John Aubrey and the Printed Book

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ABSTRACT John Aubrey was purposefully engaged with an emergent discipline of bibliography. He negotiated a subtle relationship between print and manuscript, collecting and annotating books to ensure the survival for posterity of information about their texts or authors; and he stored precious manuscript material in printed books to protect it. He contributed writings to numerous print projects, paid for the reprinting of rare works, and collected printed ephemera. His books were stored in several places during his peripatetic life, circulated and sometimes lost; he had frequent recourse to bookshops and private libraries. While writing Brief Lives, he collected rare books and papers of his biographical subjects and investigated their reading practices. KEYWORDS: John Aubrey’s Brief Lives; seventeenth-century book collecting; Anthony Wood; Ashmolean Museum

IN THE SECOND MANUSCRIPT VOLUME of John Aubrey’s Brief Lives (1680–81) is found a draft life of one “J A.” Aubrey heads this draft with the instruction, “to be interponed as a sheet of wast-paper only in the binding of a Booke.”¹ This choice of a liminal and ephemeral position in a work devoted to the memorialization of others sounds like an exercise in the rhetoric of humility expected of the life-writer (and still more of the writer of his own life). Which, of course, it is: there are many self-deprecatory gestures in the essay, such as the quotation from a poem by Thomas Carew about how the poet, like “devout penitents” in churches of a former age, dared not “press forward” to the choir, but instead clustered meekly “without door” in admiration of his friend George Sandys’s poetic achievement.² Another is Aubrey’s claim

1. Bodleian Library, MS Aubrey 7, fol. 3. All manuscripts cited here, as well as printed books with specific shelfmarks, are in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. The place of publication is London unless otherwise stated. All ellipses in quotations are Aubrey’s unless enclosed in square brackets.

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to have contributed “truly nothing” to the advancement of learning but antiquarian “umbrages.” Similarly, he asserts that his eventful life-story was “remarqueable” only as an example of how a person’s life might be molded by astrological conditions, rather than directed by that person’s active agency. But something should give us pause: in its allusion to his love of books, and its antiquarian pathos, Aubrey’s statement makes melancholy reference to the grammar schoolbooks of his boyhood education at the Wiltshire village of Yatton Keynell. It was the 1630s, and the boys’ printed textbooks were covered with parchment from the monastic libraries, whose contents, Aubrey tells us, “flew-about like butterflies” after the Dissolution. Local merchants used the leaves as wrapping paper: Aubrey recalls that gloves were “wrapt-up” in “many good pieces of Antiquity” from Malmesbury Abbey. And of course they served as waste paper in bindings, leading Aubrey to lament that one may “percieve by the binding of old bookes how the old MSS went to wrack in those dayes.”

So, not quite so self-deprecatory, perhaps, after all. Aubrey said that as a child he was fascinated “with the elegancie of the writing, and the coloured initiall letters” in the parchment; and he was evidently more interested in them than in the printed texts of Cicero and Virgil they protected. A manuscript fragment bound in a printed book may be the first object to catch the curious eye, and what is formally liminal may generate the greatest excitement. In one case that may stand for many, he “restored” such a fragment, bringing it back into intellectual circulation. In a section of Aubrey’s manuscript *Monumenta Britannica* devoted to paleography is found part of a ninth-or tenth-century text of Ecclesiasticus. Aubrey tells us, “This old parchment I tooke off, from Leovicius de Conjunctionibus magnis, it being the Cover of it.” He paid one shilling and sixpence for Leowicz’s astrological book, which, stripped of its precious cover, he presented to what is now the library of Worcester College, Oxford. He proceeded to take the Ecclesiasticus text to compare with manuscripts in two repositories, intending to establish a method for dating manuscripts by the form of their script.

It is easy to forget how much value Aubrey placed on Leowicz’s book because the neglected and despoiled Ecclesiasticus manuscript is described by him with such poignancy. Aubrey does not generally define himself in relation to print culture, and he printed only one of his own works, yet unless we look carefully at his broader career, we are likely to miss the degree to which he did engage himself in print projects, and to overlook how subtly and consciously he negotiated the relationship between print and manuscript. When Aubrey describes events of his own life, it is very often in terms either of manuscripts or of printed books that have some unique feature. In his *Naturall Historie of Wiltshire*, he describes how, aged twenty-one, he returned to Yatton Keynell

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3. MS Aubrey 7, fol. 3v, MS Aubrey 2, fols. 18v, 19v.
4. MS Top. Gen. c 25, fols. 186—88v. Aubrey compared the “old parchment” with “a Grant of King Henry 1” from the archives of the Earl of Thanet (probably in 1672), and with the “Legier booke” of Salisbury Cathedral. Today Aubrey’s copy of Cyprian Leowicz, *De coniunctionibus magnis insignioribus superiorum plantarum* (1573) is bound with other works without Aubrey provenance. It is inscribed “Jo: Aubrey R. Societ. Soc. prt 1s. 6” (Worcester College, Oxford, CC. 8. 29). The holes where the parchment was stitched to the printed book are visible.
in 1647 and “out of Curiosity” paid a visit to the rector, William Stumpe, a convivial man who brewed his own beer. Aubrey wanted to see again Stumpe’s collection of manuscripts from Malmesbury Abbey, which he remembered from his childhood. The rector used to tear out pages to stop up his barrels of “Speciall Ale,” to the “griefe” of the watching child. But his return was too late to preserve the precious texts. “[B]y that time,” Aubrey tells us, “they were lost and dispers’d.” The rector’s sons “were Gunners and soldiers, and scoured their Gunnes with ‘em.” This anecdote is one of many such emblems of the destruction of the Civil War. “Curiosity,” in Aubrey, is a combination of fascination and grief, but also of purposeful intent: not merely to observe, but to preserve.5

