

The Manuscript in the British American World of Print

DAVID S. SHIELDS

THE HISTORY of the manuscript in British America is a grab bag of archive accession reports, catalogue copy for the autograph trade, and bibliographical ruminations about the contents of various editions. No histories of the American manuscript as a medium of communication exist. No literary history of the colonial period provides a clear account of the role of circulating manuscripts and recited scripts in literary culture. No one has attempted even a preliminary account of manuscript production or reception. Recently people have realized that lack of this information prevents a full understanding of the uses of print in British America. The new historians of the book stimulated concern about the role of the manuscript in provincial cultures, particularly the American colonies. They did this by framing their investigation of print within a larger inquiry into the occasions and means of communication in a culture. As Michael Warner and David D. Hall have argued, the older histories of print granted the press and its products ontological status—*a priori* roles as ‘agents of change.’¹ This is what histories should have been proving

1. Warner's *Letters of the Republic* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990) is a pioneering attempt to construct a deontological history of the press in American culture. The Program in the History of the Book in American Culture at the American Antiquarian Society has been the central force in reconceptualizing the historiography of

This paper is an adaptation of a talk given before the planning conference for Volume 1 of the American Antiquarian Society's collaborative history of the book in America, held at the Society on September 18–19, 1992.

DAVID S. SHIELDS is associate professor of English at The Citadel.

Copyright © 1993 by American Antiquarian Society

instead of assuming. The new historians of the book regard imprints as media fulfilling already constituted tasks within cultures. This premise confronts historians with the questions, why print? why not some other means of communication? Because of the current concern among theorists of cultural studies with orality and the question whether there are such things as oral texts, the new historians of the book have drawn the demarcations between speech and print with some thoroughness.² Yet spoken communication was not 'the Other' for printed texts, but one of several possible options in getting a message across. Manuscript was another. Determining where and when manuscripts operated as preferred vehicles of written communication gives us a sharper sense of the conditions that prompted one to resort to the press. I offer a speculation about what might be encountered in an inquiry into the place of the manuscript in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century British American world of print.

Let me begin with the elementary points: before print there was writing; after printing there was writing. Printing depended on writing. Every new book, every original article in every newspaper or magazine, every law, every first-run advertisement derived from manuscript copy. Spontaneous composition at the type case was an arcane skill; so much so that Benjamin Franklin late in life could recall his first boss in Philadelphia, Samuel Keimer, composing an elegy for Aquila Rose directly in lead.

Textual critics have always kept historians of the book aware of the author's 'fair copy' manuscript, that prototype transmuted into the printer's myriad imperfect impressions.³ Yet the authority

print in America. These initiatives have been greatly encouraged by the work of its chairman, David D. Hall.

2. Richard D. Brown's *Knowledge is Power: the Diffusion of Information in Early America, 1700-1865* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989) is the most influential recent study upon this issue.

3. Manuscript's role in editorial theory has been developed more out of the findings of medieval codicology than the tradition of textual criticism running from Fredson Bowers to Jerome McGann. For an introduction to the current state of editorial theory regarding manuscripts, see Paul Delbouille, 'L'Établissement du texte,' in Maurice Delcroix and Fernand Hallyn, eds., *Méthodes du texte: Introduction aux études littéraires* (Paris: Duculot,

of manuscript in the printing shop was not limited to fair copy. An author's intentions were indicated by any mark in his or her own hand—as holograph text, or marginal corrections on the proofs, or handwritten alterations of a printed text. An author's responsibility reposed in his or her hand. In cases of libel, if the fair copy of an imprint survived and the hand of the author was recognized in court, then the author was as vulnerable as if he or she had signed the text.⁴ Because fair copy manuscripts had a way of being consumed by bookmaking, and because they were rendered redundant by the finished books, few survive from the provincial era. Their scarcity has resulted in an underappreciation of the extent to which handwriting surrounded a book in a printing shop.

