Writing Lives

Aubrey, Anthony Wood, and Antiquarian Biography

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Abstract and Keywords

Aubrey is most famous for his Brief Lives, scintillating pen portraits of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century scholars, courtiers, scientists, and others. Their origin, however, lay in his long-term collaboration with the antiquary Anthony Wood, whose Historia et antiquitates universitatis Oxoniensis (1674) and Athenae Oxonienses (1691–2) were built in part upon Aubrey’s biographical researches. As well as working on these examples of historia literaria with Wood, Aubrey also wrote a Life of his friend Thomas Hobbes, which led him to develop deeply held theories of biographical practice which would later emerge in the Brief Lives and the Apparatus for the Lives of Our English Mathematical Writers. This chapter recovers Aubrey’s intellectual development as a biographer and explores the scholarly influences and traditions which underpin his best-known work. In biography, as in much else, antiquarianism and its methodologies provided Aubrey with a foundation upon which to build something radically new.

Keywords: Anthony Wood, biography, Brief Lives, historia literaria, Thomas Hobbes
Much later in life Aubrey still remembered the ‘mile, fine walke’ his eight-year-old self had taken in 1634 to learn Latin grammar from Robert Latimer, Rector of Leigh-de-la-Mere, Wiltshire, ‘who had an easie way of teachings: and every time we asked leave to goe forth, we had a latin word from him, which at our return we were to tell him again’. Though this memory remained with him, Aubrey was all too conscious of the transitory nature of more tangible relics of the past when searching in vain for Latin poems presented to their mutual teacher by Latimer’s other famous pupil, Thomas Hobbes: ‘I searcht all old Mr Latimers papers but could not find them; the good huswives had sacrificed them the oven (Pies) had devoured them.’

Throughout his life Aubrey was only too aware of the fragile nature of scholarly achievement and the ease with which a writer’s precious papers could be lost and their memory displaced into the wrapper of a fresh pork pie. One of his major roles in the early Royal Society was as a diligent searcher after the manuscripts of deceased scholars, rescuing more than one mathematician or natural philosopher’s collectanea from oblivion. His concern for these afterlives manifested itself most clearly, however, in the many biographies or ‘minutes of lives’ which he researched and wrote over the course of his career. Aubrey drew upon established humanist genres including historia literaria, table talk, and the intimate scholarly biography pioneered by writers such as Pierre Gassendi, to develop a unique and remarkable antiquarian form of his own in which he went beyond the bare facts of a life to focus on the vital minutiae which distinguished an individual personality. This approach existed in an uneasy tension with the more public biographical antiquarianism of his friend and collaborator Anthony Wood.
Aubrey’s fascination with this form of humanist memorialization dated back to the very beginning of his career as a virtuoso. As early as 12 December 1655, the intelligen
cer Samuel Hartlib had written to John Worthington that one ‘Mr. Aubrey an English gentleman is about to write the Life of that Noble Scholar [i.e., Francis Bacon]. I wish he may do it to the life.’

Aubrey’s plan for a life of Bacon may have already been of some years standing even then, as he had already visited Bacon’s former retainer, Thomas Bushell, at Lambeth in 1650. In the end, however, his notes towards a life of Bacon did not reach fruition until decades later. Instead it was a chance meeting in Oxford which decided the course of his biographical scholarship.

On 31 August 1667, Aubrey was buying books from the Oxford bookseller Edward Forest. Seeing ‘lying on the stall’ William Fulman’s recently published *Notitia Academiae Oxoniensis* Aubrey enquired after its author and was told, mistakenly, that it was one Anthony Wood of Merton College. Being already acquainted with Wood’s older brother, Aubrey sought Anthony out in his lodgings, ‘got into his acquaintance, talk’d to him about his studies, and offer’d him what assistance he could make’ towards Wood’s collections for a history of Oxford.
Their collaboration began tentatively, with Wood writing to Aubrey in November of 1667, reminding him of a promise to ‘obtain some intelligence’ concerning John Hoskins of New College (the grandfather of a friend of Aubrey’s of the same name), but Aubrey’s fulsome replies soon led to a vibrant working partnership between the two men; by August 1669 Aubrey could write to Wood, after a visit to Oxford, that ‘I never was more happy in ones company in my life.’

