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Winckles, Andrew O. and Angela Rehbein, eds. *Women's Literary Networks and Romanticism: "A Tribe of Authoresses."* Liverpool University Press, 2017. 314 pages.

Reviewed by Heather Bozant Witcher, Auburn University at Montgomery

Andrew O. Winckles and Angela Rehbein's edited collection, *Women's Literary Networks and Romanticism: "A Tribe of Authoresses,"* offers a thoughtful consideration of women's networking in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The nine essays, as a whole, illuminate the necessity of reconsidering periodization and amplify questions concerning literary form, particularly the ways in which correspondence and archival documents open up innovative avenues for discussions of form and genre. As Winckles and Rehbein note in their afterword: "Recognizing letters and manuscripts as innovative literary texts [...] troubles many of the (often gendered) assumptions we have come to rely on about what constitutes a text—or, for that matter, an author—worthy of critical attention" (300). This volume, therefore, presents a range of essays that present "productive avenues of inquiry" into the scope and function of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century women's networks (14). In doing so, the volume provides a complex picture of Romantic-era networks by re-thinking the purpose of manuscript culture, the centrality of socialization, and the role of women in literary production. Networks, they suggest, influenced women's personal and social identities, and influenced the literary culture of the period. To maintain this argument, the volume is structured in two parts: examining "networks of association or interest"—those groups who corresponded with one another and worked in collaboration—and "networks of meaning"—defined as a form of literary influence through authorial and/or textual interactions (3-4). At the core of this volume lies the suggestion that authorship was inherently networked and community-oriented.

<2>Andrew Winckles' first essay examines the religious network surrounding Sally Wesley, wife of Charles Wesley. Wesley formed the center of a network of Bluestockings in the early nineteenth century who used evangelical religion and theology to consider the shifting social and cultural conditions of eighteenth and nineteenth-century Britain. Examining Wesley's network, Winckles argues persuasively for Wesley's desire for non-traditional publishing, preferring not to see her work necessarily in print, but in "scribal publication"—circulation of manuscripts within social circles—which provided more control over the production and circulation of her work (18). In devoting attention to manuscript culture, the essay raises questions surrounding the nature of obscurity. Scholarly determination of authorial obscurity is often determined by the extent of publication and access. Manuscript circulation, at least for Wesley, was a form of publication, thus complicating our understanding of obscure women writers. Tracing scribal publication within Wesley's network, Winckles suggests that women wrote about religion in different ways than men due to the cultivation of social bonds within the networks, which offered an alternative means of discussing theological ideas. Evangelicalism, he intriguingly argues, "was not simply a matter of doctrine, but a way of experiencing and of being in the world" (21).

<3>Felicity James and Rebecca Shuttleworth, in the second essay, continue Winckles' exploration of local networks in their tracing of Midlands abolitionists Susanna Watts and Elizabeth Heyrick. Watts and Heyrick established a network in the 1820s that utilized a variance of textual production and manuscript circulation in support of abolition. Relying upon "sociable creativity," the network adopted an approach that reframed conventional female roles and responsibilities into platforms for social change (48). Charitable activities like sewing provided a means for the network to hide extracts from anti-slavery tracts and pamphlets within the interior of work-bags for public dissemination; and door-to-door canvassing became framed in the sociable activity of "visiting" (58-59). Moreover, manuscript circulation allowed the women to promote both political reform outside of established print networks, and a "brazen" tone in support of abolition. Continuing this vein of examining local networks, Amy Culley's third essay traces the life-writing of Mary Berry and Joanna Baillie to draw attention to under-studied inter-

connected themes of Romanticism: aging, authorship, and gender. Focusing on the “companionate authorship” of Berry and Baillie within their personal and professional networks, Culley suggests that literary practice is embedded in friendship and conversation, as she extends scholarly work on collaborative communities by Marjorie Stone and Judith Thompson in *Literary Couplings: Writing Couples, Collaborators, and the Construction of Authorship* (2006). In addition to Culley’s insight into Berry and Baillie’s awareness of their position as single women in the natural life course, the essay prompts inquiries into the interactions women’s networks provide as support and encouragement for female writers crossing the borders of the Romantic/Victorian periods, and the commitment of long-lived female authors to participating in literary culture through “reading, writing, and in their personal friendships with younger authors” (91).

<4>The next essays considering networks of association change direction to explore a wider context of networks through distant-reading and digital humanities approaches. Michelle Levy and Reese Irwin’s fourth essay takes up the network of women authors corresponding and publishing with Cadell and Davies (C&D), revealing the professional and business side of women’s interactions with the world of literary publishing. The correspondence reveals that while the women did not correspond directly with one another, their association with C&D provides a common point of reference, with the purpose of “enabling a fuller understanding of how women’s books were produced, marketed, and distributed during the period” (102).