But perhaps Aubrey did want the account of his life to be literally “interponed” in a printed book. It is unfoliated, not a full part of the manuscript it introduces, which is in any case mainly a creation of Edmond Malone. Aubrey certainly stored a great deal of precious manuscript material in printed books, for fear that it might be “lost and dispers’d.” In 1688 he wrote to the Oxford antiquary Anthony Wood, reminding him that he had sent him his copy of Robert Plot’s *The Natural History of Oxford-shire* (Oxford, 1677) and that “at the later end, and beginning […] you will find some Notes of mine, that are not trivial.”6 The Oxfordshire material on the flyleaves of Plot’s *Oxford-shire* includes a sketch and plan of “Rosamond’s Bower” at Woodstock and a description of “Bushell’s Rocks” at Enstone. This was a grotto and water-works constructed by Francis Bacon’s employee Thomas Bushell. Bushell re-created, in the middle of a very remote part of Oxfordshire, some of the hydraulic “concepts” of the garden of the Villa Aldobrandini, with a grotto, rainbows, birdsong, optical illusions, a silver ball held aloft with a spout of water, and a wooden statue of Neptune aiming his trident at a duck that swam perpetually around him. Aubrey had already supplied all this matter to Wood years before, in the expectation that it would be published in Wood’s survey of the topography and antiquities of Oxfordshire. The survey was never completed; when he finally accepted this, Aubrey tried to get this material back to lend it to Plot. He supplied Plot with contacts and research support, as well as his own material. When Plot’s *Oxford-shire* was published, however, Aubrey found no mention of his name, nor of the work he most hoped would be included. Dismayed, he then had recourse to annotation of Plot’s printed book, where among a variety of comments are found the full account of “Rosamond’s Bower” and his further collections on Rosamond and the manor house at Woodstock; general collections for Oxfordshire; and his account of Bushell’s Rocks. Ever optimistic, Aubrey burned no boats: he made yet another copy of these notes and passed them to Plot. For there might always be a second edition.7

If Aubrey sought to contribute his manuscript notes to larger print projects, printed books inspired him to revise and add to them. This was what happened when

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5. MS Aubrey 2, fol. 19v.
6. MS Tanner 456a, fol. 35.
Aubrey first met Wood, on August 31, 1667. As Wood tells it, Aubrey was “in Oxon with Edward Forest, a book-seller living against Alls. Coll., to buy books.” Wood’s use of “with” reveals just how personal and sociable book-buying was in this period, and how naturally it might lead to bibliographical gossip. Aubrey spotted, and purchased, a copy of William Fulman’s *Notitia Academiae Oxoniensis* (Oxford, 1665). When he inquired as to its author, he was told that “the report was that one Mr. Anthony Wood of Merton Coll. was the author.” Aubrey then approached Wood and initiated their long intellectual relationship. It is typical that Aubrey asked the bookseller about the author. His books, particularly those published anonymously, are frequently annotated with details, gleaned through such conversations, of author, printer, and the circumstances of publication.

His collaboration with Wood began with an annotated book. Aubrey took his copy of Fulman’s list of notable Oxford alumni and over the next four months added to its margins a mass of biographical information. To take one example, Aubrey added the name of John Denham to his list of those alumni of Trinity College, Oxford, unnoticed by Fulman, and added:

> <Sir> John Denham only son <of> [ . . . ] Denham one of the Barons of the Exchequer, borne <at> Dublin in Ireland, his father then being one of the Lords Justices <t>here./

He writt the Sophy, a Tragedie; a Poem called <C>owpers-hill. translated into English verse, third booke of Virgils AEnead, <a>n Essay against Gameing./

He then sent Wood the volume in January 1668, with “seuerall papers” and a letter pledging himself, with considerable understatement, “as zealous for you as any one in this Nation.”9 He was zealous on his own behalf, too. At this period, Aubrey had already written a number of unpublished lives and biographical collections, including work on his old friend William Harvey, on Ralegh, and on Bacon.10 These he hoped to contribute to some printed project, and Wood’s projected history of the university of Oxford, which included biographical notes on Oxford worthies, sounded ideal. Aubrey contributed annotated books, his own manuscript lives and a large number of informative and focused letters to support Wood in writing his *Historia et Antiquitates Universitatis Oxoniensis* (1674), and then, when the biographical part of that work proved disappointingly concise, on his great biographical and bibliographical work *Athenae Oxonienses* (Oxford, 1691). In this, the greatest collaboration of his intellectual life, Aubrey lent Wood his manuscripts, sometimes for periods of ten years or so; in

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8. Wood 614 (1), 44, 45; angle brackets enclose text lost when the pages were cropped by the binder; ellipses are Aubrey’s, indicating that he does not know the first name of Denham’s father.
9. MS Ballard 14, fol. 80v.
10. Ibid., fol. 127. The Bacon and Harvey materials were in a lost manuscript, Liber B, of the mid-1650s.
fact he found it remarkably difficult to persuade Wood to give them back. He wrote his three-volume manuscript for *Brief Lives* partly with the intention that Wood would find it helpful and would print this material in the *Athenae*, with due acknowledgment. Wood had other ideas, and the hundreds of letters Aubrey wrote to Wood, stuffed with information, were pillaged and printed by Wood without such acknowledgment. Aubrey is often described as Wood's research assistant. This anachronistic title vastly underplays his originality, initiative, and style as a writer and researcher, and also occludes the way in which knowledge was produced in the later seventeenth century. However, one can see how it came to be used, for Aubrey would often describe his role as supplementary to the world of print. He described his early work on *Brief Lives* by saying, “I have writt Memorandums of Sir Walter Ralegh [. . .] not yet toucht by any one, for I meddle not with any Memorandum that is already printed.” In 1679 Aubrey wrote something that, on the title page, he called “Supplementum Vitae thomae hobbes Malmesburiensis,” viewing it as an addition to Hobbes's verse autobiography. “[W]hat need you say Supplimentum, “ Wood objected, “pray say The Life of Thomas Hobbs,” and this is the title finally written on the vellum cover. But it is Wood's title, not Aubrey's.

This tentativeness, as it may strike us, has Baconian roots. It is a form of publicly directed and generous intellectual ambition, a wish to participate in the building of a better world. The collections that make up Aubrey's intellectual legacy are a statement, not of power, wealth, taste, or status, but of neglected potential, the vulnerability and transience of beauty and knowledge, and the destructiveness of civil war, this last viewed from a Royalist perspective. It is a collection of the despoiled, the missing, and the undervalued. To take one example, in his *Perambulation of Surrey*, Aubrey notes that “when Charing-crosse was pulled-downe (about 1647) it was very much in vogue to have saltsellers and handles of knives made of the pieces of it.” Aubrey's annotations on his books and pamphlets, indeed those books and pamphlets viewed as a collection, comment on their times and not merely on their intellectual subjects: it is in this historical context that he left them to posterity. Aubrey got to know John Denham during the poet's yearlong visit to Wilton House in 1652. He thought very highly of Denham's political and topographical poem *Cooper's Hill*: he had obtained a copy of the 1643 reprint of the first edition as a seventeen-year-old undergraduate. In his life of Denham, Aubrey notes that after the Battle of Edgehill, “his Poeme called

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11. For example, a manuscript account of Aubrey's perambulation of Surrey was in Wood's hands between 1673 and October 1691. Aubrey never recovered at least forty-three pages of *Brief Lives*, which Wood cut out of the second manuscript volume and destroyed.

12. The manuscripts of *Brief Lives* are MSS Aubrey 6–8. The full account of how Aubrey contributed material to Wood over a period of twenty-five years will be found in the commentary to my edition of Aubrey's *Brief Lives*, forthcoming from Clarendon Press.

