

CHAPTER I

*The contexts and characteristics of
 manuscript circulation*

The Renaissance married strong continuity with technical innovation in transmitting its texts in writing. In the 1460s, printing with moveable metal type was introduced into Italy from Germany but, while the spread of the new art in the following decades certainly transformed the ways in which some works were circulated, it did not take over all the functions of the quill pen. As was natural, handwriting retained its importance in sending short texts such as letters or compositions that were related to specific occasions and destined to be read by no more than a few people. Yet manuscript transmission in the late Quattrocento and Cinquecento was not restricted to purposes such as these. It continued to flourish in some other contexts, often valued for the characteristics that differentiated it from print. Some authors wanted at least some of their major works to be read in manuscript; a few even showed a marked aversion to the idea of having works printed, while allowing them to be copied by hand. Readers would still have expected to receive many works in handwritten form and to play their own part in the further scribal circulation of these works.

The next chapter will show that plenty of copyists were available, throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, to assist authors and readers in the process of diffusion, and Chapters 3 and 4 will look in more detail at specific genres that lent themselves particularly well to the use of manuscript. But before going further, we need some introductory explanation for the persistence of scribal circulation in Renaissance Italy alongside, but at times in preference to, a culture based on print, and we need a general outline of the roles that were played in its operation by authors and readers, both as individuals and within social groupings.

I THE FUNCTIONS OF MANUSCRIPT CIRCULATION
 AND THE DRAWBACKS OF PRINT

A fundamental quality of manuscript circulation was that it created and fostered a sense of close communication and solidarity among those with

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-88847-9 - Manuscript Culture in Renaissance Italy

Brian Richardson

Excerpt

[More information](#)

similar interests and tastes. As Harold Love put it in his ground-breaking study of the phenomenon in seventeenth-century England, 'scribal publication served to define communities of the like-minded'.¹ To send a text that was written out by hand, perhaps in a one-off copy made by oneself or on one's behalf by a scribe who would often have to be paid for this service, already indicated a special appreciation of those being addressed, and it also allowed one to be quite specific about one's intended first reader or set of readers. Authors, as will be seen, could in this way explicitly try to control the extent to which a work was allowed to circulate. Even if they did not do so, receiving and owning material that was not widely available conferred on the select reader a sense of privilege and exclusiveness, sometimes of intimacy. This sense became more acute in an age when printed books were being produced in editions of hundreds or even a few thousands and were available, more cheaply than manuscripts, to anyone who could afford them. Just as scribal circulation excluded the many, so it was more strongly inclusive of the few who did have access to a text. In Love's words, it had the function of 'bonding groups of like-minded individuals into a community, sect or political faction, with the exchange of texts in manuscript serving to nourish a shared set of values and to enrich personal allegiances'.² This function worked right across the spectrum of social classes, but the exclusiveness of scribal culture meant that it continued to be appreciated especially in elite circles. The social status associated with some manuscript books is reflected in the number of contemporary portraits of females and males holding them when printed books could equally well have been used. Two examples are Andrea del Sarto's painting from the mid-1520s of a young woman with a Petrarch, now in the Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence, and Bronzino's portrait of Laura Battiferri (see Figure 1).³

Manuscript transmission was thus particularly well suited for use by those who wished to win favour in some way. They could provide a text initially for select readers even if it then became more widely available, thereby conferring a sense of privilege on the first recipients. If a reader

¹ Love, *The Culture and Commerce of Texts*, p. 33. In what follows I am much indebted to Love's book and to other excellent surveys of manuscript transmission, mainly concerning early modern England, especially Saunders, 'From manuscript to print'; Marotti, *Manuscript, Print, and the English Renaissance Lyric*; Woudhuysen, *Sir Philip Sidney*; Beal, *In Praise of Scribes*; Ezell, *Social Authorship and the Advent of Print*, pp. 21–44; Anon., 'In praise of manuscripts'; McKitterick, *Print, Manuscript and the Search for Order*; Bristol and Marotti, 'Introduction'; McKenzie, 'Speech – manuscript – print'. For Spain, see Bouza, *Corre manuscrito*. (Here and throughout, footnotes contain short references only; full details can be found in the Bibliography.)

