

George L. Justice and Nathan Tinker, eds. *Women's Writing and the Circulation of Ideas: Manuscript Publication in England, 1550-1800*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. x + 245 pp. \$60.00. Review by ADAM SMYTH, UNIVERSITY OF READING.

In the last decade, the composition, circulation, and reception of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century manuscripts has emerged as a subject central to much work in early modern studies. Three books, in particular, have helped establish this field: Harold Love's *Scribal Publication in Seventeenth-Century England* (1993); Arthur Marotti's *Manuscript, Print, and the English Renaissance Lyric* (1995); and Margaret Ezell's *Social Authorship and the Advent of Print* (1999)—all of them in turn drawing on Peter Beal's *Index of Literary Manuscripts, 1450-1700* (1980-93). The scholarship this trinity has enabled is often characterized by an attention to the materiality of books; an interest in returning to the archives, and in uncovering “new” (that is, neglected) texts; and a commitment to reconsidering, reformulating, or expanding key critical terms such as “author” and “publication.” *Women's Writing and the Circulation of Ideas: Manuscript Publication in England, 1550-1800* is the latest book to grow out of these vital works.

The aim of *Women's Writing and the Circulation of Ideas* is, most fundamentally, to complicate and in some cases correct certain assumptions about women's publication between 1550 and 1800. Two important lines of argument stand out. In the past, manuscript publication has been seen as a second-best option to print, and women's manuscript writing has been understood as evidence of women's exclusion from public print—a writing that is, paradoxically, a kind of silencing. Editors George L. Justice and Nathan Tinker, however, emphasize the female agency and authority which manuscript writing both signaled and induced, noting how, for example, women writers might positively choose manuscript publication to enable them to exert greater control over texts and audiences. The editors' second central ambition is to nuance that by-now familiar (and, in fact, oft-nuanced) narrative of the “rise”

and eventual “triumph” of print over manuscript. As contributor Kathryn R. King notes, this narrative is problematic not for its principal assertion of the emergence of print as the primary medium of publication—since this clearly did occur—but rather for its use of “the familiar agonistic metaphors of ascendancy, competition, and conquest” (158) which position manuscript and print as mutually exclusive, even hostile media and which therefore occlude those more characteristic moments of interaction, dependency, “cross-fertilization” (8). In fact, given this central tenet of the book—this emphasis on “the overlap between various literary cultures of print and manuscript” (9)—*Manuscript Publication in England, 1550-1800* is a misleadingly narrow subtitle. Print is as much the book’s concern. Like much work that has developed out of research by Love, Marotti, and Ezell, the emphasis of *Women’s Writing and the Circulation of Ideas* is on the particular, as a means to critique those larger narratives: the book presents a series of rigorous close case-studies in order to gain critical leverage on established, broad assumptions about women’s writing.

The opening three chapters are concerned with the Sidney family. Margaret P. Hannay considers why Mary Sidney Herbert was reluctant to print her Psalm translations. The standard answer suggests that public print was a medium that excluded women, but Hannay argues rather that manuscript granted Sidney greater control over text and readers. Building on Hannay’s chapter, Debra Rienstra and Noel Kinnamon show eloquently and convincingly how this decision to publish the Sidney-Pembroke Psalter in manuscript, not print, had much to do with the transgressive nature of Mary Sidney Herbert’s Psalm translations: exuberant, sensual, “idiosyncratic” (52), in contrast to plain, Protestant norms. Keeping the text in manuscript enabled greater authorial control after publication, “staving off the potential suspicion” (51). Michael G. Brennan explores the poetic and political relationship between Mary Sidney’s niece, Lady Mary Wroth, and Ben Jonson, and in particular the latter’s role in aiding Wroth’s “transition [from 1612] from private to public status as a patron and guardian of the literary reputation of her illustrious uncle” (73).

Victoria E. Burke provides a very thorough examination of two extant, largely poetic manuscripts of Anne, Lady Southwell, and explores the political, anti-courtly strains in these manuscripts. In a critically self-reflexive chapter on posthumous publication, Margaret J. M. Ezell provides a compelling analysis of the ways in which women's writing was made public after the writer's death, as part of an attempt to expand our notion of authorship to include "other alternatives for literary life" (124). Leigh A. Eicke examines Jane Barker's manuscript poems and printed novels and shows, once more, how Barker used manuscript publication to control her texts and audiences, just as she drew on manuscript conventions in her printed books to defuse their political agenda. Eicke suggests a two-way dynamic between manuscript and print and shows how Barker, as a female writer, deployed the connotations of each to generate literary authority.

Kathryn R. King traces the various kinds of authorial positions assumed by Elizabeth Singer Rowe: celebrated contributor to the periodic press; "quasi-aristocratic manuscript poet" (160); anonymous author of the hugely popular *Friendship in Death* (1728). King argues that Rowe was able to "take advantage of the dual possibilities of manuscript and print to advance her literary ambitions" (160); consequently, King suggests that "manuscript and print presented not so much opposing as overlapping sets of publication possibilities" (159). As well as showing another woman writer adeptly moving between manuscript and print, King's excellent chapter is a plea for a movement away from a criticism based on "moralized dichotomous models" (the good woman of manuscript; the bad woman of print), towards a consideration of the more subtle "web of textual and human relationships" (175) that enables a precise consideration of women's writing in its various early modern modes.

Isobel Grundy surveys the adolescent manuscript writings of two generations: Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and her daughter and niece. While highlighting differences between these youthful writings, Grundy suggests that for both generations manuscript

poetry enabled “both an agenda and a voice for their rebellion” (197). In the final chapter of the volume, Justice examines Frances Burney’s turning away from coterie manuscript circulation and her use of the marketplace of print. As a writer who encouraged the emergence of print as the primary medium of publication, Burney was, Justice argues, “a woman author who shaped the literary history that is occasionally described as ‘male’” (202).

The best chapters in the book (including Rienstra and Kinnamon’s; Ezell’s; Eicke’s; and King’s) tend to be those that extrapolate out from the specifics of their case studies to interrogate broader methodological questions about the way we classify and describe early modern literary cultures—questions that Justice lucidly articulates in his Introduction. In the less successful chapters, particularities function to constrain discussion and implications are left unexplored. But as a book which sets out to nuance grand narratives through careful case studies, *Women’s Writing and the Circulation of Ideas* is a clear success. Perhaps most valuable of all, the chronological sweep is far broader than most comparable volumes which often jolt to a disappointing halt at 1660. Inevitably, certain important areas of enquiry are not included: women’s letter-writing, for example—where female manuscript agency was significant, as James Daybell, among others, has shown. In a collection which considers manuscript and print, that third mode of publication—performance—is rarely discussed. And there is, with some exceptions, a certain narrowness of social rank among the women writers considered (one-third of the book is devoted to members of the Sidney circle). But these are only cautious caveats: Justice and Tinker’s volume is undoubtedly a welcome and useful addition to the field of women’s writing and the cultures of manuscript and print.

Mihoko Suzuki. *Subordinate Subjects: Gender, the Political Nation, and Literary Form in England, 1588-1688*. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2003. x + 330 pp. + 6 illus. \$79.95. Review by ELISA OH, BOSTON UNIVERSITY.