13. MS Ballard 14, fol. 130v.

14. MS Aubrey 9, fol. 28.

15. MS Aubrey 4, fol. 229.

16. MS Aubrey 1, fol. 135v.
Cowpers-hill was printed at Oxford, in a sort of browne paper, for then they could gett no better.” Royalist printers at Oxford were obliged to use the poor-quality, unsized, coarse-fibered English paper “made of coarse rags and useless rope-stuff,” as a contemporary described it, because they were unable to get the usual supply of fine Dutch- or French-made paper from the London stationers. Aubrey’s ink has spread on the “browne paper” of his own copy of the poem: the life of Denham comments on the poem as a material object and acts as a companion to it.17

Aubrey’s main period of work, from the 1650s to the 1690s, coincided with his having no one place of study. This was the leading cause of the notoriously chaotic and inchoate state of his surviving manuscripts. But it is also the chief source of the bibliographical richness of their content, for he made good use of the libraries in the houses and colleges in which he stayed. He spent much time in Wilton House library and the archives of the earl of Thanet.18 He read items in his grandfather’s library at Lyte’s Cary, Somerset, and wrote to Wood from the earl of Abingdon’s house at West Lavington in Wiltshire, promising that if he had time he would “look over Henry Danvers Earl of Danby’s Library here, of old bookes. Where is a little 8o, a Poeme in English, of Cosmographie, writt by Richard Zouch Civilian of New-coll. 1613 which I suspect you have not seen.” He apologized for not being more bibliographically precise: “Mr More is gone a hawking and hath the Key of the Library in his pocket, els I could have been more particular.”19 When Aubrey came to work on his collection of Lives of the English Mathematical Writers, he consulted his notebooks and recorded that “I did see many yeares since in a country-man’s house a little booke in octavo in English, called Arsmetrie, or the art of Numbring, printed in an old black letter, about Henry 8. The authors name I doe not remember,” and he made a note to ask the Duck Lane booksellers about it.20 No copy of this arithmetical textbook is known to have survived. Perhaps this “country-man’s house” was the “country mans howse in Herefordshire” in which Aubrey, around 1649, “did light upon” a book that he calls “something in Latin de Methodo” by Sir Everard Digby. He later found out what this was, and bought a copy of De duplici methodo (1580).21 This he then offered to Wood for his personal use. He used the home of the self-taught astrologer and mathematician Henry Coley, in a little court near Gray’s Inn, as an address from which to send and receive letters in the mid-1670s.22 There he browsed Coley’s library of practical mathematical books and

18. MS Top. Gen. c 25, fols s. 186v, 189.
19. MS Wood F 51, fol. 6v.
20. MS Aubrey 8, fol. 71.
21. MS Wood F 39, fol. 178; Ashm. 1596.
22. In the 1670s (certainly from May 1672–August 1674), Aubrey used Coley’s home “in Baldwyns-court in Baldwyns gardens neer Grayes Inne lane” as an address from which to send and receive letters. See MS Ballard 14, fol. 98; MS Wood F 39, fols. 173, 175, 178, 213v, 223, 229, 234, 248, 252, 280; MS Aubrey 13, fol. 265v.
almanacs, which included one by Nostradamus; and he took an extract for his collections on magic from Coley’s “long manuscript like a shoppe-booke. where are [. . . ] rare things in Magick.”23 In another letter Aubrey says that Archbishop Tobie Matthew “founded a fine library in the Marsh in Bristol where I have many times been: his picture is there.”24 Wherever he stayed, he looked for books. He bought a geometrical work in Paris in 1664.25 He even noticed pamphlets pasted on windows or on parlor walls. In his life of Thomas Bushell, he of “Bushell’s Rocks,” in Brief Lives, Aubrey notes:

He wrote a stitch’t Treatise of Mines, and improving of the adits to them and Bellowes to drive-in Wind, which Sir John Danvers (his acquaintance) had, and nayled it to his parlor wall at Chelsey, with some Scheme: and I beleive is there yet. I sawe it there about 10 yeares since.

This was 1670. It is not clear which treatise Sir John Danvers (1584/5–1655), Aubrey’s relative, owned. It was perhaps one that has not survived.26

Aubrey found manuscripts, too, discovering, and copying, poems from a neighbor’s miscellany, inscriptions from the job book of the memorial mason Edward Marshall, and he also copied texts painted or carved on the walls of writers’ houses, chapels, and gardens.27 In Brief Lives we find something presented as Aubrey’s life of the fifteenth-century Augustinian canon and alchemist George Ripley but effectively an account of the alchemical manuscripts in the collections of Aubrey’s acquaintance, containing the best available source for such a life. Aubrey begins by saying that Ripley “was a Canon of Burlington; the greatest Chymist of his time.” Then he continues: “Mr Meredith Lloyd (an able Chymist. and who enformed his Majestie and Sir Robert Moray herin) hath a MS in 8o, 3 inches thick transcribed by T. P. 1580. viz: Medulla Philosophiae in English. Item Ripleys XII Gates in English verse, more full then in Mr Ashmoles Theatrum Chymicum.” Aubrey goes on to describe the manuscript in sufficient detail to allow it to be identified as British Library Sloane MS 3580 A and B, a miscellany of alchemical works in print and manuscript compiled by Thomas Potter in 1580. All the texts itemized by Aubrey are in these volumes, which before division formed a single work about “3 inches thick.” Aubrey’s Brief Lives then goes on to catalogue Lloyd’s alchemical manuscripts.28

23. MS Wood F 39, fol. 303, 360; MS Aubrey 24, fol. 100v.
24. MS Wood F 39, fol. 171.
26. MS Aubrey 6, fol. 97v. Of Bushell’s extant works, the most likely is Mr Bushell’s ABRIDGMENT of the Lord Chancellor Bacon’s Philosophical Theory in Mineral Prosecutions (1659), which contains “A Table setting forth the manner of that great Philosopher the Lord Chancellor Bacons searching for Mettals by making Addits through the lowest Level of Hills or Mountains, and conveying Aire into the innermost parts of their Center by Pipe and Bellows.” Aubrey hoped to make enquiries of one Beech, a Quaker, for the treatise.
28. MS Aubrey 8, fol. 10v.
But Aubrey did not merely make catalogues or copies of manuscripts. He actively pursued unpublished works, for example by Sir Francis Bacon.29 Typically, when Aubrey discovered an interesting or fragile manuscript, whose content was not so sensitive as to preclude its publication, his practice, or at least his intent, was to preserve the manuscript while printing its content. He collected versions of poems by Edmund Waller, Cowley, Herbert, Milton, and Samuel Butler which had not been printed, hoping to incorporate the new readings into later editions.30 He discovered a poem by Henry Clifford, Earl of Cumberland, on the Psalms, and tried to get it published; but in this he was unsuccessful. He found that “the language being now something out of fashion (like Sir Philip Sydneys) they will not print it.”31 He reprinted Christopher Love's single sheet of Rules to Be Observed in Buying and Selling, most copies of which had been destroyed in the Fire of London. The publication was inspired by both the traumatic experience of witnessing Love's execution and the discovery, which he considered providential, of “an old torn copy” that was “pasted on the Windowe of the Rectors house of Lower-Dunhed” in Wiltshire.32 His accounts of the discovery of bibliographical rarities frequently double as emblems of the neglect of the riches of the past, or the violence of his century. Thus he describes how a manuscript from the library of Bath Abbey happened “into a small Chandlers hands in a Village neer the Devises” and was bought by the Bath physician Dr. Thomas Guidott.33