² Love, *The Culture and Commerce of Texts*, p. 177. ³ For a survey, see Macola, *Sguardi e scritture*.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-88847-9 - Manuscript Culture in Renaissance Italy

Brian Richardson

Excerpt

[More information](#)1 *The functions of manuscript circulation*

3

was in a position of social power, he or she might expect to be given the honour of having first sight of an author's works. Federico Gonzaga, marquis of Mantua, wrote to Pietro Aretino in 1525 demanding to see his works before anyone else:

Ma recordative, che le cose vostre male se potriano tener ascose; et quando sono publicate per tutta Roma, et quasi per tutta Italia, non ce delectano tanto, non perché non siano quelle medesime quando sono publicate che prima, ma perché la novità commenda tutte le cose, et aggiunge precio alle cose preciose.⁴

(But remember that your writings would be hard to keep hidden; and when they are published throughout Rome, and almost throughout Italy, they do not give us such pleasure, not because they are not the same when they are published as before, but because novelty commends all things, and adds value to valuable things.)

When in 1573 Torquato Tasso sent a sonnet to Leonora d'Este, sister of the duke of Ferrara, he recalled 'ch'io le promisi di mandarle tutto ciò che mi venisse fatto di nuovo' (that I promised to send you everything new I happened to do).⁵

When an author's chosen first reader of a handwritten text was another writer, a bond of reciprocity between them could be forged in two ways. First, an author could request comments from the receiver and, if he or she wished, incorporate any suggested changes in the text before it circulated further. Sonnets, in particular, were often sent with invitations to propose improvements. This was often a matter of politeness or modesty, as when Veronica Gambara sent to Pietro Bembo, on 19 September 1536, a poem on the death of his partner Morosina: 'Ella si degnarà darmi aviso del ricever del sonetto, et correggerlo per sua cortesia' (Please let me know you have received the sonnet, and be kind enough to correct it). When Bembo replied on 16 October, he welcomed her sonnet but added: 'Quanto al correggerlo, che V. S. mi dice, Dio mi guardi di pensare a ciò' (As for correcting it, as you mention, God forbid me from thinking of it).⁶ But younger writers could gain much benefit from their interaction with more experienced poets, receiving suggestions for improvement or simply a confirmation that a poem could 'go forth'. Thus, for example, Bembo suggested corrections to three sonnets of Giovanni Della Casa in a letter to Carlo Gualteruzzi in about 1543; on the other hand, Torquato Tasso wrote to Angelo Grillo in 1585 to say that he had read Grillo's fine sonnet

⁴ Letter of 7 June 1525, in Baschet, 'Documents inédits', 127; Baschet's text has 'precise'.

⁵ T. Tasso, *Le lettere*, no. 16, 3 September [1573] (I, 47–8).

⁶ *Lettere da diversi re*, Book II, no. 22; Bembo, *Lettere*, no. 1,791 (III, 673–4). On Gambara's modest seeking of corrections, see too Dilemmi, '“Ne videatur strepere anser”', pp. 31–2.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-88847-9 - Manuscript Culture in Renaissance Italy

Brian Richardson

Excerpt

[More information](#)

‘e mi pare che possa uscire senza pericolo’ (and I think it can go out without danger).⁷ Second, receivers of handwritten works could respond to the gift by offering a work of their own. The phenomenon of reply poems will be considered in Chapter 3 Section 2.

