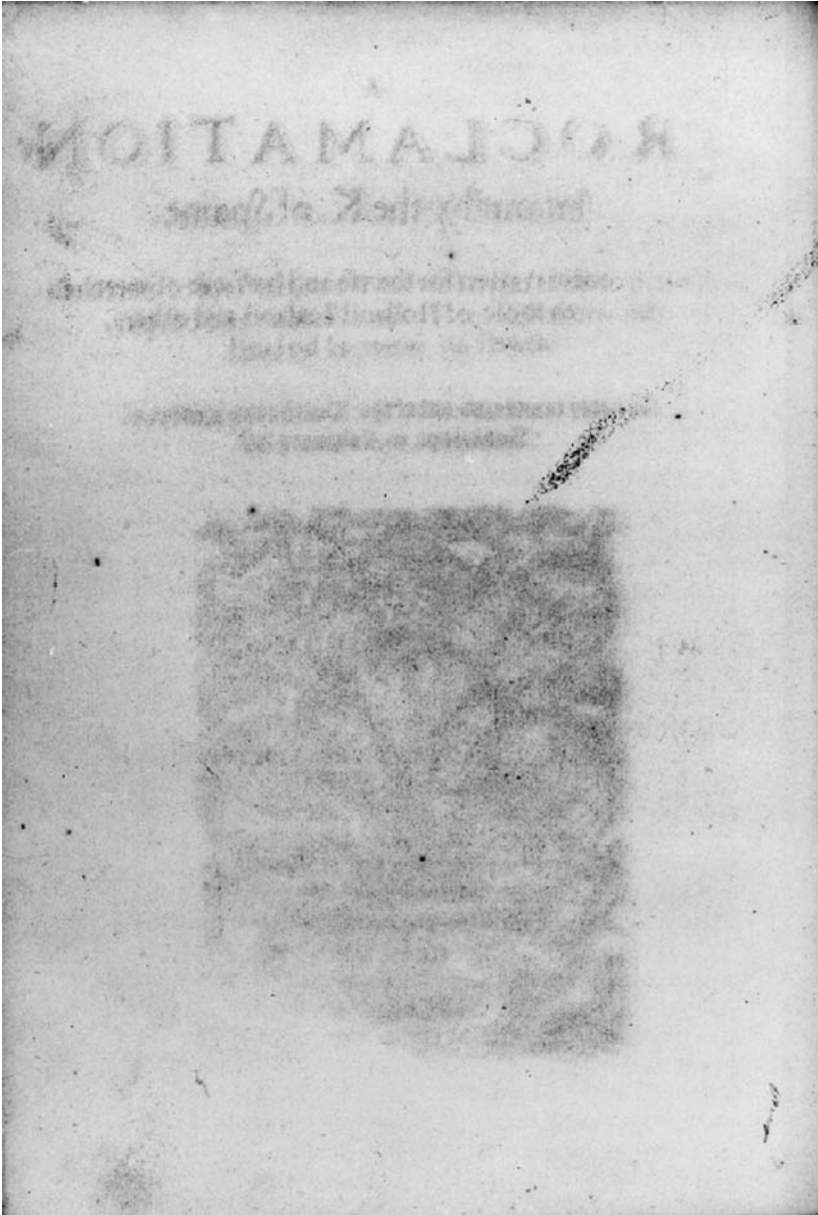*PBSA*, 67 (1973), 437–42.

Figure 4.9   A proclamation made by the K. of Spaine (no known copy): offset image from British Library, C.33 b.56, *A ioyfull receiuing of Iames the sixt . . . and Queene Anne his wife* (STC 14425.3; 1590: entered 3 June), A4ᵛ.

Estimation and Casting Off

Before a compositor could begin to set a book in type, it was necessary
for an estimate to be made of the length of the text, and then for this
figure to be divided by the amount of type that would be required per
page (in ens), in order that the quantity of paper required could be
calculated. Conventions of page design and layout determined certain
things, whilst the size of the platen provided a technological limit as to
how great an area of type could be impressed at one time: the standard
type faces of 82 mm pica and 94 mm english existed in an approximate
relationship of 7:8 (i.e. eight lines of pica set solid had the same depth as
seven lines of english). The standard page depth was 36–8 lines of pica
(or 31 lines of english) for a quarto, and 48 lines of english for a folio.
The width of the measure was adjustable, and normally varied between
40 and 44 ens for quarto, and 58–64 ens for folio. This ability to make
small adjustments allowed printers to determine a best fit between the
quantity of text to be set and the number of sheets required.