The goal towards which they were working became suddenly more real on 22 October of that same year when the Delegates of the University Press, led by John Fell, signed a contract with Wood to publish his history, which would ‘be translated (p.97) into Latine for the honour of the University in forreigne countries’. The second volume of this project, eventually published as Historia et antiquitates Universitatis Oxoniensis (1674), is organized by college in order of foundation, within which are short biographical notices of benefactors and heads of house, as well as bishops and writers educated there. It was to these biographies that Aubrey chiefly contributed, offering details of birth and death, works written, and other information gleaned from a variety of written and oral sources.
Wood’s projects, both the *Historia et antiquitates* of 1674 and its successor, the *Athenae Oxonienses* of two decades later, were part of a pan-European tradition of *historiae literariae*, histories of letters which were vast biobibliographies of ancient, medieval, and early modern writers. These texts could vary in scope from a work like Wood’s, which enumerated the scholars produced by a single institution, to that of his contemporary Thomas Pope Blount, which surveyed the entire literary inheritance of Europe and the Near East. They shared in common a structure of short biographies followed by bibliographical details of their subjects’ publications and, often but not always, learned judgements (*judicia*) on their value. Although best known in German contexts, where the vast folios of polyhistors like Daniel Georg Morhof and Johann Albert Fabricius brought the genre to its unwieldy zenith, *historia literaria* had a rich history in England dating back to immediate post-Reformation works of salvage and memorialization such as John Leland’s *De viris illustribus* (*c.* 1545) and John Bale’s *Scriptorum illustrium maioris Brytanniae catalogus* (1559). Wood and Aubrey were both familiar with this tradition, referring repeatedly to Bale, his Catholic counterpart John Pits, and their seventeenth-century successors in their works; Wood, in particular, explicitly allied himself with the *historia literaria* tradition in the (p.98) preface to the *Athenae*, describing it as ‘the Memoires of the University it self, and the History of Learning therein’.14
Their engagement with this tradition was borne out by the structure of the biographies in the *Historia* and the *Athenae*. The lives in the *Historia* closely echo the compact sketches of older *historiae literariae*, emphasizing the subject’s county of birth, place of education, a handful of biographical particulars, a list of their works in print or manuscript, their date of death, and place of burial. The heavily fact-centred correspondence between Wood and Aubrey, which, on Aubrey’s side, regularly took the form of rapid-fire pieces of data or reports of investigations in progress—for example, ‘Mr Hugh Holland buried neer the dore [of Westminster Abbey] entering into the Monuments’ or ‘I very luckily sent to Sir J. Penruddock who now is at Salisbury about his acquaintance H. Holland’—resulted in equally terse and fact-centred biographies in the *Historia*.\(^{15}\) Individual pieces of information were often lifted almost verbatim from Aubrey’s letters and inserted into their proper places in the text. In the case of Holland, Wood paraphrased Aubrey closely, noting that his tomb was ‘in Westminster Abbey by the door which leads to the monuments and not far from the poets’ tombs’.\(^ {16}\) By comparison with the later work of either scholar the *Historia* is terse and public, focused on deeds and dates rather than habits and minds, but its basic structure—family, education, life, death, works—would remain the preferred method of biographical composition for both Aubrey and Wood.