The exclusiveness of scribal circulation and its relative freedom from control also made it appropriate for, among other works, those that were exploratory, confidential or outside the mainstream of received opinion. As has just been seen, an author might want to test the waters by seeking a few readers’ reactions or might feel that the work was not yet in its final state. A desire to maintain confidentiality may help to explain the use of manuscript for works on alchemy dedicated to Duke Cosimo I de’ Medici in Florence.⁸ Some scribal texts might be ‘ideologically charged’ or ‘oppositional’, in Love’s terms.⁹ In Chapters 3 and 4 we shall see instances of the manuscript dissemination of texts that were scurrilous, politically partisan, heretical or heterodox. In this respect, an additional, practical advantage of using manuscript was that it could help texts to remain ‘under the radar’, evading censorship or rebuke, when print was formally policed by the state and the church. Manuscripts were certainly subject to censorship, as recommended by the Jesuit writer Antonio Possevino and as advocated by the Inquisition, but there was no system to control their production.¹⁰

The circulation of freshly composed texts in one or a small number of manuscript copies was a speedy process. It could thus, in some circumstances, confer a sense of immediacy, of up-to-dateness – that ‘novità’ prized by Federico Gonzaga – with which print could not compete on equal terms.¹¹ Privileged readers eagerly awaited handwritten copies of the latest compositions, sometimes sending their requests to authors or to those in contact with them. Cosimo di Palla Rucellai and the scholar Pier Vettori, for instance, wrote from Florence around 1538–40 to ask, respectively, Benedetto Varchi in Padua and Mattio Franzesi in Rome for literary novelties (‘delle compositioni che escon fuora’, compositions being published, in Vettori’s words), in particular for verses by the fashionable Modenese writer Francesco Maria Molza. Varchi, too, did not

⁷ Bembo, *Lettere*, no. 2,385 (IV, 457–8); T. Tasso, *Le lettere*, no. 389, 14 June 1585 (II, 382–3). On the terminology of publication, see Section 3 below.

⁸ Perifano, *L’Alchimie à la cour*. On the scribal and printed circulation of such texts in the first half of the Cinquecento, see Thorndike, *A History*, V, 532–49; Perifano, ‘Giovanni Battista Nazari’, 241.

⁹ Love, *The Culture and Commerce of Texts*, pp. 177, 184–91.

¹⁰ L. Balsamo, *Antonio Possevino*, p. 68; Fragnito, *Proibito capire*, p. 42 n. 35 (‘libri et scritti’), p. 270 n. 29. On occult manuscripts, see Barbierato, *Nella stanza dei circoli*.

¹¹ Woudhuysen, *Sir Philip Sidney*, p. 14.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-88847-9 - Manuscript Culture in Renaissance Italy

Brian Richardson

Excerpt

[More information](#)1 *The functions of manuscript circulation*

5

wish to be the last to see Molza's mythological narrative poem *La ninfa tiberina*, completed in 1538.¹² The quality of freshness was especially valuable for occasional texts and in general for any composition relating to current affairs and topical issues. After an author had given a text out to its initial readers, he or she could follow this up by sending them revisions or variants in a subsequent letter. Poets, in particular, liked to do this with their sonnets. Thus in 1581 Torquato Tasso sent to Curzio Ardizio (a gentleman from Pesaro at the court of Mantua) a sonnet to be presented to the young Ranuccio Farnese, future duke of Parma, then sent the same sonnet with variants that Ardizio might choose to incorporate after consultation with others, reminded Ardizio that he could send this and two other sonnets to Ranuccio when he wished, and finally asked Ardizio to incorporate a revised first tercet, to copy the poem and send it to Ranuccio.¹³

When a text in manuscript was being presented to someone of high social status, who might also be the dedicatee, care was likely to be taken over the artefact itself, in order to enhance its aesthetic appeal, and also its material worth, though the latter was of course not supposed to be realizable by the recipient. The giving of manuscripts as gifts presented particularly good opportunities for producers of texts to strengthen their personal relationships with others and, through a process of self-fashioning, to influence the ways in which they and the works contained in their manuscripts were perceived by readers, especially by those subsets of the wider public to whom they would have first addressed their works: actual and potential patrons, their peer group, those with shared interests who were potential supporters of their cause. Such gifts would rarely be rejected, though a manuscript of verse by Antonio Brucioli was refused by Vittoria Farnese because of its heterodox content.¹⁴ As Chapter 2 Section 3 will show, the author might have the text written out by a professional scribe. The physical support might be more expensive than usual, larger-size paper (giving more spacious margins) or vellum; the text might be adorned with illuminations or other decorations (see Figures 5, 6, 8, 13); a fine binding could be commissioned. There was occasional straining after novel effects, such as text written in gold on black vellum in a context of mourning (a collection of verse written in memory of Orsino Lanfredini, killed in a brawl in 1488) and text written in silver and gold on purple