In the same way, Aubrey sought to preserve visual images of the past by having them etched or engraved. When writing about the funeral of Sir Philip Sidney in Brief Lives, he recalls as a child standing in the front parlor of a Gloucester woolen-draper’s while the paper print of Sidney’s funeral procession was turned on two pins, making the engraved figures “march in order.”34 He tried to recall exactly where the house was, in the hope that what we now know as Lant’s Roll might be preserved and reprinted. But along with such purposeful commitment to record and to act came a vivid evoca-

29. In his Ephemerides for February 27, 1653, the intelligencer Samuel Hartlib says that “My Lady Mitton is said to have the remainder of all Verulam’s MS. which Aubrey will labor to get from her” (Sheffield University Library, Hartlib Papers, HP 28/2/49B), and he wrote to Aubrey on March 8, 1653, to announce that he had “received a piece of the Lord Verulam’s which was never yet extant in print” (MS Aubrey 12, fol. 155). The letter missing from Aubrey’s life of Bacon in Brief Lives, a copy of which Aubrey says he obtained “not long since” (that is, some time in 1680) from Walter Charleton, M.D., shows that Aubrey continued to pursue this project.


31. MS Wood F 39, fol. 208.

32. MS Aubrey 10, fol. 57. See Michael Hunter, John Aubrey and the Realm of Learning (Sussex, 1975), 66.


tion of childhood: his bibliographical writing is often poignantly autobiographical. He had, of course, more opportunities to preserve such antiquities as an adult. In the section “Of old castles” in his antiquarian treatise Monumenta Britannica, he recounts seeing in the parlor of a Wiltshire manor house several prospects of medieval castles that Inigo Jones had drawn while accompanying James I and Charles I on progresses. In the short term, Aubrey rescued one from a child and put it back on the wall. In the longer term, he tried to persuade engravers to copy these sketches to “make them publick.” The castles were no longer standing, and the sketches were a rare record of their appearance. The engraver whom he most admired was Wenceslaus Hollar, whom he employed on occasion, for example to etch a drawing that he commissioned of Osney Abbey, shortly before its demolition. It was Hollar who made Aubrey’s bookplate, which exists in two versions.

These records and observations were the fruit of a life largely spent in travel and at the houses of friends. But despite the bibliographical, social, and intellectual opportunities that his peripatetic habits afforded him, the lack of a study was an inconvenience with severe consequences for his work. It led to his negative posthumous reputation as one who never completed his works. Aubrey sometimes alludes wistfully to “delitescencies,” places for retirement and study, such as the “mighty pleasant” study created in Belsize by Sir Isaac Wake, with an avenue of trees and a prospect over Surrey and London. Instead, Aubrey left caches of books everywhere. When he quit Trinity College, Oxford, in the 1640s, his tutor, William Browne, allowed him to leave a box of books behind him, and they remained in Oxford for at least five years until he finally collected them. He had books at home in his study at Broad Chalke, Wiltshire, including what he called “Austins little treatise of Fruit trees,” which may be any of Ralph Austen’s publications on the topic. He kept some books with him at his lodgings: in 1668 he was helping Wood with biographical researches and lodging with the bookseller Fabian Stedman in Fleet Street. Then Stedman went into hiding from his creditors. Aubrey had left in “his Custody 2 great trunks of gallant books of good value, and know not yet what’s become of them”; there were also two manuscripts and the life of Hobbes. Some books that Aubrey had asked Stedman to send Wood also seemed to have been lost in the post. Aubrey as usual burned no bridges and, when he later established contact with Stedman, got from him valuable information about the life and publications of the mathematician Edmund Wingate. But three years later it happened again: Stedman disappeared without paying his rent. His landlady seized Aubrey’s “gallant” books, but somehow he coaxed her into giving them back.

Aubrey circulated his books and manuscripts and lent them to colleagues, such as Thomas Gale and John Evelyn, for annotation. Some books and manuscripts were

35. MS Top. Gen. c 24, fol. 198.
37. MS Aubrey 12, fol. 302.
38. Worcester College, Oxford, MS 63 (unfoliated MS).
39. MS Wood F 39, fols. 128v, 133, 135; MS Wood F 40, fol. 17.
40. MS Wood F 39, fol. 141v; MS Ballard 14, fol. 89.
in Wiltshire, and when Aubrey received them in 1682 he had not seen them for eleven years.41 The London books were by 1688 either at Robert Hooke’s lodgings in Gresham College or at Aubrey’s lodgings near Charing Cross. (This worried him: he feared that if he died suddenly the landlord’s son would appropriate them.)42 But they seem to have been everywhere. After Aubrey’s death his brother William wrote to Edward Lhuyd about Aubrey’s “Sea-chest” of books; a fitting repository for one who described his biographical collections as “tanquam tabulata naufragii,” like planks from a shipwreck.43 William Aubrey also wrote to Thomas Tanner saying that he did not know the whereabouts of “all his Scattered Papers” but that some books were with Dorothy (d. 1710), widow of Aubrey’s friend Sir James Long, of Draycot, Wiltshire. Nothing more is known of these, except that one was a lurid-sounding work about “poisoning and clappes.”44

Aubrey’s book collection, as we have seen, had wider purposes than purely to permit him to study their content. Some books he bought because he recognized their rarity and hoped to protect them; others he bought as gifts and to extend and support his social and intellectual networks; others were gifts to him. Did Aubrey read all his books? Some more than others, naturally. History, poetry, mathematics, and science are well-thumbed and marked; but there are very few religious books, with a few exceptions. He told Anthony Wood in 1673 that “among a great many books that I have, I have one of the best bound set of Greeke Chrysostomes of Eaton-binding that I have seen: they were Judge Hobards”—that is, Sir Henry Hobart, who died in 1625, “whose coate is gilt on the covers.” Aubrey says that as his interests are historical and scientific, he is “well enough contented to let the Fathers be thumbed by the Divines”; the books are “as fresh as out of the shop” and “the whole number which are 6 or 8 I have forgot.” Despite his bankrupt state, Aubrey preferred to present them to a library rather than to sell them, but could not think of a suitable one. Since in his draft will Aubrey leaves “My greeke Crysostoms” with other books to Jesus College library, he probably bought them with the intention of presenting them to some worthy institution, to protect them from being used for lesser purposes. But eventually the financial pressures won the day and Robert Hooke bought “Auberys Crysostoms” for £4 10s.45