Then, too, the attentions of historians of the book have fixed on another sort of printing office manuscript, the business ledger. The ledger is a fascinating document, providing a privy glimpse of the printer's trade, hinting even at the reception of various of the imprints. Yet we should notice the window as well as the view. We should see the ledger itself and be reminded that, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the day-to-day recordkeeping of private businesses and public institutions was conducted in manuscript: business accounts, daybooks, letterbooks, church rec-

1987); also, John Whittaker, 'The Practice of Manuscript Collation,' *Text: Transactions of the Society for Textual Scholarship*, 5 (1991): 121–30. Of contemporary theoretical treatments, two command notice: David F. Hult, 'Reading It Right: The Ideology of Text Editing,' *Romanic Review*, 79, 1 (Jan. 1988): 74–88; Louis Hay, 'L'Écrit et l'imprime,' *De la lettre au manuscrit: Sémiotique des manuscrits littéraires*, ed. Louis Hay (Paris: Centre Nationale de la Recherche Scientifique, 1989).

4. The destruction of incriminating manuscripts by printers took place as a matter of course during the eighteenth century. Nevertheless, the authorities routinely searched for such evidence in the major press suppressions: the James Franklin arrest, the Zenger affair, and the *Monster of Monsters* prosecution. Lacking evidence of authorial identity, the authorities would arrest printers. The noteworthy political libel case involving handwriting occurred in New York in the aftermath of the Zenger prosecution. Francis Harison, the chief polemicist for Gov. Cosby and the court faction, was arrested for an incriminating letter. 'From the neglect to disguise the hand, which Mr. Smith, Mr. Hamilton, Mr. Lurting the Mayor, all pronounced to be Mr. Harison's, it was conjectured that his design was to provoke a criminal prosecution, establish the precedent of convicting on the proof of a similitude of hands, and then, by counterfeiting the writing of one of the demagogues of the day, to bring him to the gallows, while the Governor's friends were to escape by pardon.' William Smith, Jr., *The History of the Province of New-York*, 2 vols., ed. Michael Kammen (Cambridge, Mass., 1972), 2:8–11.

ords, government proceedings, and court findings were all kept by hand according to conventionalized, in some cases legally stipulated, formats.⁵ Some forms of records were ancient—charters, deeds, oaths; some were modern—receipts, daybook entries, institutional proceedings. From the bookkeeping revolution of the fifteenth century well into the seventeenth century, the scope and orderliness of recorded information in the West increased markedly. In England, the emphasis on efficient recordkeeping during the seventeenth century led to a series of innovations in handwriting (the ‘science of chirography’). Secretary’s hand was simplified into cursive script, tachygraphy and other shorthand systems were created, and secret scripts proliferated.⁶ Throughout the West, the period that saw the efflorescence of print also saw the flourishing of manuscript.

What explains the proliferation of manuscripts? One can ‘round up the usual suspects’: the growth of schools, the spread of banking, the rise of literacy. One point deserves elaboration: the Reformation sparked the growth of schools in Protestant countries, and schools taught literacy so that persons might know God’s saving word. Young men were sent to the local grammar master to learn to read and write, to read printed books—The Book—and write manuscripts. Only the ability to read was needed for salvation; writing was an ancillary skill. One of the powerful points made by

5. Perhaps the oddest colonial recognition of the legalism of manuscript recordkeeping may be found in the conduct of gentlemen’s clubs. A favorite pastime was to try members for violating secretarial protocols. The Homony Club of Annapolis, for instance, made mock trials for secretarial malfeasance the most common social entertainment during the early 1770s. The Homony Club Record Book. Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Also, Homony Club Loose Papers. Gilmor Collection. Maryland Historical Society.