‘Minutenesse will be gratefull’: Biographical Theories in the *Life of Hobbes*

This participation in a well-established tradition of scholarly biography provided Aubrey with an apprenticeship which would bear fruit some \(\text{(p.99)}\) years later. In the 1680s and 1690s, he engaged in three separate biographical projects. First, he wrote his *Life of Mr Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury*, a biography of the philosopher which was intended for publication from the outset.\(^ {17}\) At about the same time his collaboration with Wood began to evolve into the independent compilation of a substantial quantity of miscellaneous biographical information which he explicitly intended for the use of future generations. This material he variously called ‘Minutes’, ‘Memoires’, or ‘My booke of lives’, but is now better known as the *Brief Lives*.\(^ {18}\) Finally, he prepared a series of *Lives of our English Mathematicians*, which, like the biography of Hobbes, was also ultimately intended for publication.\(^ {19}\)
Of these, his first attempt was least characteristic of the *historia literaria* tradition: a lengthy, stand-alone biography of his friend and fellow Wiltshireman, Thomas Hobbes. Long before, in 1667, Aubrey had promised Hobbes that he would write his life, and it appears that Aubrey and several others revived the plan shortly after news of Hobbes’s death at Hardwick Hall on 4 December 1679. Certainly it was well under way by 16 January 1680, when Hobbes’s former amanuensis, James Wheldon, wrote to Aubrey with responses to a series of biographical queries.  

Wheldon wrote of ‘what you designe to get written by way of Commentary on his [Hobbes’s] life’ and thanked Aubrey for what he, Anthony Wood, and Sir George Ent ‘designe for Mr. Hobbes his honour’. The implication was that Aubrey, Wood, and Ent, sometime in December 1679 or the first days of January 1680, had conceived a plan for publishing a biography of their recently deceased friend.

Aubrey lacked confidence in his own literary style and soon enlisted an assistant, the young physician Richard Blackburne, one of the ‘the best scholars in London of his age, & φιλοHobbist’. The immediate connection seems to have been that Blackburne had been a pupil of Aubrey’s friend Thomas Gale when at Trinity College, Cambridge, some years before. Aubrey spoke of him in a letter to Wood dated 10 February 1680 and their collaboration appears to have been decided by 16 February, when Hobbes’s former publisher, William Crooke, wrote an anxious letter to Aubrey arranging a meeting with him and Blackburne to pre-empt another, unspecified, plan to publish a life of Hobbes.

An undated letter from Aubrey to Blackburne from about this time suggests that their original collaboration was to consist of Aubrey preparing a draft which Blackburne would then correct and improve stylistically. It had not yet been decided whether the biography was to be in Latin or English and Aubrey was content to give Blackburne carte blanche in revising his initial text, describing him as ‘my Aristarchus’, in an allusion to the second-century BCE Alexandrian grammarian whose severe editing of the Homeric texts was proverbial. He seems to have envisioned Blackburne editing for style, noting that he should, ‘correct and marke what you thinke fitt. First draughts ought to be rude as those of paynters, for he that in his first essay will be curious in refining will certainly be unhappy in inventing.’
By the following month this working relationship had soured. It had been decided that Blackburne would translate Aubrey’s Life into Latin and, writing to Wood on 7 March, Aubrey complained that he was ‘a great judge, & consequently magisteriall: he is much against Minutiae’. Blackburne was being advised by John Dryden and his friend Lord John Vaughan, sometime governor of Jamaica and correspondent of Henry Oldenburg, and the latter two had apparently objected to the not always flattering details contained in Aubrey’s draft. By 22 May the disagreement had reached a head and Aubrey fulminated to Wood that:

This afternoon I shall see the proofe of the first sheet of Mr Hobbes. I hope to gett all my originall papers into my hand, & then I will transcribe a faire Copie to be preserved in your hands. Pox take your orators & piety, they spoile lives & histories. The Dr [i.e., Blackburne] says that I am too minute; but a hundred yeere hence that minutenesse will be gratefull … He would putt it in the High Style.\footnote{30}