So not all of Aubrey’s books were acquired for his own exclusive use. He worked tirelessly as an encourager of others and would send the latest publications to those, like the mathematicians Francis Potter and Edward Davenant, whose talents he considered in danger of being wasted due to their provincial isolation in country parsonages.46 During his biographical researches he collected a number of items that he sent to Wood or interleaved in his own manuscripts. These included printed texts, manuscript bibliographies of authors’ writings, and neglected items such as the letters or

41. MS Wood F 39, fol. 369v.
42. MS Tanner 456a, fol. 34v.
43. MS Aubrey 21, fol. 75; MS Eng. hist. c. 11, fol. 9.
44. MS Tanner 23, fol. 52; MS Aubrey 21, fol. 6v.
45. MS Wood F 39, fols. 142v, 206v; MS Aubrey 21, fol. 75; The Diary of Robert Hooke . . . 1672–1680, ed. H. W. Robinson and Walter Adams (1935), 135.
other minor manuscripts of writers. He also lent Wood his own books. In one letter Aubrey tells Wood that he had sent him “a Pamflet under the name of a Beaumonts poems […] for the sake of Verses of John Earles at the end.” This is Earle’s “Elegie upon Master Francis Beaumont,” reproduced in Poems, by Francis Beaumont (1640). Aubrey lent Wood his copy, inscribed “John Aubrey 1643,” which is now in the Bodleian (Ashm. 1663). Aubrey added his comments for Wood’s benefit before sending him the work: “I have a strong Conceit, that the most Ingeniose Mr Francis Beaumont, […] was not the Author of those Poemes” (referring to “The Hermaphrodite” and “The Remedy of Love”), “but the Bookesellers are cheating knaves” who tamper “with good Names.” He even added notes on the printer, Laurence Blaikelocke, who signed the dedication to Robert Ducie. Underneath Blaikelocke’s name Aubrey added the statement that the printer

was a Raskal and a Cuckold […] and one of the Informers to the Committees of Sequestration at Haberdashers-hall, and Goldsmiths-hall: and I being at the former, attending the taking-off of my Fathers Sequestration I over-heard this Blaicklock give notice of this Sir Robert Ducy’s being in London (incognito) and discovered his Lodgeing. / He dyed a Beggar; and (I thinke) in the Kings-Bench-prison.

Wood made use of all of this quasi-private information in his “Life of John Earle,” published in the Athenae Oxonienses.47

Aubrey obtained his books from a number of sources. In an essay on biography and gossip, Harold Love claimed that Aubrey was less bibliographically resourceful than Wood.48 But Aubrey’s “gossip,” or rather his conversation, was a major part of Wood’s bibliographical resources, for it was one of the routes through which Aubrey found out about, and obtained, the many written texts with which he supplied Wood. This was the way things were done in the seventeenth century. When in 1703 Aubrey’s brother William attempted to secure subscriptions for Edward Lhuyd, he did so informally, through similarly far-reaching social networks. He told Lhuyd that he had distributed papers via a friend, Charles Gore, “to a Bowling Greene where the D. of Beaufort, and some of Glocestershire and Wilts. Gent. weekly meets. One asked me how he should have the Book sent him and I told him, I would undertake for that.”49 Bibliographical information also traveled along these gossip avenues. In one typical letter, Aubrey tells Wood, “Sir William Dugdale sayes, that John Leyland left his MSS to a Lawyer (his executor) who gave them to Mr Burton of Lincoln's Inn, who left them to his Brother Democritus junior, who gave them to the Bodleian archives.” Dugdale was

47. Wood says that Earle has written “An Elegy upon Mr. Franc. Beaumont the Poet— Afterwards printed at the end of Beaumonts Poems. Lond. 1640 qu. Put out with a poetical Epistle before them, subscribed by Laur. Blaikelock a Bookseller near Temple-bar, afterwards an informer to the committees of sequestration at Haberdashers and Goldsmiths-hall, and a beggar defunct in Prison” (Athenae Oxonienses, vol. 2 [1692], 252).


49. MS Eng. misc, c 11, fol. 9.
the obvious person to ask and his testimony is along the right lines, if not correct in every particular. Aubrey was in fact the conduit through which many lists of authors’ works reached Wood. These he often obtained from his bookseller friends or from the authors themselves, but he also made a practice of visiting the relatives of recently deceased biographical subjects; his aim was to protect books, manuscripts, and such-like rare materials from dispersal or destruction. “[W]hat worke doe the Executors and widowes make with Librarys which were so dearly beloved by their late Masters!” he exclaimed in a letter to Wood. Sometime at these visits he was presented with copies of his subjects’ publications. When he visited Margaret Bagshawe, the widow of Edward Bagshawe, the nonconformist minister, she gave him a copy of Bagshawe's The Life and Death of Vavasour Powell (1671). Aubrey studied it with his usual polymathic zeal, annotated it heavily, and pretty much squeezed it dry.

Annotation might keep material safe until the time was ripe for publication. At the end of his life, Aubrey wrote to the antiquary Thomas Tanner after the death of Henry Birkhead, the Latin poet, who had briefly converted to Catholicism in his youth and retained covert high-church sympathies. Aubrey described Birkhead as “inge-niose” and universally “beloved.” He told Tanner that he had presented his copy of Francis Rider’s etymological dictionary to the Ashmolean Museum and urged him to “look on the blank leaves at the end of it, and you will find a thundering copy of Verses that he gave me in praise of this king of France. Now he is dead, it may be look’t upon.” I have unfortunately not been able to trace Aubrey’s copy of this work, which he cites in Monumenta Britannica. It would be a book worth seeing, almost as much as Aubrey’s much-used, and doubtless much-annotated, copy of Ralegh’s History of the World (1614), which, in an undated draft will, he bequeathed to his highly eccentric lawyer friend Anthony Ettrick. Now lost, it was apparently in the hands of Aubrey’s brother William when, in August 1703, six years after Aubrey’s death, William sold some of his brother’s books.