6. Gustavus Selenus, *A Complete System of Cryptography*, trans. John Henry Walden (London, 1624); John Wilkins, *Mercury: or, The Secret Messenger* [London, 1641]; Francis Goodwin, *Nuncius Inanimatus* [London, 1639?]; Thomas Shelton, *A Tutor to Tachygraphy, or, Short-Writing* [London, n.d.]; William Addy, *Stenographia or the Art of Short-Writing* (London, [1690]). The academic paleographical literature is extensive, as is the more recent historical corpus concerning the experiments in creating ‘universal character,’ writing that figured ideas rather than signified the acoustics of particular languages. Unexamined are the semiotics of manuscripts using several writing systems. What, for instance, does one make of Michael Wigglesworth’s diary that records the confessions of sin in shorthand while noting resolves and meditations in script? Do the various scripts correspond to regions of the spiritual interior?

feminist historians of literacy is that female literacy in the provincial era was often limited to an ability to read; home-taught girls were oftentimes not taught to write.⁷ Two of the points of distinction recommending Sarah Kemble Knight as a schoolmistress in 1690s Boston were that she had professional experience as a scrivener and that she taught writing.

An ability to write implied personal worth. It suggested that one possessed messages deserving communication, business worth memorialization, and thoughts worthy of preservation. Reformed Christianity's reevaluation of the individual operated as one efficient cause of the proliferation of manuscripts.

The Puritan journal of spiritual self-examination was the paradigmatic manuscript projecting personal worth. It was the book of one's own soul, testifying that one's heart registered the world's most meaningful struggle, the war between divine grace and sin. The Puritan journal was a modern form. It was devised in the 1580s by members of the classes of East Anglia as an experiment in piety.⁸ From this network of ministerial practitioners, journal-keeping spread through conventicles as one of the extraordinary practices of piety helpful in the work of sanctification. Every known first-generation journal writer in Massachusetts, for instance, had a personal connection with someone in the original classes. My historical point: social institutions developed the new manuscript forms of recordkeeping—even that most private form of record, the tally of one's own sins. These institutions first sponsored the spread of those forms. My second point: print invariably usurped the educative function of these institutions at some point after the creation of a new manuscript form. The conventicle lost its monopoly on instruction when Henry Scudder published *A Christians Daily Walke* (London, 1633) and John Beedle exemplified *The*

7. E. Jennifer Monaghan, 'Literacy Instruction and Gender in Colonial New England,' *American Quarterly*, 40 (March 1988): 18-41.

8. David S. Shields, 'The Journal of Spiritual Self-Examination,' *A History of Personal Diary Writing in New England 1620-1745*, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Chicago, 1982, pp. 69-84.

Diary of a Thankful Christian (London, 1656).⁹ One no longer had to enroll in the writing master's school when William Bradford's *The Secretary's Guide* showed how to form the characters of a clear, cursive hand and Edward Cocker's *Arithmetic* showed one how to cipher. Nor did one have to article oneself to a bank in order to learn the methods of double-entry bookkeeping. Books drove the spread of various sorts of manuscript writing.

I am not proposing a simple dialectic here, with print animating spread of manuscripts, and manuscripts enabling the spread of print. The relationship was more complicated. It was most complicated in the institution that had more to do with books than any other in British America, the college. Much has been made, particularly by Walter Ong, of the interpenetration of speech and print in the communication of the early modern colleges.¹⁰ One learned by lectures and by reading. The purpose of the lectures and readings was to refine a student's skill in forensics. Graduation was marked by a demonstration of the students' rhetorical skills when theses were debated at commencement. Because one's learning was manifested in speaking rather than in writing, the body of information one had confronted in the lecture hall and in texts had to be digested to an aphoristic minimum, so it might be quoted as 'copia' in one's rhetorical performance.¹¹ Outlining, note-taking, and commonplacing were the techniques by which students transmuted the body of received knowledge—i.e., the library, school texts, and the content of their masters' lectures—into usable form.

9. Determining the reception of these works is a difficult matter. Perhaps other guides to practical Christianity were responsible for the dissemination of diary writing—Thomas Hooker's *The Christians Two Chiefe Lessons, viz. Selfe-Denial and Selfe-Tryall* (London, 1640), for instance. John Corbet, *Self-Employment in Secret* (Cambridge, Mass., 1684 reprint of 1681 London ed.) was the major American imprint dealing with diary writing and other closet devotions. Henry Scudder's *The Christians daily Walke with God*, because of its introduction by John Davenport, was known and well regarded. It was not reprinted in British America. Cotton Mather, however, cannibalized it in *Bonifacius*. Mather's *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1703) published portions of the journals of Jonathan Mitchel, Thomas Shepard, Nathaniel Mather, and John Bailly.