¹² Vianello, *Il letterato*, pp. 24–5, 28.

¹³ T. Tasso, *Le lettere*, nos. 173, 174, 178, 182, all from 1581 (I, 139–41, 144–9); *Le rime*, no. 812, pp. 806–7.

¹⁴ Barbieri, 'Tre schede', 717–19.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-88847-9 - Manuscript Culture in Renaissance Italy

Brian Richardson

Excerpt

[More information](#)

vellum.¹⁵ In presentation copies, the decorations might include – in an illuminated initial or in an independent illustration – an image of the author, reminding the recipient of the author's human existence. The author could be depicted presenting a copy of the work to a dedicatee who is sometimes enthroned on a raised dais; but members of a court can be represented as onlookers, so that this gift-giving is seen as a semi-public act, not just a transaction between two people (see Figure 13).¹⁶

Printed copies were of course also presented to individuals, and they too could be made unique through their decoration and binding; but an expensively produced manuscript would always be a more flattering gift. Where gift copies were concerned, the pen was still mightier than the press. Armando Petrucci has suggested that a product typical of the late Quattrocento and Cinquecento was the 'libro letterario manoscritto di lusso' (the de luxe literary manuscript book), often containing a contemporary text in the vernacular rather than in Latin, and serving as a dedication or gift copy. It is significant that these manuscripts were still commissioned, at what must have been considerable expense, precisely when the use of print was expanding and that, as Petrucci notes, they could be produced just before the first printed edition. Bembo, for instance, presented a manuscript copy, now lost, of his dialogue on the literary vernacular, the *Prose della volgar lingua*, to the dedicatee, Pope Clement VII, by 18 January 1525, only a few months before he had the work printed in Venice.¹⁷

Donors of works in manuscript would naturally hope to receive other gifts or favours in return. When Aretino sent to Duke Cosimo I de' Medici, soon after 8 November 1555, a sonnet on the recent death of the Milanese general Gian Giacomo dei Medici ('L'estinto Marignan Dio, de gli eroi'), he asked in his accompanying letter, with characteristic effrontery, for thirty scudi to pay his rent for six months.¹⁸ The attraction that might be exercised by possessing a unique copy of a new work by a renowned author was illustrated in an unusual way when in 1585 Torquato

¹⁵ BL, MS Add. 22805 (see Wardrop, *The Script*, pp. 37–8 and pl. 41 and Weiss, 'In obitu'); BAV, MS Vat. Lat. 10377 (Wardrop, *The Script*, pp. 43–4 and pl. 46).

¹⁶ Other examples include BAV, MS Vat. Lat. 227, Antonio da Rho presenting his *Dialogi in Lactantium* to Eugenius IV (M. Miglio, 'Dedicare al pontefice', p. 84, pl. 54); BNP, MS Lat. 4586, Gerolamo Mangiaria presenting a work to Galeazzo Maria Sforza (Lubkin, *A Renaissance Court*, after p. 213). See, too, Tarquini, *Simbologia del potere*.

¹⁷ Petrucci, 'Copisti e libri', pp. 516–25; Bembo, *Lettere*, no. 513 to Federico Fregoso, 18 January 1525 (II, 235–6). For examples of presentation manuscripts used by Italians in England, see Carlson, *English Humanist Books*, pp. 20–59.

¹⁸ Larivaille (ed.), *Lettere di, a, su Pietro Aretino*, pt I, no. 8 (p. 19).