50. MS Wood F 39, fol. 255.
51. The Life and Death of Vavasour Powell (1671). Aubrey’s copy is Ashm. 1571. Inside front cover is “Io: Aubrey R. S. S. Dedit Margaret Bagshaw. vidua Th.B.” (in error for Ed. B., or Edward Bagshawe). Aubrey marked the margins extensively and made a list on the verso of the final endpaper of passages about “recovery of an Ague,” “Dreames,” “escape,” about Powell’s being struck yet not feeling pain, “apparitions,” “anointing,” and a natural-philosophical record of tin being mentioned in Isaiah. Most of these were later used in Aubrey’s Miscellanies (1696). Aubrey annotated Powell’s epitaph, “This epitaph was made by Mr Edward Bagshaw B. D. formerly Student of Christ-church in Oxford” (p. 208). He also added on the final endpaper:

Mr Meredith Lloyd knew Vavasour Powell, who was wont to say that there were but two sorts of people that had Religion, viz. The Gatherd-churches, and the Roman-Catholiques. He would not allow it to the Church of England, or the Presbyterians.

Mr Lloyd sayes, that when he preach’t, a Smoake would issue from his head: so great agitation of Spirit he had. Why might not such accidents heretofore be the Hint to the Glory which the Painters putt about the heads of the Saints?”

52. MS Tanner 24, fol. 159. John Rider’s 1589 Bibliotheca Scholastica was corrected by Holyoke in 1606 (and there were several later editions to 1657). Aubrey’s annotated copy, which he certainly planned to give to the Ashmolean Museum (MS Ashm. 1814, fols. 112, 113), is not known to have survived. For his use of it, see MS Top. Gen. c 25, fols. 238v–241v.
53. MS Aubrey 21, fol. 75; MS Eng. hist. c. 11., fol. 9.
His Ralegh had special significance. It was a work that influenced his own sense of the proper relationship between print and manuscript. He was to allude to it in Brief Lives, where Aubrey says in the prefatory letter that the individual lives are not fit to “lett flie abroad now,” but should be kept privately and in manuscript for at least thirty years; the dilemma he faced was where they should be kept. Aubrey says that his researches are much the better for being in manuscript, where they are not subject to the limitations of “printed Histories.” He exclaims, oratorically: “What uncertainty doe we find in printed Histories? they either treading too neer on the heeles of trueth, that they dare not speake plaine; or els for want of intelligence (things being antiquated) become too obscure and darke!” He is alluding to Ralegh’s statement before the History that:

I know that it will bee said by many, That I might haue beene more pleasing to the Reader, if I had written the Story of mine owne times; hauing beene permitted to draw water as neare the Well-head as another. To this I answere, that who-so-euer in writing a moderne Historie, shall follow truth too neare the heeles, it may happily strike out his teeth.54

Ralegh’s words were much quoted by those seventeenth-century historians who, like Aubrey, did choose to write a modern history. Fuller, in his Church-History of Britain (1656), says, in a sermonizing vein: “I know how dangerous it is to follow Truth too nere to the heels: yet better it is that the teeth of an Historian be struck out of his head for writing the Truth, then that they remain still and rot in his Jaws, by feeding too much on the sweet-meats of flattery.”55 Aubrey, however, did not think all that much of Fuller. He judged him a sloppy historian, deficient in detail. Aubrey preferred to keep his teeth; yet he liked texts with teeth, too. His solution, most fully deployed in Brief Lives, was to use his own manuscripts to preserve truth, while very actively supporting the print projects of others.

Aubrey’s intellectual interests led not only to the acquisition of books but also to curiosity about their authors; and he generally records these preliminary investigations on the endpapers of his books. To take one example, Aubrey spent some of the 1650s learning natural philosophy and mathematics, making connections with congenial interests and buying books. During this period he taught himself chemistry, and he asked Robert Boyle to recommend a course of reading. Boyle seems to have suggested he obtain a copy of the Aberdeen-born physician and chemist William Davidson’s Philosophy pyrotechnica as a chemistry textbook. This was one of the works Aubrey left to the Ashmolean Museum, and so it is now in the Bodleian. On the inside cover Aubrey wrote, “Liber John Aubrey. 1656,” and sometime later, on the front endpaper he added the note:

This Booke scilicet his Cursus Chymiatricus was recommend to me by Mr Robert Boyle, as the best then extant: but he advised me not to read the Philosophia Pyrotechnica. Mr Thomas Hobbes Malmesburiensis

55. Thomas Fuller, The Church-History of Britain (1656), 232.
told me that he knew him [Davisson] very well at Paris, and that he went through a Course of Chymistrie with him. His Laboratorie was at the upper end of the King of Frances Physick-Garden. About 1660 he left France, and went into Poland to get acquainted with the Brothers of the Rosie-cross: where he ended his daies./56

This is on the whole typical of Aubrey's information. It is substantially correct, but it is not right in every particular. Aubrey clearly cannot quite remember a conversation that happened some years before: as "Cursus Chymiatricvs" is the subtitle, it is not clear what advice Boyle gave him: perhaps to leave out the second part of a three-part work.

Davisson was certainly professor of chemistry at the Jardin du Roi, and he was indeed a Paracelsian. He did leave the French court for the Polish court in 1651, but left Poland in 1667: by 1669 he was back in Paris, where he died that year. It is not quite clear whether it was Boyle or Hobbes who told Aubrey the mistaken dates and the mistaken place of death, but clearly a result of Davisson's move to Poland was that he was off the London radar thereafter. The annotation is also typical of Aubrey's miscellaneous collections in that the correct information—that Hobbes knew Davisson at Paris and studied chemistry with him, that the laboratory was in this precise location, and that Boyle admired Davisson's book—is very valuable. Some of this information was transcribed into the life of Hobbes; and such biographical and bibliographical combinations are exactly the kind of information that Aubrey hoped to consolidate in the biographical work Brief Lives.57

The chemical book, Philosophia pyrotechnica, was donated to the Ashmolean, and the annotation is part of the book's intellectual value and something Aubrey wished to preserve. Indeed, Aubrey quite often commissioned annotations, as a form of peer review or expert response. Constructing a list of geometry books for his projected school library in his An Idea of Education of Young Gentleman, Aubrey lists "Thomas Digges's Stratioticos, which I have, which Dr John Pell did me the favour to peruse, and hath solved the Questions there after his owne way, which I have annexed to the booke now in the Musaeum at Oxford."58 These solutions survive twice over. First, in Worcester College, Oxford, MS 63, a small booklet that Aubrey has annotated, "This Explanation on Stratioticos was donne at my request by J. Pell. D.D and is his owne handwriting." Second, in the copy of Pell's answers Aubrey "annexed" to his own copy of the 1590 Stratioticos, which had belonged to his grandfather Isaac Lyte (Ashm. 1553, now in the Bodleian but formerly in the Ashmolean "Musaeum at Oxford"). We see some of the same annotation practices in books that did not accompany Aubrey's manuscripts to the Ashmolean, but were sold. Aubrey had at one time several books by Erasmus, for example, of whom he thought very highly and, unusually for him, defended against more modern teachers of grammar. These were probably among those sold either in his lifetime or after his death by his brother. One of them

56. Aubrey's copy of the 1641 Paris edition is Ashm. 1551.
58. MS Aubrey 10, fol. 101.
was bought in 1967 by Stuart Piggot. This is Aubrey's annotated copy of Erasmus, *Liber utilissimus de conscribendi epistolis* (Amsterdam, 1636). In it, among several annotations, mostly biographical, is this note:

Memorandum my cosen John Danvers of Baynton has an original picture of Erasmus, for which he sate for his scholar . . . . . . Blunt, my cosen wifes grand mother was a Blunt of MapleDurhum and begged it, and gave it to her grand daughter . . . . . . Long, wife to my cosen John Danvers 'tis a very good piece. 2 foot + high.