Perhaps more intriguingly, the essay not only demonstrates the women’s active involvement in the process of publication, but the “chivalrous” approach that C&D take in respect to their female authors. Through analysis of the correspondence, Levy and Irwin argue that the women have confidence and respect for C&D, and that “notwithstanding their superior position, C&D did not exploit this position” due to their respect and esteem for women writers (132).

Likewise, Elisa Beshero-Bondar and Kellie Donovan-Condron’s fifth essay utilizes the data generated by the [Digital Mitford](#) project to assert the prominence of men within Mitford’s network. Relying on correspondence, the database provided the discovery of a pattern of “particular male figures,” while the breadth of correspondence reveals a shift over time in the “person receiving the majority of her letters” (142). As the authors note, the importance of

these male recipients—Mitford’s father, replaced by Sir William Elford, Thomas Noon, Elizabeth Barrett in the 1840s, and finally William Cox Bennett—illuminates the “wit and eloquence of educated female-male friendship” in nineteenth-century correspondence (143). Moreover, these two essays underscore that utilizing distant-reading and digital approaches opens productive avenues for future scholarship on women’s interactions with the publishing industry, prompting inquiry into the ways in which female authors begin to rely less on male intermediaries for publication and begin to act as agents in their own right, buoyed by the social bonds provided by women’s networks.

<5>The remainder of the volume shifts to explore what the editors deem “networks of interest,” moving away from physical networks to consider “networks of citation, influence, knowledge, and affect” (12). Thus this portion moves beyond manuscript culture and correspondence to recognize symbolic networks that provide links between authors and their works. In the volume’s sixth essay, Harriet Kramer Linkin traces the ways in which numerous authors make up a “citational network,” invoking or citing poet Mary Tighe in their own works. Tracing citational influences in the works of authors Anna Maria Porter, Anna Letitia Barbauld, Alicia Lefanu, Lady Morgan, and Felicia Hemans, Linkin argues that the citational network not only calls attention to Tighe’s significance for Romanticism, but underscores our conceptions of Romantic-era sociability: “the interactive, conversable worlds of salons, coteries, literary circles, and social networks” (198). By connecting and analyzing the citational influences of Tighe, Linkin persuasively argues that the “posthumous presence” of Tighe in the poetry and fiction of women authors “constitute a community or even imagined salon engaged in reading her work and life to see or suggest how it amplifies their own works and lives” (199).

<6>Robin Runia’s essay on Maria Edgeworth’s *Letters for Literary Ladies* professes to examine the form and genre of the letter during the eighteenth century. While falling short of an argument on literary form, the essay masterfully uses close reading to trace Edgeworth’s relationships with Thomas Day and Mary Wollstonecraft. Runia demonstrates Edgeworth’s rejection of “perceived essential associations between women and emotion or intellectual

inferiority” to illuminate the equality of women’s reasoning “within the public world of print” (227). Intervening into the debate about female education through ironic ventriloquism, Edgeworth rejects Day and Wollstonecraft’s specific instructions surrounding education; instead, she deploys Enlightenment discourse to deconstruct arguments about women’s inferior reasoning as an aid to domestic duty.

<7>In the final essays of the volume, the contributors consider more expansive networks through writers who never met one another. Rebecca Nesvet, in the eighth essay, explores the intertextual relationship between Mary Shelley and the Marquis de Sade. Scholarship has long speculated over whether Shelley read Sade, and the influence of Sadian themes in her literary works. Nesvet draws particular attention to Shelley’s participation in Sade’s network of literary influence as an important intervention because the Sadian network has long been assumed to exclude women. Tracing the history and scholarly approaches to Sade’s global network, Nesvet persuasively argues for Shelley’s involvement and participation through allusion to Sade’s “Eugénie de Franval” in both *Frankenstein* and *Mathilda*. Conceding Shelley’s contribution to the recovery and reinvention of Sade’s works opens lines of inquiry surrounding our own preconceived notions about Shelley’s role as a woman writer, namely, her divergences from the “morality of her time with respect to gender roles, sexuality, and self-expression” (267). Continuing the aspect of influence to consider unacquainted writers, Eric Hood’s final essay traces the ways in which Elizabeth Barrett Browning uses French socialist Charles Fourier as an affective symbol to challenge the periodization of Romanticism and the confines of the network. In a theoretical vein, Hood reads Fourier “as a conjuncture of affective forces operating across different levels” to explain why Elizabeth Barrett Browning “not only rejected socialism as a potential solution [to capitalist exploitation] but why she focused her attacks on the theories of Charles Fourier” (276).

<8>*Women’s Literary Networks and Romanticism: “A Tribe of Authoresses”* is a valuable contribution to eighteenth- and nineteenth- century studies for its treatment of a multiplicity of networks and its focus on the centrality of sociability and conversation. The collection is

strongest in its illumination of the interconnectedness of the literary world during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and its argument surrounding a re-assessment of manuscript culture, including an emphasis on reading manuscript letters and life-writing as literature.