The proofs were those of Blackburne’s Latin adaptation of Aubrey’s text, Thomae Hobbes Angli Malmesburiensis philosophi vita, though it was not published until the autumn.\footnote{31} That Aubrey had decided to transcribe a fair copy of his original draft and deposit it with Wood suggests that, by May 1680, he had reached a parting of ways with his former collaborator and saw his Life of Hobbes as something essentially separate from Blackburne’s Vita.\footnote{32}
In the course of his disagreements with Blackburne, Aubrey had begun to articulate his own theory of biography. ‘Now I say the Offices of a Panegyrist, & Historian, are much different’, he wrote. ‘A Life, is a short Historie: and there minutenes of a famous person is gratefull.’\(^{33}\) This linking of biography with history also appears in the *Life* itself, which he described as ‘this *Historiola* of our Malmesbury philosopher’, but it is evident that it was not narrative history that Aubrey had in mind.\(^{34}\) In a letter to Wood of 27 March, he tellingly remarked, ‘I never yet knew a Witt (unless he were a piece of an Antiquary) write a proper Epitaph, but leave the reader ignorant, what countryman &c: only tickles his eares with Elogies.’\(^{35}\) For Aubrey, biography was a matter of minute detail rather (p.102) than elogium, a position which accorded well with his contributions to Wood’s *Historia*. The ‘high style’ of Blackburne was antithetical to an antiquarian precision of recollection which changed biography from misty hagiography into a recollection of specific facts.

The theory of biography which Aubrey was reacting against derived ultimately not from Blackburne, but from his adviser Dryden, and was subsequently articulated in the poet laureate’s *Life of Plutarch* (published in 1683, not long after the *Life of Hobbes*). Dryden’s views, in their very proximity to Aubrey’s, show up more clearly the crucial points of difference.\(^{36}\) In his *Plutarch* he gave a taxonomy of history, dividing the subject into annals, narrative history, and biography.\(^{37}\) Biography, according to Dryden, was ‘in dignity inferiour to History and Annalls, [but] in pleasure and instruction it equals, or even excells both of them’.\(^{38}\) In his explanation of the role of biography, he seemed, at first, to hold a position similar to that of Aubrey himself, for he observed that:

> There is withal, a descent into minute circumstances, and trivial passages of life, which are natural to this way of writing ... you are led into the private Lodgings of the Heroe: you see him in his undress, and are made Familiar with his most private actions and conversations.\(^{39}\)
But Dryden’s ‘minute circumstances’ were not Aubrey’s. His distinction of the subject as ‘the Heroe’ in itself suggests a different viewpoint and this is confirmed by his examples of private actions: ‘a Scipio and a Lelius gathering Cockle-shells on the shore, Augustus playing at bounding stones with Boyes; and Agesilaus riding on a Hobby-horse among his Children’. In each case the private action illustrated served to illuminate the character of the subject in such a way as to teach a moral or social lesson, harking back to Dryden’s initial praise of biography for the ‘pleasure and instruction’ it gives. Dryden imagined a perfect and polished public hero, a far cry from Aubrey’s recollection of General John Lambert once saying, ‘that the best of men are but men at the best’. It was this attempt to reduce a life into a lesson against which Aubrey fought.

Aubrey’s convictions reappear in his preface to the Life of Hobbes. He justified the work by recalling his long-standing promise to the late philosopher to publish his biography and remarking with pride that (p.103) ‘nobody knew so many particulars of his life as myselfe’. He then justified his biographical style:

Amongst innumerable Observables of Him which had deserved to be sett downe these few (that have not scap’t slipt/ my memory) I humbly offer to the present Age and Posterity, tanquam Tabula naufragii; & as plankes & lighter things swimme, and are preserved, where the more weighty sinke & are lost. The Recrementa of so learned a Person will/ are valueable. And as with the light after sun-sett—at which time, clear; by and by, comes the crepusculum; then, totall darknes: in like manner is it with matters of Antiquitie. Men thinke, because every body remembers a memorable Accident shortly after ’tis donne, ’twill never be forgotten, which for want of writing registering/ at last is drowned in Oblivion. This reflection haz been a hint, that by my meanes many Antiquities have been reskued, & preserved (I myselfe now growing inclining/ to be ancient senescens/)—or els utterly Lost & forgotten.
This is an astonishingly forceful exposition of the biographer’s duties. Next to the struck-through *recrementa* Aubrey added a note to ‘meliorate this word’, but had not, in the end, done so.\(^4^4\) Meaning dross or refuse, Aubrey was probably aware that *recrementum* had also been used to mean human excrement by the Augustan antiquary Aulus Gellius.\(^4^5\) Such bluntness was a far cry from Blackburne’s polite Latin, but, more than speaking out against the ‘orators & piety’ which he had fulminated about to Wood, it graphically drove home his belief that the smallest remnants of a personality were worth preserving. This was supplemented by his quotation of Bacon’s famous description of antiquities, *tanquam tabula naufragii* (*like planks from a shipwreck*), itself a borrowing from the fifteenth-century Italian antiquary Flavio Biondo, whose *Italy Illuminated* had provided the model for Camden’s *Britannia*.\(^4^6\)