Aubrey later gave a more detailed version of this information in his life of Erasmus, in which he fills in the spaces with the missing information and comments that "'twas pitty such a rarity should have been alien'd from the Family: but the issue male is lately extinct. I will sometime or other endeavour to gett it for Oxford Library." The final remark is intended to interest Anthony Wood, and in fact Aubrey did give a portrait of Erasmus, not to the Bodleian Library Picture Gallery, but to the Ashmolean Museum. It has apparently not survived.59

Aubrey had also discussed Erasmus with a Somersetshire friend, Andrew Paschall, who had been at Queens' College, Cambridge, and was able to tell him about the location of Erasmus's room and also that "he mentions his being there in one of his Epistles: and blames the Beere there. One long since wrote in the margent of the booke in Collegii librorum in which that is sayd—Sicut erat in principio etc—and all Mr Paschalls time they found fault with the Brewer." This is a reference to a letter written to Andrea Ammonio from Queens' College in August 1511 in which Erasmus deplores the beer of "this place"; and evidently there was such an annotation in a Queens' copy of the *Epistles* in the seventeenth century.60 John Buchanan-Brown, editor of three minor prose works of Aubrey's, told me that in 1959 he had a conversation with Colonel Hugh Toye, whose work, *Springing Tiger*, a life of Subhas Chandra Bose, he was publishing. Colonel Toye told him that as a schoolboy in Bath he had bought a seventeenth-century edition of a work by Erasmus that had belonged to Aubrey and contained his manuscript note about the criticism of the beer at Queens' College. In 2007 I discovered the colonel's address, but his memory by then had failed; his sister very kindly arranged for me to come and examine his books. Although I found a number of antiquarian books and some in Latin and Greek, I did not find the book Toye had bought. The quest to discover it is thus an Aubrean tale: one based on hearsay, about a book bearing an annotation about another annotation, none of which can be authenticated.

Aubrey, then, alludes in *Brief Lives* to books annotated by his biographical subjects, or to published books by those subjects with notable annotations. He says of


Ben Jonson, for example, that his motto before his “bought” books was the Senecan tag “tanquam explorator.” He knew this because he owned two of Jonson’s books. One was found by Mark Bland in the Rosenbach Library: Jonson’s copy of John Selden’s De diis Syris (Leiden, 1629). The other was Digges’s A Geometrical, Practical Treatise Named Pantometria, now in Worcester College, which had been given to Jonson by Digges’s son and bears Aubrey’s geometrical calculations. Another book donated to Worcester College was the mathematician William Oughtred’s copy of Bartholomaeus Pitiscus, Trigonometriae (1614). In the life of Oughtred in Brief Lives, Aubrey says that he burned “several printed bookes, and would not stirre, till they were consumed. [...] Mr Oughtred at the Custome house (his grandson) haz some of his Papers. I my selfe have his Pitiscus, imbelished with his excellent marginall notes, which I esteeme as a great rarity.” Aubrey has annotated it, “This was old Mr Oughtreds booke, and the Notes are of his owne handwritting.” Aubrey does not say how he obtained the Pitiscus, but he was looking for a copy in 1649. In March 1650 Ralph Bathurst found a copy for him at the steep price of seven shillings, but this probably was not the Oughtred copy.

As well as collecting books owned by Oughtred, Aubrey attempted to secure manuscript copies of the mathematician’s works. He was quite aware that printed works might not represent the best text of an author’s work, and also that copies made by an author’s contemporaries might contain valuable corrections or annotations. He wrote to Wood to report that he had visited the widow of the algebrist Thomas Merry and secured his manuscripts for the library of the Royal Society; they included a manuscript of Oughtred’s “Trigonometrie” that Aubrey describes as a better text than that printed in 1657. He hoped to extract from Oughtred’s watchmaker son some “Rules of his Fathers, in Manuscript, for Levelling Water. with other rare notions: ‘tis pity they should be lost.” Aubrey obtained two publications of Oughtred’s from his daughter, Margaret Brooke, who was married to a mathematical-instrument maker in Oxford. One was a booklet to accompany a design for a planisphere and the other was the user’s manual for a quadrant. She told him about an unpublished grammar of Oughtred’s, too. Margaret’s brother Benjamin gave Aubrey another work by Oughtred about a new design for a gauging rod. As these examples show, Aubrey’s preliminary researches into his biographical subjects routinely involved the identification and collection of manuscripts and ephemeral printed works that his contemporaries, even the most learned, were unlikely to consider worth keeping.

Aubrey got hold of the Oughtred publications by being his usual charming self: by talking. But of course, some of his bibliographical knowledge came exclusively from...
such conversations and not from seeing the things themselves. A friend told him in
1663 he had seen an early printed work on algebra “in the inner Library” of St. John's
College, Oxford, by one “Galathus.” Aubrey wrote to Wood in 1680, “In 1665, one told
me that 40 years before he had seen an old printed book called the Plowmans glasse,
about the bignesse of a Primmer. wherein is mention of Stoneheng, Silbury hill, and
who lies there buried.” (These dates of 1663 and 1665 are evidence of a chronological
system of notebooks that have not survived. Aubrey’s notes are much less haphazard,
and less reliant on memory alone, than was once supposed.) Aubrey asked Wood if
these books could be identified in the Oxford libraries. Wood doubtless never
checked, but The Plowman’s Glass certainly seems to be one of the lost publications for
which Aubrey’s work is a rich source.66 Or just a mistake on the part of his informant.
We are on more solid ground when, in the life of Sir Henry Savile, in Brief Lives,
Aubrey reports the talk of the mathematician John Wallis, who, as Savilian Professor
of Geometry, had access to a private library of geometrical books for his exclusive use,
later incorporated into the Bodleian Library. This library included Savile’s copy of
Joseph Scaliger’s work on the quadrature of the circle, Cyclometrica (Leiden, 1594),
now Savile Ee 1. Aubrey had heard Wallis say “that Sir Henry Savill haz sufficiently
confuted Joseph Scaliger de Quadratura Circuli, in the very margent of the booke,”
calling his opponent an ass. Savile had filled the margins with an indignant mixture of
Greek, Latin, and English, abusing Scaliger for ignorance of geometry and refuting
his proofs. Scaliger’s Mesolabium, with which the work is bound, has received the same
treatment. Brief Lives is pioneering, as a work of both biography and bibliography, in its
use of such evidence of its subjects’ reading.