    For convenience, the following example will assume that the printer
planned to set the text in either pica or english, and that the format was
to be quarto. The author or publisher (who may or may not have been
the printer) had already been to visit a chaplain at Lambeth Palace to have
the text allowed.[61] The manuscript was 100 pages, with c.2,000 ens of
text per handwritten page as calculated by selectively sampling and
counting sections of text and averaging the result. With an estimate of
c.200,000 ens of text, the printer would seek to match the size of the
manuscript to the closest number of whole printed sheets. Hence the
estimated count was divided by the number of ens per sheet according to
various standard layouts. Hence, if 200,000 ens was to be set in pica:

lines ×	width ×	pages =	ens =	sheets
36	40	8	11,520	17.36
36	42	8	12,096	16.53
37	40	8	11,840	16.89
37	42	8	12,432	16.09
37	44	8	13,024	15.35
38	42	8	12,768	15.66
38	44	8	13,376	14.95

---

[61] See, W. W. Greg, *Licensers of the Press, &c. to 1640* (Oxford, 1962); also, P. W. M. Blayney,
'The Publication of Playbooks', in J. D. Cox and D. S. Kastan (eds.), *A New History of the
Early English Drama* (New York, 1997), 404 (383–422).

Similarly, if the text was to be set in english, then the calculation is the same, except that an adjustment needs to be made for the greater width of the type: i.e. the body of a letter is not only taller (hence the fewer number of lines per page), every letter is proportionally bigger. As seven lines of english are the same height as eight lines of pica, so the same amount of text can be set in seven pages of pica as in eight pages of english. The strictly correct way to make this calculation is to divide the 20-line pica height by the 20-line height of the other type (e.g. 82 ÷ 67 for brevier, 82 ÷ 94 for english, and 82 ÷ 117 for great primer) and keep the number of pages as standard; however, early modern printers are unlikely to have done complex fractional calculations, but rather would have relied on standard rules of thumb. Thus, a 200,000-en text set in english, rather than pica, would have had more sheets:

lines ×	width ×	pages =	ens	=	sheets
31	40	7	8,680		23.04
31	42	7	9,114		21.94
31	44	7	9,548		20.94

Having determined the layout of the page, the next thing that the printer had to do was cast off copy, not to determine the organization of work, but to confirm that the estimate was accurate. As McKenzie has remarked:

> We must recall too that neither Moxon, Stower, nor any other early grammar mentions casting off as a means of enabling work to be set by formes. In every case it is . . . a device for costing, and for determining the paper required, not for organizing work.[62]

There are 27 examples of manuscript cast-off copy that survive from before 1640, and 100 in all that survive before 1700.[63] Perhaps the most famous of these is the copy for Book V of Richard Hooker's *Ecclesiasticall Politie* from 1597.[64] Just as with these known examples, the printer (or overseer) would have gone through the manuscript counting the

---

[62] McKenzie, 'Printers of the Mind', 46.

[63] J. K. Moore, *Primary Materials Relating to Copy and Print in English Books of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Oxford, 1992: OBS 24), 11–30.

[64] See, P. Simpson, *Proof-Reading in the Sixteenth, Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Oxford, 1935), 76–9; W. S. Hill et al. (eds.). *The Folger Library Edition of the Workes of Richard Hooker* (Cambridge MA and Binghamton NY, 1977–93), I, xiii–xxii, xxix–xxxviii, 359–72 and II, xiii–xliii.

words, averaging the number of words per line, with part lines allowed at the ends of paragraphs until 37 lines of the page had been counted out. The text would then be marked with a closing square parenthesis] and the next signature was written in the margin to indicate where one page ended and the new began. The process was then begun over again until all the text was so divided up. With verse, matters were simpler, as the printer only had to count the number of lines; and with regular stanzas, estimation might be done simply by counting them out.

Let us assume that the printer decided that the text should be set to a measure of 40 ens, a depth of 37 lines, and that the type size was pica roman. The estimate, that the text of the book will occupy 17 sheets, had been confirmed by the casting off. Having made these calculations, the printer allowed a sheet for the preliminaries (title-page, dedication, preface, and associated verse). At this point, the publisher and printer knew that the retail price of the book, at 1/2*d* a sheet stab-stitched but not bound, was 9*d*.[65] If a publisher was supplying the paper, as would normally be the case, the printer had only to estimate the production cost and the time until delivery. If the printer was publishing on his own account, then he had to factor in both printing costs and paper to calculate the break-even point. That subject, the economics of book production, will be resumed in a later chapter.

