

as “Sappho was . . . being used in early modern England as an Ovidian example of tribadism in literary discourse” (39), Andreadis notes also that “Sappho’s iconic status in modern discourse . . . can be a witty way of saying ‘lesbian’: for example, during the summer of 2000, a three-week retrospective of lesbian cult films being shown in New York City was entitled ‘Sapp-o-Rama’” (185 n.2). In this account of female same-sex erotics, Sappho in early modern England bears a constitutive, if not seamless, relationship to Sappho in the here and now. Even as her *literary* persona is all but extinguished in its modern invocation, Sappho becomes one of those ellipses that form the content of this book: like Foucault, she functions as a code word that largely fulfills its function by suggesting an intertextual community. This suggestion of historical continuity, though not the goal of *Sappho in Early Modern England*, is nonetheless made possible by its brilliant analyses, which are not only historically grounded and astute, but also intellectually rigorous and timely. As a sign of our times, *Sappho* is also a sign *for* our times, and achieves this dual distinction by continually doubling in on itself.

Deborah Aldrich-Watson, ed. *The Verse Miscellany of Constance Aston Fowler: A Diplomatic Edition*. Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies and Renaissance English Text Society, 2000. lxii + 206pp. + 2 illus. \$40.00. Review by ADAM SMYTH, UNIVERSITY OF READING.

Deborah Aldrich-Watson’s rendering of the verse miscellany of Constance Aston Fowler (Huntington Manuscript 904) provides the first printed edition of this significant manuscript—a manuscript containing many poems which have not appeared before, in any other context. Aldrich-Watson’s book is thus an important contribution to the process of bringing previously cloistered texts, particularly those by women, to a broader readership. That process of making texts public owes much to the work of the Renaissance English Text Society.

The manuscript contains 65 poems transcribed by Fowler between about 1630 and 1660. Aldrich-Watson's detailed, scholarly introduction suggests the significance of this manuscript is three-fold: in terms of gender, Fowler's Staffordshire family, and Catholicism. Since accounts of early modern manuscripts often construct the verse miscellany as a form inevitably associated with a male, Oxford, anti-Catholic, misogynous context, Fowler's text is valuable in providing an alternative model: the work of a woman, in Staffordshire, in a recusant environment. First, the text tells us much about female agency in the world of manuscript transmission and compilation. This has been discussed by Arthur Marotti in *Manuscript, Print, and The English Renaissance Lyric* (1995), among others, but Fowler's text provides valuable, sustained evidence. Second, Aldrich-Watson carefully positions the manuscript as a product of Fowler's family at Tixall, Staffordshire. Thirty-six of the 65 poems relate to Fowler's family members and friends, and Aldrich-Watson details these connections: there are verses by family members including Fowler's father, Walter Aston, and her brother, Herbert (although I am not convinced by claims that Fowler's own unattributed verse appears, based on assessments of "her style and what is known of her personality" [xx]); there are transcriptions in several family hands; and there are poems marking particular family occasions, including Walter Aston's return from Spain. Third, Aldrich-Watson presents the manuscript as a Catholic text: sixteen of the poems are overtly Catholic, including four by the Jesuit priest Robert Southwell.

While Aldrich-Watson is certainly right to draw attention to this miscellany as a family document, and while her research in this area is exemplary, her tendency to read the manuscript biographically is sometimes restricting. A greater sense of Fowler's manuscript as a collection operating within the genre of the verse miscellany would be helpful. Thus, for instance, when Fowler's manuscript includes a poem perhaps by Robert Herrick, Aldrich-Watson notes that "perhaps she included the poems [...] because Herrick was chaplain to Buckingham on his expedition to the Isle of Ré in 1627" where Fowler's father, Walter, might have met him

(xlii). This might be right: but such a reading overlooks the fact that Herrick was a verse miscellany favourite, appearing in numerous volumes. Fowler's manuscript includes work by poets such as Henry King, Ben Jonson, and Thomas Randolph: poets that align the text with other verse miscellany collections. Aldrich-Watson certainly does introduce discussions of other manuscripts as useful points of comparison: most notably, Bod. MS Eng. poet. b.5, a recusant manuscript of Thomas Fairfax, a Warwickshire yeoman, which exhibits compelling overlaps with Fowler's texts; and BL Add. MS. 15225, a manuscript of Catholic ballads. But the emphasis on Fowler's manuscript as a family document obscures consideration of the text as it relates to miscellany norms. Similarly, Fowler's poems on Buckingham may well have been, as Aldrich-Watson suggests, the result of direct family connections: Fowler's father developed a friendly relationship with Villiers through his appointment as joint ambassador to Spain and his consequent involvement with the marriage negotiations of Prince Charles to the Infanta. But poems about Buckingham (both for and against) were generally popular in manuscript miscellanies, and Fowler's inclusion may owe more to characteristics of verse transmission than to particular family links.

Given this reading of Fowler's manuscript as a text operating within a particular genre, it is useful to compare Fowler's transcriptions with other miscellanies—in part to understand something of the methods and ambitions of Fowler's compilation. Fowler's manuscript is particularly important in this respect since it is in many ways a significantly atypical collection. Aldrich-Watson provides useful starting points, as an appendix notes some textual variants, but more detail would be valuable. For instance, poem 57 in Fowler's manuscript is a verse beginning "O loue whoes powre and might could neuer be w<sup>th</sup>stood." This poem also appeared in a number of popular printed collections of verse (including *Wit and Drollery*, which Aldrich-Watson notes, and others such as *The Marrow of Complements* and *The New Academy of Complements*), and in several manuscripts (Crum's *First-Line Index of English Poetry 1500-1800 in MSS. of the Bodleian Library* lists 13

appearances). A comparison between Fowler's text and these printed versions yields important points of difference: most noticeably, Fowler's text cuts many of the bawdier lines (including "A Turd in Cupid's teeth," and "I'll rend her smock asunder") and, as a consequence, offers a relatively decorous verse (although the poem is still discordant among the manuscript's other inclusions). Fowler's text also omits several lines that construct a female object of love: in her text, only one reference to "Her" remains. Such considerations raise important questions about the degree to which Fowler's transcriptions were in fact active, even creative acts, rather than simple mechanisms of duplication; they invite reflection on the significance attached to early modern ideas of authorship and the original; and they raise notions of how "public" verse was appropriated and rendered "private."

These are just the kinds of important questions that Aldrich-Watson's careful editing and meticulous scholarship has enabled. It is in some ways regrettable that her edition did not fully embrace such issues, but the vital point is that her work has brought out into the public an otherwise secluded text. The use of editions like *The Verse Miscellany of Constance Aston Fowler* in research and, crucially, in teaching, will certainly help reorientate the early modern canon and bring previously neglected texts, compilers, and readers to scholarly attention.

Jane Spencer. *Aphra Behn's Afterlife*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. ix + 307 pp. \$72.00.

Derek Hughes. *The Theatre of Aphra Behn*. New York: Palgrave, 2001. xiii + 230 pp. \$65.00.

Reviews by ROBERT MARKLEY, WEST VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY.

Almost a decade ago in her Introduction to *Rereading Aphra Behn*, Heidi Hutner suggested that critics could not understand Restoration literature without taking into account the significance