10. Walter J. Ong, *Ramus, Method and the Decay of Dialogue* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958).

11. John D. Shaefter, *Sensus Communis: Vico, Rhetoric, and the Limits of Relativism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), pp. 28–34.

(And for much of the seventeenth century access to the library was limited to select Harvard seniors.¹²) A good number of the student study aids have survived from Harvard, William and Mary, and Yale. The earliest Harvard materials include Abraham Pierson's lecture notes, the notebooks of Samuel Shepard and William Patridge, and commonplace books by Solomon Stoddard, John Leverett, John Holyoke, and John Hancock. The commonplace book had a dual function: on one hand it stood as a substitute library, epitomizing literature into its pithiest sentences all conveniently arranged by topic, on the other hand the act of writing *sententiae* helped fix them in memory.

Note-taking insured an important point wouldn't be forgotten, both by preserving it in the more perfect memory of writing, and by investing special attention on it by the act of writing. In any circumstance where a body of information had to be inscribed on the tablets of one's heart, note-taking was resorted to. Notes are an index to the matters deemed valuable by writers, too valuable to be entrusted to mere human memory. The importance of sermons, political debates, business negotiations, public meetings were attested by the memoranda they generated.¹³ Though the often modest appearance of the notes—the slapdash abbreviated script, the scraps of paper—suggests casualness, in truth they constitute the surest register of the interests of their writers.

More elaborate than commonplaces and notes were transcripts. Because of the scarcity of books in British America until well into the eighteenth century, persons often borrowed volumes and copied passages into manuscript. Transcripts from medical books are perhaps the most common such manuscripts. Laws run a close second.¹⁴ Literature had its devotees too. The Essex Institute

12. Norman Fiering, *Moral Philosophy at Seventeenth-Century Harvard: A Discipline in Transition* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1981), pp. 64–66.

13. The surviving body of sermon notes in particular testifies to the importance of the practice. As Thomas Shepard II counseled Thomas Shepard III, 'Neglect not to write after the preacher always in ha[n]dsom books, and be careful always to preserve and peruse the same.' Cotton Mather, *Magnalia*, 2:82.

14. This is an unscientific observation based on a decade's experience examining manu-

possesses a handwritten copy of Philip Pain's *Daily Meditations* of 1668 so painstaking that the spatial disposition of the printed title page is imitated in the manuscript copy. Someone liked that work a great deal.

After the consolidation of the gazettes and magazines during the eighteenth century, persons with belletristic inclinations would transcribe selected verse and essays from the prints. These collections resembled the published miscellanies in form, but differed in that they expressed the taste of the compiler. When one chose a piece and then copied it by hand for a collection, one exerted a proprietary claim over a writing, indicating 'this is for me.' What is interesting is the number of such collections that mix works from periodicals and from the networks of manuscript distribution. Nathan Fiske's notebook at the American Antiquarian Society is a case in point.¹⁵ The principles of selection implicit in the collections tell a great deal about the history of taste and the development of provincial aesthetic concerns. A revolution in self-understanding stands between the transcript book of Rev. William Becket, the Church of England minister at Lewes Town, who during the 1720s cherished the metropolitan wit of Pope and Swift, and Thomas Pemberton, who at the end of the century wished to chronicle the genius of Massachusetts, preserving any poem he could find by native authors.¹⁶

Then, of course, manuscripts circulated in British America when and where there was no local press. Prior to 1751 in Nova Scotia, 1709 in Connecticut, 1756 in New Hampshire, 1693 in New York, 1751 in New Jersey, 1761 in Delaware (the lower counties), 1726 in Maryland, 1729 in Virginia, 1755 in North Carolina, 1730 in South Carolina, 1762 in Georgia, 1730 in Jamaica, 1730 in Barbados, 1746 in St. Kitts, and 1748 in Antigua manuscript was

script collections. The incidence may only reflect the survivability of such texts. Other transcript forms—student exercises, recipes, geographical notices—were more perishable.