Once a manuscript had been cast off, any page could, theoretically, be set in any order, and copy could be divided between compositors, or printing-houses. Each page and forme could be set as a self-contained unit without having to set the pages in between: thus pages 1, 4–5, and 8 (the outer forme of a quarto) were typically set first and, once they had been corrected, were printed while pages 2–3 and 6–7 (the inner forme) were set next. Any slight errors in calculation that were not resolved by the division of paragraphs could be fixed during composition by the adjustment of spacing between words. If the text did not fit an exact number of sheets, the final page or leaf might be blank, or used for an errata list if this was not set along with the preliminaries.

Typography, Layout, and Impression

Both Moxon and Gaskell have described the work of compositors and pressmen.[66] Rather than reiterate their focus on processes and

---

[65] See, F. R. Johnson, 'Notes on English Retail Book-Prices, 1550–1640', *The Library*, V: 5 (1950), 83–112; D. J. McKitterick, "Ovid with a Littleton': The Cost of English Books in the Early Seventeenth Century', *TCBS*, XI: 2 (1997), 184–234.
[66] Gaskell, *New Introduction*, 5–141; Moxon, *Mechanick Exercises*, 191–311.

materials, what follows is concerned with how those means were used to achieve specific ends. In particular, Moxon made a number of comments about best practice, such as even setting, and the avoidance of what the trade called 'pigeon holes', that is the excessive spacing between words, and similarly of vertical rivers of space that open up like an internal fracture within a paragraph: tight composition, so long as legibility and word separation were preserved, was encouraged. 'A Good *Compositer*', noted Moxon, 'is ambitious . . . to make the meaning of his *Author* intelligent to the *Reader*, as to make his Work shew graceful to the Eye, and pleasant in Reading'.[67]

To begin with, the appearance of the page was defined by the size (both height and width) of the face chosen for composition, the choice of format, and the width of the measure. Hence, once a book had been cast off, and the compositor had been told what type was to be used and the proportions of the page, work could commence. For a 37-line, 40-en page, the compositor would take a piece of reglet 40 ens long, or five 4–em quads, and place these in a brass composing stick that was fixed on the right and movable on the left (the stick was held in the left hand). The left gauge was then locked into position so that all lines of type would be exactly the same length. The type was set upside down, left to right, so that if one could imagine it flipped through its vertical axis and the paper below the type, the text would then appear as it ought.

The compositor worked from a pair of type cases placed one above the other. The upper case contained the less used sorts such as capitals, small capitals, and numerals. The size of the compartments for each sort (letter or number) was the same. The lower case was different, as the most commonly used letters had larger compartments in the middle of the case: *a*, *e*, *n*, and *d* being in immediate proximity. The compositor memorized the layout of this case and relied as much on tactile sense as visual confirmation that each letter was in the correct compartment, as different letters are of different width.

The formal requirements of the measure, in turn, influenced the spacing used for justification and the layout of the page. When setting, a compositor started with mids (there are two mids to an en, or one thick and one thin to an en), and then adjusted the spaces as required once the line was complete. If a line was slightly too long, the compositor would look for combinations such as 'say once' to replace the mid with a thin between the words; if the line was too short, the spacing was selectively increased by changing mids to thicks where this would be less noticeable.

---

[67] Moxon, *Mechanick Exercises*, 207–11.

Owing to the flexibility of early modern spelling, a compositor might also change such words as 'easy' to 'easie', or '(s)he' to '(s)hee'. In this way, the more obvious pigeon holes could be avoided. If an initial letter was required, either the ornament or a wooden block of the same size was first put in place, and then composition proceeded as usual. After every six-to-eight lines, the text that had been set would be transferred to a galley.

The rigid structure of the page, and the consistency of letterforms introduced a precise and ordered structure to the printed book; whereas, with manuscript, variation was inevitable, even when professional scribes had to write to strict requirements, and they were skilled at adapting their hand to the nature of the text being prepared. The physical characteristics of type also introduced limitations as to what could be done with a text once it had been printed. With a written document, insertion, deletion, contraction, correction, and, to some extent, erasure are straightforward activities. Even for formal codices, uniformity was always more of an ideal than a practice: the written hand is always variable in its use. Further, in manuscript, space involves the absence of the writing instrument from the page. The reverse was true of print: space was a piece of solid type that had to be physically inserted into the line.