Wallis was the occasion for Aubrey to acquire a collection of pamphlets through
which another controversy was made public. These concerned the rival claims made
by Wallis and by William Holder to have taught a ten-year-old boy, born deaf and
dumb, to speak. Holder had achieved this to some degree, but the boy’s ability waned

65. Both references come from MS Wood F 39, fol. 171. The friend was Edmund Wylde. “Galathus”
is unidentified. The inner library was built in Laud’s Canterbury quadrangle in the 1630s to accommo-
date those manuscripts and printed books whose safekeeping was of special concern. See John New-
man, “The Architectural Setting,” in The History of the University of Oxford, Volume iv, Seventeenth-

66. For example, Aubrey wrote to Wood on January 18, 1672, announcing that Sir John Denham had
written “an Essay against Gaming to shew his Detestation of it to his Father. Printed by Nathaniel
Brooks at the Angel in Cornhill. I have it: about 3 or 4 sheetes. 8o. His name is not to it: but I know
’twas his and a kinsman of his that was one of his Fathers clarkes gave the copy to Brookes, and Sir John
Denham ownd it to me” (MS Wood F 39, fol. 193). Aubrey’s copy seems not to have survived, and the
only extant copies, by a different publisher, are among the Thomason Tracts in the British Library: The
Anatomy of Play, Written by a Worthy and Learned Gent. Dedicated to his Father, to shew his detestation
of it, printed by G. P. for Nicholas Bourne (1651), 8vo. 30 pp. Aubrey’s bibliographical descriptions are
usually accurate title-page transcriptions.
when Holder left to take up the post of prebendary of Ely. Wallis took over, triumphed, and took full credit for the success. Holder then published an account of his work, which was not acknowledged by Wallis, who published a rival account in the *Philosophical Transactions*. Then proceeded an almighty row, much writing of letters and coffee-house conversation, and a publication war. Aubrey’s lives of the two men passionately support Holder’s side. Aubrey also obtained a copy of Holder’s defense against Wallis in the *Philosophical Transactions*. As Aubrey wrote to Wood in 1690:

Dr Holder desired me to contrive some way, to dispos of those Tractates of his, against Dr Wallis, in some Libraries of Oxford; for Dr Wallis haz endeavoured to rob Dr Holder of his Invention. [. . .] When I come to Oxford, I will [. . .] bind up [. . .] one of Dr Holders Pamphlets to place in Bibl: Bodl. 67

Aubrey’s copy of Holder’s defense was not given to the Bodleian. Wallis’s widely resented position as Keeper of the University Archives made that an impossibility. Instead, the work was presented to the Ashmolean Museum. Holder continued to use Aubrey as a means to urge Anthony Wood to place copies of his defense in Oxford college libraries, where Wallis would not find and suppress them, but Wood did not do so. In a letter written after the publication of Wood’s bio-bibliographical *Athenae Oxonienses* (1691), on which Aubrey had been tirelessly working since 1674, Aubrey tried to engage Wood’s sympathies on Holder’s behalf by saying that the newly published *Athenae* was displayed in Holder’s hall, “as the Booke of Martyrs was heretofore.” 68

It was the second time Wood had been called a martyr. 69 The first time it happened was on the publication of his account of the history and antiquities of Oxford University, in which John Fell, who oversaw the University Press at the Sheldonian Theatre, changed Wood’s positive account of Hobbes for one very different in tone. In fact, Aubrey’s most significant missing book is perhaps his presentation copy of the *Historia*, “your noble present,” as he wrote in thanks, “which I shall preserve as a Relique for your sake.” Aubrey’s later allusion to Wood’s work as the *Book of Martyrs*, upon the publication of the *Athenae*, seemingly foreshadowed Wood’s prosecution by


68. MS Wood F 51, fol. 6v.

69. MS Tanner 456a, fol. 22.
Henry Hyde, second earl of Clarendon, for printing in it the widespread rumor that at the Restoration the first earl had received bribes from office seekers, information that Wood had received from Aubrey.  

It was a sad outcome of twenty-five years’ collaboration. Samuel Pepys, who did not like Wood, was informed by Arthur Charlett, who felt likewise, that Wood “was now begging mony to pay my Lord Clarendon’s fees,” but that he was still proposing to “go on still to collect truth, with much more to the same purpose which would make you laugh heartily.” Pepys was amused to hear that Wood meant “to expose his teeth” to “further kicks” from “the heels of truth.” Wood’s publication was extremely offensive to a great number of people, and many people considered him not a martyr but a malicious would-be destroyer of character. Aubrey himself was dismayed when he saw so many friends maligned. Wood’s publication revealed their fundamental differences in principle and approach. Wood was a man deeply committed to print and was prepared to print anything. Aubrey, kinder and infinitely more respectful of others, used the private strategies of manuscript circulation, private correspondence, and manuscript annotation of printed books, not all of which he expected or intended to be printed in his lifetime. 

As we have seen, this was not a strategy to bring him what he hoped; but it allowed him unqualified control over his own writings while they remained in manuscript and in his possession—and not in the hands of Wood (who mutilated them) or indeed in the clutches of landladies. Certainly Aubrey often collected manuscripts in the hope they would be printed or in the hope of producing better editions of printed books. But he treats his own manuscripts and his own books as eloquent material objects, or paper museums. Ultimately he hoped they would survive for posterity and as witness to their times. His collections are ambivalent and ambiguous in nature. Governed by an attraction as much to the fragmentary and frail as to the collaborative and substantial, they are both public and personal. As we saw with that image of the waste paper interposed in the binding, Aubrey’s collections may demur at great claims but, nevertheless, in their sympathetic engagement with the marginal, the fragile, and the neglected, they “breed in generous minds a kind of pittie: and sett the thoughts aworke.”

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70. MS Tanner 456a, fol. 41. See *Life and Times of Anthony Wood*, ed. Clark, 4:1–50. Wood was fined £40, money that Clarendon laid out on three statues for the gate of Oxford’s Botanical Gardens.


72. MSS Wood F 45, fol. 208, F 51, fol. 5, 6v; *Brief Lives*, ed. Clark, 1:258.


74. MS Aubrey 3, fol. 10.