15. Nathan Fiske Notebook, [1750s–1780s], American Antiquarian Society.

16. William Becket, 'Notices and Letters Concerning Incidents at Lewes Town 1727–1744,' Manuscript Am .0165. Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Thomas Pemberton. Poetry Collection. Massachusetts Historical Society.

the dominant mode of written communication for matters public and private. The situation is epitomized by an entry in the journal of public affairs kept by William Stephens, resident secretary for the Trustees of Georgia. In his memorandum for July 8, 1738, Stephens remarks upon the successful prosecution of a junto of malcontents who posted handwritten satires of Oglethorpe at a Savannah tipling house.¹⁷ Stephens arranged for transcripts of the libels and the court proceedings to be shipped to London along with his manuscript journal. One event—three layers of manuscript commentary.

When the printing press came to a provincial metropolis, it often seemed a tool of the ruling oligarchy in the eyes of outlanders and political outsiders. Manuscript in these circumstances could symbolize a deprivation of the advantages of urbane society. During the 1760s, the Regulators of the Piedmont Carolinas raised a vigilante army and demanded under the threat of force that the coastal oligarchy extend the institutions of civility—courts, chartered markets, churches—into the back country. The ample Regulator literature—songs, sermons, remonstrances, satires, petitions—circulated almost entirely in manuscript.¹⁸

Then, too, when groups who had access to the press wished to convey the impression that governmental tyranny was depriving them of their liberty, they resorted to manuscript distribution of tracts and satires. Posted on the town pump, on the lintel of the market, in the common room of taverns, or even on the door of the state house, manuscripts garnered as broad an urban readership as any printed text.¹⁹ One did not have to pay to read. And

17. William Stephens, *A Journal of the Proceedings in Georgia, Beginning October 20, 1737* (London: Meadows, 1742). The manuscript of the journal was dispatched to the Georgia Trustees in sections. The material from 1737 through October 1740 was published in two volumes. The material after 1740 remained in manuscript.

18. Charles Woodmason, *The Carolina Backcountry on the Eve of the Revolution*, ed. Richard J. Hooker (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1953). William Stevens Powell, *The Regulators in North Carolina, A Documentary History* (Raleigh: State Department of Archives and History, 1971).

19. The most extraordinary British American collection of pump verses and pasquinades is found in the loose pages of the diary of Benjamin Walker of Boston. 4 vols. Massachusetts Historical Society. The material collected dates from the 1710s to the 1740s.

the manuscript had magnetic power, since its method of distribution suggested that the contents contained truths too dangerous to be printed. This aura of dangerous privy intelligence was a legacy of the Whig manuscript distribution schemes of the 1680s in England. During the Stuart reaction to the Rye House Plot there was a royalist clampdown on the press (both Benjamin Harris and Richard Steere left London for New England because of this clampdown). The Whigs responded by setting up scriptoria and flooding the metropolis with handwritten ballads that added the allure of the forbidden to the energy of the controversial.²⁰ During the colonial disturbances connected with the Glorious Revolution, public incitement by manuscript came into its own. Col. Benjamin Fletcher's cabal in New York City and the Old Charter faction in Massachusetts circulated manuscripts around the cities.²¹ Yet for historians of the book the most interesting manuscript campaign was that conducted by James Alexander and Lewis Morris as the final fusillade of the Zenger affair. After Governor William Cosby's minions burnt the gazettes and two ballads at the public gibbet, the river party flooded New York City with manuscript songs attacking Governor Cosby.²² Five survive in various versions. The manuscripts signified the closure of the press to truth.

Another manuscript circulating in the New York coffeehouses during the Zenger affair—one of the few manuscripts supporting Governor Cosby's side—supplied another reason for a writer avoiding print. Archibald Home's 'Memoirs of a Handspike' spoke of the press as an engine that spewed 'black putrid venom' until it was regarded as a 'common nuisance.'²³ Home was invoking the image of the press as agent of depravity, an image that had become

20. The products of the Whig scriptoria are printed and discussed in the volumes of *Poems on the Affairs of State: Augustan Satirical Verse 1660-1714*, 8 vols., ed. George deF. Lord (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963-75).