The appearance of a book was shaped not only by the design of the type, but by the characteristics of the hand-press. Once type had been transferred to a galley and locked within a forme, the maximum area that could be impressed upon a sheet of paper was not defined by the size of the sheet, but by the pressure that could be applied (in pounds per square inch) on the type, given the mechanism of the screw and the wooden structure of the press, which consequently limited the maximum size of the platen.[68] In practical terms, an area of little more than forty by thirty centimetres was printed at two pulls per forme including the inner margins between the pages of type; normal practice was less cramped, though it was theoretically possible to print up to an area of 49×39 cm.[69] The most common paper size for printing was pot (approximately 40×31 cm), with the maximum rarely exceeding crown (45×35 cm).

It is that consciousness about the visual construction of typography (the way in which a text is filled out and pieced together, rather than filled in) that separates the visual aesthetics of the written and printed word. The principal advantages of type (its legibility, regularity, and re-usability) exposed its inflexibility in other ways. Hence, print developed a new diversity of presentation as compositors manipulated the visual and spatial structure within which they had to work. Typography evolved in

---

[68] G. Pollard, 'Notes on the Size of the Sheet', *The Library*, IV: 22 (1941), 130–4.
[69] Gaskell, *New Introduction*, 120–4.

response to both the visual appearance of the text and the meaning and purposes to which it would be put. Even the disposition of margins defined the uses of space within and around the text.[70]

To be sure, many early modern books were printed within what, on reflection, are well-established conventions, and these are formats and layouts that must have seemed instinctive to members of the trade. There is no manual of the age that says that a book of godly devotion has to be set in octavo or duo-decimo, or a play in quarto. The trade understood, in ways that now need greater explication, that certain books suited certain formats, and that the more important books might be printed in typesizes and formats that were a size larger than standard practices. At one level, a printer was always aware that a book had to be adaptable and stable in its binding: physical considerations of malleability and structure were primary when considering the object in hand. The specific market for a book, or pamphlet, might equally shape trade attitudes as to the care with which it was produced: a news pamphlet with a lifespan of a week would be treated with less attention to specific detail than the work of an important public figure whose book reflected on the publisher and the trade: it is important for students of literature to realize that c.1600 Shakespeare was not amongst the latter category.[71]

The way in which reception and use shaped format and presentation can be shown by the way in which a text might evolve through informal and formal manuscripts and then to print. The poems of Donne offer one obvious example: they circulated in separates and booklets, and were then copied individually, or in small groups, in commonplace books; or else they might be transcribed as a whole for personal collections. Some of the collections, such as the Dowden and Leconsfield manuscripts, were carefully prepared on special paper.[72] The 1633 *Poems*, on the other hand, is a standard trade publication intended for the mass market, printed as a pot quarto and set in english roman. The book had shifted from being a personal and, in the case of the Dowden or Leconsfield manuscripts, luxurious object, to a mass-produced public possession. The history of the manuscript and print traditions of Donne's poems demonstrate, as well, the way in which the two media were interrelated. Throughout the seventeenth-century, scriptoria existed in competition with the press, particularly for small-scale production and special needs.[73] Just as Henry

---

[70] A. W. Pollard, 'Margins', *The Dolphin*, 1 (1933), 67–80.
[71] See, Bland, 'The London Book-Trade in 1600', 450–63.
[72] Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Poet. e.99, and Cambridge University, Add MS. 8467. See also, P. Beal, *Index of English Literary Manuscripts: Volume I, 1450–1625*, I, 243–564 and 566–8.
[73] See, H. Love, *Scribal Publication in Seventeenth-Century England*, 126–34.

Olney offered the editorial integrity of his perfect copy as the prime reason for having the *Essayes* of Sir William Cornwallis printed, so Donne used the scribal medium as a means for publishing his poems.[74]

If the link between manuscript and print is one way of understanding the evolution of a text through the media of production, then another is to consider the changes from edition to edition. Camden's *Britannia*, for instance, was regularly revised and enlarged by the author. The first edition (STC 4503) was entered in the Stationers' Register on 23 February 1586. Letters from that time indicate both Camden's anticipation of the book going to press and his frustration at the quality of the typography.[75] Printed by the Eliot's Court Press, it was a 35½-sheet pot octavo set in long primer roman to a measure of 36 ens and a depth of 40 lines.