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-88847-9 - Manuscript Culture in Renaissance Italy

Brian Richardson

Excerpt

[More information](#)1 *The functions of manuscript circulation*

7

Tasso offered to compose encomiastic sonnets in order to open doors for his nephew Antonino Sersale, who was trying to make a court career in Mantua: 'E se i miei sonetti posson giovarvi perc'abbiate da vestire, ne farò a chi vi pare' (and if my sonnets can help to get you clothes to wear, I will write some to whoever you wish).¹⁹

Dedication or presentation copies head the list in Petrucci's classification of the functions of early modern manuscripts and in that of Donatella Nebbiai. However, their analyses show that the typology of these manuscripts covered a wide range of both contents and material quality. For Petrucci, the manuscripts of continental western Europe in this period contain two further main categories of texts, each one corresponding to a more plainly produced artefact: works whose printing and sale were forbidden, and various types of works produced on the margins of official written culture, such as *commedia dell'arte* scenarios, collections of recipes or popular verse.²⁰ Some scenarios survive from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but only one collection was printed because their use was specialized and confidential.²¹ Although some culinary recipe books were of high quality, others were decidedly less so. Manuscripts of recipes for medicines, cosmetics and products used in domestic tasks were compiled for personal use.²² Another category of manuscript that had an everyday, practical function and thus tended to be produced more cheaply was schoolbooks.²³ Andrea da Barberino's prose romance *Le storie nerbonesi* was copied several times in Florence in the early sixteenth century by readers from different social classes.²⁴

The scribal medium had a flexibility that allowed those who commissioned manuscripts or who were involved in the transmission process to customize them according to their personal requirements. Wealthy families had texts for their private use – in particular, devotional texts such as Books of Hours – copied and decorated by fine scribes and illuminators.²⁵ Anyone transcribing a work or having it transcribed could

¹⁹ T. Tasso, *Le lettere*, no. 384, 6 June 1585 (II, 377–8).

²⁰ Petrucci, 'Introduzione', pp. xxxvii–xxxviii. Nebbiai, 'Per una valutazione', using a sample of 73 manuscripts, adds: manuscripts destined for printing; personal copies and writings destined for limited circles (including works on an Index of prohibited books); miscellanies; 'popular' works; monastic and religious works; and erudite works produced in academies.

²¹ Andrews, *Scripts and Scenarios*, pp. 195–6.

²² Laurioux, 'I libri di cucina' and Scully, *The Neapolitan Recipe Collection* (examples of manuscript cookbooks); Cavallo, 'Health, beauty and hygiene', pp. 175–6 (domestic recipe books).

²³ For Florence, see Black, *Humanism and Education*, pp. 386–425.

²⁴ Allaire, *Andrea da Barberino*, p. 126 and 'A fifteenth-century Florentine community'.

²⁵ See e.g. Harthan, *Books of Hours*, pp. 74–7, 138–41, 154–7, 162–8; R. Watson, 'Manual of dynastic history?'

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-88847-9 - Manuscript Culture in Renaissance Italy

Brian Richardson

Excerpt

[More information](#)

deliberately modify or add to it so that the revised version would suit their own purposes or tastes. In one manuscript of Niccolò Machiavelli's *Il principe*, a scribe shifted the viewpoint of some sections of the treatise to a later date and outside Florence by making interpolations hostile to Pope Leo X and favourable to the Siennese.²⁶ Also probably Siennese is a partial rewriting of the *Stanze* that the Venetian Pietro Bembo composed in Urbino; this incongruously introduces references to Tuscany and '[l'] alma et gloriosa Siena' (bountiful and glorious Siena).²⁷ Similar sophistications are found in the tradition of Venetian chronicles that endured into the sixteenth century and beyond: their authors, scribes and readers altered, abbreviated and added to earlier chronicles in order to suit their own aims and interests.²⁸ One of the copies of Biagio Buonaccorsi's *Diario dall'anno 1498 all'anno 1512* (to which we shall return in Chapter 4 Section 1) interpolates denunciations of prelates and of the sack of Prato in 1512.²⁹ Buonaccorsi, a close colleague of Machiavelli's in the Florentine chancery between 1498 and their loss of office in 1512, was also a scribe, and he introduced some stylistic 'improvements' into the text of Machiavelli's *capitoli* when he transcribed them together as a unitary work, drawing on his own tastes as a poet; even someone close to the author evidently felt free to do this.³⁰ Machiavelli himself read an anonymous short poem in Rome in April 1526 and reworked its ending in his own epigram 'Sappi ch'io non son Argo'. This version has survived in a copy jotted down by Varchi on the endpaper of one of his manuscripts.³¹ In cookbooks, recipes were reworked to suit local tastes.³²

