Joshua Eckhardt and Daniel Starza Smith, eds.

Manuscript Miscellanies in Early Modern England. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014.

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The history of the book has become a burgeoning field in literary studies and it overlaps with and contributes significantly to many areas of historical interest, perhaps especially the early modern era. While much of book history focuses on printed materials, it also has many insights to offer us about manuscripts, which continued to be important long after the first printed book appeared in the fifteenth century. This is made quite clear in *Manuscript Miscellanies in Early Modern England*, a wide-ranging collection of essays which explore the significant and sometimes subaltern manuscript culture of sixteenth- and especially seventeenth-century England. We learn about networks of producers and owners, as well as the active agency of authors, transcribers, compilers, and readers. Alas, some tantalizing bits of information generate intriguing speculations, but often no more than tentative conclusions.

The first two essays explore aspects of the writings and reception of the seminal figure, John Donne. In "Reconstructing Donne's *Satyres*," Daniel Starza Smith suggests that these writings were originally released in a limited manuscript format because of their critical and potentially seditious content. At the same time, regarding the dissemination and interpretation of materials, both the contents and contexts could be fluid. This provokes the question: were manuscripts one way to circumvent censorship? Next, Piers Brown discusses the ordering of poems in "Donne, Rhapsody, and Textual Order." He concludes that "rhapsody is conceptually useful when discussing compilation because it offers us an early modern term that bridges the gap between the haphazard miscellany and the orderly anthology" (55). The placing or ordering of material can be quite significant, as seen not only in literary studies, but also in biblical studies. Specifically, in the area of canonical criticism, not only the inclusion of a document but also its placement vis-à-vis other canonical texts can be an important interpretive key.

With regard to letters and letter-books, James Daybell highlights the fact that while these collections were often socially hierarchical and rather restrictive, geographically they could be quite extensive, encompassing wide-ranging gentry and aristocratic circles. They also included various genres and purposes, whether literary, spiritual, erotic, personal, or public. Daybell suggests that some of these collections might serve as useful barometers of political activity. In an article on supposedly prophetic texts, Noah Millstone says that they could and sometimes did produce multiple contemporary interpretations. As indices of political and religious beliefs and animosities, one supposed prophecy that

employed pictures had “a stork with a snake marked ‘Jesuitas’ in its beak” (84). During the Thirty Years’ War, another writing suggested that Jesuit and Spanish factions tried to trick a Protestant duke into switching sides in that struggle. Malevolent foreign forces, whether religious or political, evidently abounded.

The Jesuits and their mission in England are highlighted in two insightful and interrelated articles. In “Unlocking the Mysteries of Constance Aston Fowler’s Verse Miscellany (Huntington Library MS HM 904),” Helen Hackett identifies the long-disputed “Hand B Scribe” as Father William Smith, vere Southern (or Southerne), a Jesuit missionary who added spiritual material, including four poems by his fellow Jesuit Robert Southwell, to the Fowler manuscript. Cedric C. Brown builds upon this article with “Three Linked Manuscript Miscellanies” of William Smith. Along with his additions to HM 904, Smith’s was the primary hand in the composition of two other manuscripts: Bod. (Bodleian) Eng. poet. b.5, which served largely as a travelling book, geared to evangelization on the mission, and TCD (Trinity College, Dublin) MS 1194, which contained materials useful for vocational purposes. Smith was a spiritual advisor and friend to Constance Aston Fowler, and these three linked manuscripts provide some valuable insights into the often-murky world of the seventeenth-century Catholic recusant community.

In her article on “Attribution and Anonymity,” Lara M. Crowley discusses the fact that anonymous or disputed manuscripts could be attributed—or misattributed—to various authors for a range of reasons, not the least of which was their popularity. In particular, “more poems were misattributed to the extraordinarily popular Donne than to any other contemporary poet” (135). Of course, a number of manuscripts had not one but several contributors. Joel Swann, in “Copying Epigrams in Manuscript Miscellanies,” points out that manuscripts could become “collaborative projects in surprising ways,” and that “texts were copied with a fluid sense of ownership and delegation” (168).

The role of rhetoric and the active agency of compilers take center stage in Joshua Eckhardt’s article on “Camden’s *Remaines* and a Pair of Epideictic Poetry Anthologies.” Eckhardt highlights the fact that collectors sometimes structured manuscripts for rhetorical effect. He also recognizes “the literary agency,” not only of print authors (like Camden), but also of the anonymous compilers of texts (179). Finally, in her discussion of “Late Seventeenth-Century Verse Miscellany,” Victoria E. Burke discusses the sometimes intersecting and overlapping genres of commonplace books and miscellanies, with the former tending to be more topical than the latter.

In general, this collection of essays and topics will be of greater interest to literary scholars than historians, but there are insights here on a significant range of issues relating to early modern English culture. Readers of *The Journal*

of Jesuit Studies will likely find the related articles on the Jesuit missionary William Smith (chapters 5 and 6) of particular interest, as they shed needed light on the often hidden work and world of the English Catholic recusants.

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