21. David S. Shields, *Oracles of Empire; Poetry, Politics, and Commerce in British America, 1690-1750* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), pp. 110-11, 139-41.

22. Miscellaneous Papers, Songs (Cosby 19, 20, 21, 22, 23.) New York Public Library.

23. Archibald Home, 'Poems on Several Occasions By Archibald Home. Esqr. late Secretary, and One of His Majesty's Council for the Province of New Jersey: North America,' Laing Manuscripts, III, 452, University of Edinburgh Library.

commonplace in the metropolis after the rise of Grub Street in the 1690s. A popular print of the 1710s entitled 'The Mystery of Printing' shows the interior of a printing office filled with the drying sheets of *Onania*, Rochester's poems, John Toland's works, and *Aristotle's Masterpiece*. Behind the press a two-faced printer stands.²⁴ One face grins lewdly; the other gazes out with the grave sobriety of the guardian of learning. Well before Benjamin Franklin adopted the persona of 'Old Janus' when he took control of the *New England Courant*, the duplicities of printers and printing had become commonplace. Persons who identified with the developing ethic of politeness often entertained trepidations about resorting to the press. Even after Addison and Steele's much vaunted injection of manners into print during the 1710s, the onus attached to print had not entirely dissipated, particularly in the provinces.

One of the important revisions in English literary historiography of the past decade has been the realization of the centrality of manuscript circulation of literature during the seventeenth century. The work of Arthur Marotti and Jean Brink has revealed the extent to which the literary genres associated with the communications of the English court were conducted in writing.²⁵ The 'entre nous' exclusivity of the court was reinforced by the sense of intimacy arising from reading something in a person's own hand. When Edmund Waller imported belles lettres from France into the conversation of the English Court, he reinforced the preexisting preference for manuscript. Belles lettres, that literature designed for social pleasure rather than edification, memorialization, or attestation, made literature a sort of lubricant for the smooth working of sociability in the developing scenes of conversation. John Taylor, 'the water poet,' made it the lingua franca of the English spas. The Waller-quoting stage wits—Ethrege's Dori-

24. A copy is reprinted in Philip Pinkus, *Grub St. stripped bare* (Weston, Conn.: Archon books, 1968).

25. Arthur Marotti, *John Donne Coterie Poet* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986). Jean Brink, *Michael Drayton Revisited* (New York: Twayne, 1990).

mont and Congreve's *Mirabell*—imbued belles lettres with cachet in the city drawing rooms. Belles lettres flourished particularly as an adornment to the conversation of mixed sex company. Epigrams, impromptus, anecdotes, toasts, and other 'conversible forms of wit' were the favored forms exchanged at the city tea tables and the card tables at Bath, Epsom, and Islington Wells.

The first American belletrists were figures who partook of these conversations. Benjamin Colman of Boston traded verses with polite Christian ladies at Bath.²⁶ William Byrd made his name as a wit at Tunbridge Wells in 1700 with his complimentary poems and satires. Henry Brooke, who would introduce polite letters to Philadelphia, refined his skills as an extempore writer in the drawing rooms of London after graduating from Oxford in 1692.²⁷ Brooke's greatest admirer in Philadelphia, Elizabeth Magawley, also learned to write in London. In British America these persons sought to create enclaves of gentility. They took as their explicit task the refinement of the conversation and manners of specific companies of people. Brooke's 'A Rule for Conversation seriously recommended to a certain Club' and 'A Discours against Jestings' (1700s) are instructions in both pleasure and politeness.²⁸ If, as J.G.A. Pocock has argued, an amelioration of manners was mercantilism's payoff for a citizenry without direct access to power, then belles lettres was the discursive vehicle that worked to this refinement in the provinces.²⁹ It was the literary adjunct to consumerism. And while books of metropolitan wit might be imported as manuals of polite conversation, the local practitioners maintained a preference for manuscript communication even after newspapers began featuring poetic contributions in the 1720s and '30s. Archibald Home, the arch-poet of Trenton, the central figure in a coterie that included two Jews, two Women, a Huguenot