Shorter texts could be rearranged or newly combined in personalized anthologies. In the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, for example, the Florentine scribes Bartolomeo Fonzio and Francesco Baroncini were in the habit of collecting texts into codices made up of independent gatherings (sets of sheets folded into leaves, also called fascicles or quires), bound together only provisionally so that their ordering could subsequently be altered.³³ We shall see examples of the practice of

²⁶ BAV, MS Urb. Lat. 975: see Inglese in N. Machiavelli, *De principatibus*, pp. 54–5, 57–62. The transcription was made at some point after the battle of Pavia, 24 February 1525.

²⁷ Gnocchi in Bembo, *Stanze*, pp. xlix–l.

²⁸ Carile, 'Aspetti della cronachistica' and *La cronachistica*; Cochrane, *Historians and Historiography*, pp. 62–74.

²⁹ BNCF, MS Magl. XXV 634; see Niccolini in Buonaccorsi, *Diario*, pp. 12, 31–2.

³⁰ On Buonaccorsi's 'improvements', see Inglese in N. Machiavelli, *Capitoli*, p. 172 and Trovato, *Con ogni diligenza corretto*, pp. 311–16.

³¹ Scarpa, 'Argo, Clemente VII e Pasquino'. ³² Laurioux, 'I libri di cucina', 55–7.

³³ Caroti and Zamponi, *Lo scrittoio*, p. 18; Polcri, 'Una sconosciuta corrispondenza', 49.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-88847-9 - Manuscript Culture in Renaissance Italy

Brian Richardson

Excerpt

[More information](#)1 *The functions of manuscript circulation*

9

collecting verse in Chapter 3 Section 5. In various ways, then, as Michael Bristol and Arthur Marotti have written, in manuscript communication the roles of reader and producer were fused: it was a participatory process, 'the whole environment being one in which texts are malleable and social rather than fixed and possessively individualistic'.³⁴

One reflection of the enduring strength of scribal culture is the presence of manuscripts, in some cases ones containing contemporary works in Latin and the vernacular, as a not inconsiderable proportion of the contents of libraries in the sixteenth century. The inventory of the library of Isabella d'Este, drawn up after her death in 1539, specifies that 66 out of 133 books were manuscript, but that proportion is unusually high. Marino Zorzi's survey of Venetian libraries shows, for instance, that in 1526 there were 12 manuscripts among the 155 books of the patrician Antonio Pesaro, including a Dante, 'uno libro trata de cose antique' (a book about ancient matters), writings by Frontinus (author of works on stratagems and aqueducts), a work on 'come el re die governar el suo popullo' (how a king must rule his people) and Marco Polo. In 1560, 19 manuscripts figured among the 240 volumes of the surgeon Giorgio de Agaris. The manuscripts of Leonardo Donà (doge 1606–12) included some works that were probably inherited, but recent authors such as Giulio Camillo, Francesco Guicciardini and Francesco Robortello were also represented. The scholar Battista Egnazio owned at least 73 Greek manuscripts as well as many Latin ones, and there were several Greek works among the 40 or so manuscripts out of 800 volumes in the library of Matteo Calergi on his death in 1572. In the largest libraries, those with over 1,000 volumes, Zorzi estimates that between 10 and 20 per cent of the holdings were handwritten. The partial inventory of Pietro Bembo's library in Rome drawn up in 1545 includes 33 manuscripts in the section devoted to them, a few others among the 126 books listed as 'Editi' (published) and at least 10 among the vernacular books. A catalogue made in 1604 of Gian Vincenzo Pinelli's collection in Padua lists 6,428 printed books and 738 manuscripts. Later in the Seicento, the library of Carlo Strozzi of Florence included nearly 2,500 manuscripts, mainly of historical texts, some copied by Strozzi himself, some copied for him, others purchased second-hand.³⁵