Camden continued to work on *Britannia* throughout the following 24 years. The second edition of 1587 (STC 4504) was a 43-sheet pot octavo printed once more in long primer roman. By the third edition of 1590 (STC 4505), the book had expanded to a 50-sheet demy octavo, and the typesize was increased to pica roman. The format was unusual but, compared to the width and page-depth of a pica pot quarto, halved the paper required, though demy was more expensive than pot. A German edition was also printed during 1590. The next revision of 1594 (STC 4506) was a 94½-sheet pot quarto in eights. A sixth edition (STC 4507) was published in 1600 as a 114-sheet pot quarto in eights. Both these editions were again set in pica roman. The final Latin edition of 1607 (STC 4508) took this gradual enlargement to its logical conclusion. The book is a 233½-sheet crown folio, with large paper copies printed on demy, set in english roman to a measure of 70 ens and a depth of 55 lines.

The evolution of the *Britannia* through its various formats and types reflects both the labour of the author and the transformation of the book into a classic of its age. Between 1586 and 1607, the text became nearly four and a half times longer and used more than six and a half times as much paper, the type had increased in size by a third, and Camden had quoted as evidence more than eight times as many inscriptions. Similarly the cost had risen from 2*s*6*d* in 1586, to 5*s* in 1594, whilst the edition of 1607 could scarcely have cost less than £1.[76]

---

[74] Olney claimed that 'hauing in my hands a perfect Copy', he was obliged to see them through the press, as the *Essayes* 'might haue beene by a mercenary hand fowly corrupted and altered in sence, and both in his absence and mine, deliuered to some Printer, who to make present gaine, would haue published them vnpolished, and deformed without any correction': W. Cornwallis, *Essayes* (STC 5775, 1600), A2ʳ⁻ᵛ.

[75] Camden to Jacob Ortelius, 3 February 1586 and undated, MS Smith 74, ff.2–3; see also, Bland, 'The Appearance of the Text', 104.

[76] F. R. Johnson, 'Notes on English Retail Book-prices, 1550–1640', 98.

The skill of the compositor lay not with the accuracy of the text alone, but with even spacing, the selection of appropriate types as well as avoidance of damaged sorts, the avoidance of loose setting that might cause type to drop from the register, and the judicious use of ornament. In particular, a decorative piece of printer's material could be employed to complement the literal concerns of the text whilst, at the same time, helping to stabilize the structure of a page that was only partially set with type. Devices, title-page borders, headpieces, type ornaments, factotums, ornamental initials, rules, and tailpieces were the stock items of decorative material, and were commonly employed with a sense of appropriateness. A well-chosen ornament reflected a degree of elegance and judicious taste on the part of the trade.

In the same way as a compositor wished to make the page pleasing to the eye, so the pressman was concerned to make a fair impression: that is to ensure that a page was evenly and well inked, that the type bit into the paper, and that the alignment of the page was square and consistent on both sides. Loose type might need to be rectified during the run, as the pressure of the platen could cause type to drop or spread. Care was taken to avoid ink in the wrong places (though sometimes a thumbprint might have left its record in the margin). When a printed sheet left a pressman's hands it was as yet untrimmed, with its full margins and deckle edge. Slightly imperfect sheets, and those printed before any stop-press corrections had been introduced, were not discarded but used like any other. Hence, whilst the workmen preferred to have made the proof and revises before printing began in earnest, this was not always possible as sometimes problems were noticed either by them or the author (or that person's representative), once printing had begun.

What the collation of multiple copies of the same book makes evident is that the concerns of compositors and pressmen were not those of a modern textual scholar. The accuracy of the text was not determined by a rigid adherence to the copy before them, but by the requirement that the final printed version could be read and understood: hence, matters of typography, layout, and register were their primary interest. Sometimes stop-press corrections involve nothing more than the adjustment of space, and more fuss could go into those details than ensuring that every last word and punctuation mark were as they ought to be. To the extent that contemporaries still regarded the printed book as a public reiteration of manuscript, what was wrong might easily, if so desired, be later corrected by a pen, as indeed many an author asked the readers to do in their errata.