26. Several survive in the Benjamin Colman papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

27. David S. Shields, 'British American *Belles-Lettres*,' *Cambridge History of American Literature*, vol. 1, ed. Sacvan Bercovitch (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

28. Henry Brooke, *Commonplace Book*, Peters Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

29. J.G.A. Pocock, 'Virtues, rights, and manners,' *Virtue, Commerce, History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 49.

minister, Trenton's sheriff, and several provincial officers, chose to print only two verses during the course of his life. Upon his death in 1744 his circle prepared a manuscript collection of his poems that circulated in a number of copies. The calligraphy of the title, the organization of the contents by genre, the prefatory elegies, and the appendix of coterie verse attest to the high degree of finish of this work. Certain belletrists maintained personal collections of works in fair copy. Elizabeth Graeme Ferguson, the Pennsylvanian who gathered an extraordinary salon at Graeme Park outside Philadelphia during the 1760s, prepared as many as nine separate collections of her work. Robert Bolling prepared at least seven manuscripts of his writings, some of which were illustrated with pen-and-ink drawings. Annis Stockton prepared four collections of her writings.³⁰ We know of other belletrists whose works once existed in collected form, but now survive only piecemeal: William Packrow of Charleston, Susanna Wright of Pennsylvania, Benjamin Waller of Williamsburg. Indeed, the first published posthumous collection of a British American poet's works, Aquila Rose's *Poems on Several Occasions* (1740), was prepared without the aid of the manuscript of his collected works, which had been lost during the sixteen-year interval between the poet's death and the printing of his works. All of these collections presented the author's work as part of a literary conversation. Nearly invariably, poems or prose vignettes by associated writers appear amidst the authors' works. Yet the manuscripts that most manifest the spirit of sociability animating belles lettres were club writings. The most elaborate of these, Alexander Hamilton's history of the Tuesday Club and the recordbook of the Homony Club, are among the few masterworks of early American litera-

30. Bolling's works remain uncollected. J. A. Leo Lemay, the authority on Bolling's life and literary works, details the surviving materials in the scholarly apparatus to *Robert Bolling Woos Anne Miller: Love and Courtship in Colonial Virginia, 1760* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1990). Susan Stabile, a graduate student at the University of Delaware, is currently preparing a study based on a comprehensive collection of the manuscripts of the Delaware Valley network of women poets: Elizabeth Graeme Ferguson, Susanna Wright, and Hannah Griffiths. Carla Mulford's edition of *The Poetry of Annis Boudinot Stockton* will be published by the New Jersey Historical Society in 1993.

ture.³¹ Hamilton's nearly 2,000-page mock history parodies world history in the transactions and squabbles of a company of Annapolis gentlemen. The parodic distance of the work depends upon the disparity of the candid conversation of private society and the discursive ceremonies of public, published declarations.

Habermas has traced the development of the bourgeois public sphere out of the private conversations of clubs, salons, and coffeehouses.³² Yet not all of the institutions that Shaftesbury termed 'private society' projected into the public realm. Some groups consciously maintained their distance from public spirit and *doxa*. By composing a vast ironic manuscript mocking politics, learning, and manners, Alexander Hamilton exploited the privacy of private society to nurture a *sensus communis*—a group consciousness—at odds with the empire and the republic of letters. Manuscript belles lettres possessed the insularity necessary to provide a haven for the pleasure of social free play. It was in the service of exclusive communications and privy pleasures that the manuscript would retain its greatest utility after the end of the provincial era. Secret manuscripts became invested with such peculiar authority that popular fiction seized upon the image of the clandestine writing as a favorite mask for its narrations.

31. Dr. Alexander Hamilton, *The History of the Ancient and Honorable Tuesday Club*, 3 vols., ed. Robert Micklus (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990).

32. Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989).

Copyright of Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society is the property of American Antiquarian Society and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.