

configurations of particular publics. Lake's foregrounding of libelous secret histories as a narrative genre that forcefully enters the field of public discourse and confounds the possibility of rational critical debate is a crucial intervention. (Alastair Bellany and Thomas Cogswell's *The Murder of King James I* [2015] makes a similar and similarly detailed case for the importance of untruths and libels as formative elements of a public sphere well into the seventeenth century.) Lake's assiduous research brings to attention drafts, notes, annotations—distinctly unpublic material—and shows its impact on what comes to be published in manuscript or print. He is attentive to the variety of forms that shape public discourse and their intermedial relations. Yet, writing about two unpublished manuscript tracts, he remarks that they were public despite their not reaching “the apotheosis of print” (207). The importance of manuscript circulation in early forms of the public sphere challenges any such hierarchical conception, as Noah Millstone's very recent book, *Manuscript Circulation and the Invention of Politics in Early Stuart England* (2016), makes clear. And the question of orality—not residual orality, but orality as a matrix of public conversation—bedevils our literate practices. Lake's (and other historians') favored terms for the oral—rumor and gossip—will not do; we need a more thoughtful theorization of the oral and one place to start would be with Lake's pamphlet material, which describes a range of oral practices, often in passing, that would refine our modeling of early modern publicity.

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Manuscript Circulation and the Invention of Politics in Early Stuart England.
Noah Millstone.

Cambridge Studies in Early Modern British History. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016. xvi + 358 pp. \$120.

Noah Millstone's outstanding work supplies an invaluable survey of scribal pamphleteering during the Stuart era and provides rich new insights concerning the significance of their circulation. Chronicling a history of revisionist and postrevisionist scholarship concerning Stuart history, and drawing upon critical trends such as political culture, Millstone establishes a multivalent perspective on politics that differs depending upon the circumstances; he develops a definition of political awareness that ties to the necessity of the Stuart monarchy to implement mechanisms of participation and collaboration in order to function. The book consistently demonstrates meticulous attention to the material conditions of manuscripts and their distribution with an eye to “questions of publicity, perception, and state formation” (16).

Part 1 examines the objects of study and their complex histories by beginning with the evidence available concerning manuscript production as well as the tacit systems that allowed these documents to be made and circulated. Millstone thus focuses on

the figures of the scrivener and the antiquarian, thereby investigating the material circumstances in which the manuscripts were created and the manner by which they were read, valued, and stored. This segment of the book also frames the historical backdrop regarding the relation between the monarch and Parliament, which preoccupies the remainder of the book. As Millstone aptly observes, James's need to cultivate and retain an economy of love between himself and the English people, represented through Parliament, meant that an image of unity was necessary in order to preserve his power. However, he acknowledges that this pleasant image of dialogue was in reality established and compromised through parliamentary separates, manuscripts that were either formal orations from the monarch, collective statements, or individual speeches. Throughout this incredibly informative section, of which this review only offers some highlights, Millstone demonstrates rigorous and deft analysis of the circumstances of production and the contents of the manuscripts, but he also carefully pays attention to the data he collects on these texts, specifying their limitations and identifying the misleading nature of the visual charts and graphs he incorporates in order to guide his readers toward more plausible and apt conclusions.

Following this informative historical inquiry, Millstone provides equally valuable applications of this backdrop to several case studies. By examining the tensions between and fluctuating fortunes of Bristol and Buckingham during and following the Spanish Match, Millstone elucidates the ways in which each used the other as a foil during times of political vulnerability in order to resuscitate his favorable image. Circulating manuscripts allowed them to reveal secret plots the other had ostensibly devised, and Millstone identifies the manner by which readers' interpretations of these allowed them to develop and predict a history of what would or could happen in relation to what had happened or was presently occurring. Modeling himself after admired historians like Tacitus, William Drake, for example, "wished to be accounted a man wise in the ways in the world, a sophisticate or politic" (179). Hence, in Stuart England, "the world of events was a meaningful system of signs" that was available for manuscript readers to decipher in order to develop political awareness (192).

The third part of the book chronicles the riddled history of Parliament during Charles I's reign, exposing the ways in which the Crown turned to means such as ship money in order to expedite military endeavors without needing to summon Parliament, and the manner in which Parliament regained control by characterizing members of the monarch's circle as evil counselors with wicked political schemes. Revisiting the matter of Charles's personal rule, Millstone identifies the realities of the king's need to appease the Parliament despite efforts to dismiss them as a pluralistic and chaotic body. As a result, we are left with a far more complex and detailed narrative of the events leading to civil unrest.

Millstone's detailed inquiry into manuscripts and their circulation reconceives the ways in which readers became involved in political matters. By expertly addressing the manner by which "collectors and diarists treated the texts themselves as forming a . . .

political history of their own times” (167), Millstone bestows us with a modern equivalent that will prove useful to scholars with an interest in Stuart politics, regardless of their discipline.

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John Aubrey: My Own Life. Ruth Scurr.

New York: New York Review Books, 2015. xxiv + 520 pp. \$35.

The year 2015 proved to be a wonderful one for the study of John Aubrey. Kate Bennett’s magisterial edition of the *Brief Lives* for Oxford University Press is by far the most significant publication in the history of Aubrey scholarship. Making extensive use of Bennett’s researches, Ruth Scurr’s experimental biography of Aubrey is both delightful and instructive, even if at times it is also confusing.

In a preface, Scurr explains her decision to translate masses of manuscript and print evidence for Aubrey’s life into a fictional diary on the order of the real diaries kept by his contemporaries such as John Evelyn. Scurr’s concern is that the self-effacing Aubrey would get lost if cast in a straightforward narrative in which he interacted with so many vivid personalities and great minds over the course of his life—with Hobbes, Hooke, Harrington, and Harvey—as well as with more obscure but colorful men and women among Aubrey’s acquaintance. To lend her fictional approach credibility, Scurr draws extensively on material not just from Bennett’s edition, but also from the rich trove of Aubrey manuscripts. These latter fill the book with arresting insights and delightful cameo appearances: for instance, Aubrey’s late-in-life summation of his work as an antiquary (422); a beloved dog for whom there is no room in a coach (378); a list of Aubrey’s works (390–91); the outline of a utopian fiction attributed to Andrew Pascall (318) as well as Pascall’s assessment of the universal-language project that it might prove “to reduce schism and babel to nothing” (268). The wide range of even this highly selective list illustrates Aubrey’s capacious curiosity that (like so many of his virtuoso contemporaries) knew no disciplinary bounds. Scurr has so immersed herself in the Aubrey archive that her invented vocalizations of his habits, concerns, and worldview are on so many occasions compelling.

Scurr’s experiment in fictional biography comes with a price, however. Some of the most fascinating bits are assigned no source at all, making it unclear whether Scurr is offering her own interpretation of Aubrey’s mentality or simply has omitted the source from which she has taken her evidence. This state of affairs obtains in regard to, among many such cases, Aubrey’s declaration of his ignorance (323); his reading of French romances (316); and a crucial, vivid account of his method, with an emphasis on Aubrey’s haphazardness (296), which students of Bennett’s edition will recognize as controversial. One