³⁴ Bristol and Marotti, 'Introduction', p. 5.

³⁵ Luzio and Renier, *La cultura*, pp. 273–7 (Isabella); Zorzi, 'La circolazione', 118–19 (Pesaro), 125 (Agaris), 131 (Donà), 133–4 (Calergi), 137–8 (Egnazio), 149 (large libraries); Danzi, *La biblioteca*, pp. 117–318 (Bembo); Nuovo, 'Dispersione', pp. 47–8 (Pinelli); Callard, 'Conservazione' (Strozzi).

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-88847-9 - Manuscript Culture in Renaissance Italy

Brian Richardson

Excerpt

[More information](#)

To summarize so far: the handwritten medium was a rapid and convenient means of transmission as long as not too many copies were required; it was well able to reinforce existing social bonds and to help to create new ones in a process of community fashioning, since it fostered exclusiveness; in comparison with print, it could give writers greater freedom to express their views or imaginings, and it was more immediate and direct; it eluded the apparent finality and fixity of print by permitting authors to continue working on their texts; and, for readers, it offered opportunities to influence the ways in which texts were set down. One can add that some might have preferred scribal to printed texts because these could be perceived as having a stronger 'presence', in the sense of being closer to what Love calls 'an assumed source of validation in the movement of the author's fingers'.³⁶ Some users of manuscripts may simply have had an aesthetic preference for the handwritten page. This is one possible explanation for the fairly common phenomenon of texts copied by hand from printed books; a well-known example is the vellum manuscript of Matteo Maria Boiardo's chivalric romance, the *Orlando innamorato*, that is based on the edition printed in Scandiano in 1495. But some such copies must have been made because no further printed texts were available for purchase.³⁷

The printing press soon became much more powerful than the pen, in quantitative terms, as a means of circulating texts. Although in a very few cases printed editions were produced for coteries (see the Conclusion), normally print publication was 'strong', in Love's terms, involving the production of a large number of copies, whereas manuscript publication was 'weak', involving often no more than 'a surrender of control over the future use of the manuscript [...] in a context where there was some practical likelihood of the text entering public channels of communication'.³⁸ Presses also produced copies more swiftly than was possible in the scribal medium, and these copies were generally made for sale to unknown readers who could reside in different states. At the same time, as has been seen, the use of print publication did not mean that authors could no

³⁶ Love, *The Culture and Commerce of Texts*, pp. 141–8 (p. 145).

³⁷ The Boiardo manuscript is BTM, Triv. 1094; see Harris, *Bibliografia dell' 'Orlando Innamorato'*, II, 55–8, with further examples, and Tissoni Benvenuti in Boiardo, *L'Innamoramento de Orlando*, I, lxxvi–lxxi. On a partial copy of a prohibited heterodox printed work, the *Sommario della Sacra Scrittura*, see Peyronel Rambaldi, *Dai Paesi Bassi*, pp. 397–9 and pl. 5. On the general topic, see Reeve, 'Manuscripts copied from printed books'; De la Mare, 'Script and manuscripts', p. 406 and 'New research', p. 453; McKitterick, *Print, Manuscript and the Search for Order*, pp. 47–8.

³⁸ Love, *The Culture and Commerce of Texts*, pp. 36–41 (p. 40). On the transition from the market for manuscripts to that for printed books, see Bonifati, *Dal libro manoscritto*.