Aubrey was doing much more than asserting the need for detail in biography: he was rejecting the hagiographic tradition which had dominated its seventeenth-century English forms and emphasizing the need for an intimate, antiquarian approach which neglected no facts and took no prisoners.\(^4^7\)

Tied to Aubrey’s association of biography with antiquarianism is a sense of urgency, an apprehension at the fleeting nature of human memory. The biography he advocated was not antiquarianism in the conventional sense—the restoration of what was long past—but rather a sort of preventative or anticipatory antiquarianism in which the planks from the shipwreck were not ancient coins or inscriptions but the specificities of an individual life. He justified his indulgence in these minutiae:

> For that I am so minute, I declare I never intended it; but setting downe in my first rude draught every thing particular, (with purpose, upon review to retrench \cut off/ what was superfluous & triviall), I shewed it to some Friends of mine (who also were of Mr. Hobbes acquaintance) whose judgements I much value: who gave their opinion: & ‘twas clearly their opinion to let all stand; for though to soome at present it might appeare too triviall, yet hereafter ‘twould not be slighted \scorned/ but goe \passe/ for Antiquity.\(^4^8\)
Although he appealed to the judgement of his unnamed friends—amongst whom were presumably Anthony Wood and perhaps also George Ent and William Petty—the sentiment is in accord with Aubrey’s own, developing theories. The ‘soome at present’ is surely a backward glance at Blackburne and his advisers. Aubrey the antiquary was vividly aware that the remnants of his own time would one day be ‘antiquities’, and was concerned to preserve these for future students of his favoured discipline.

The manuscript of the *Life of Hobbes* which now survives (Bodleian MS Aubrey 9) is that of the third draft and has been corrected by both Aubrey and Wood. It originally consisted of twenty-five sheets, marked on the outside ‘For Doctor Blackburne with care’, indicating that this was the copy used in the composition of Blackburne’s Latin life. It began with Aubrey’s note to the reader, just discussed, and continued with a sixteen-sheet narrative biography of Hobbes from his birth until his final removal to Derbyshire under the patronage of the Earl of Devonshire in 1675. Although far more detailed and circumstantial, in structure it still echoed the standard biographical forms of *historiae literariae*. 
What followed the *Life* proper was more unusual. In the subsequent sheets Aubrey analysed Hobbes’s appearance, mannerisms, and character with antiquarian precision, beginning with his complexion and going on to cover his wit, reading habits, diet, exercises, illnesses, and predominant emotions. The emphasis in these recollections—for they are chiefly Aubrey’s personal memories of the philosopher—is on physicality. Aubrey described Hobbes in the same vivid detail as he had scripts or architecture in the *Stromata*, noting that, ‘His Skin was soft, and that kind which my Lord Chancellor Bacon in his Hist. of Life and death calles a *Goose-skin* (i) of a wide texture Crassa cutis, crassum cerebrum, crassum ingenium.’ Or, ‘Besides his dayly Walkings, he did twice or thrice a yeare play at Tennis (at about 75 he did it) then went to bed there, and was well rubbed. this he did believe would make him live two or three yeares the longer.’ These recollections were not inserted for their own sake, but reflected Aubrey’s stated intention that even the *recrementa* of a great man were worth preserving. Aubrey was attempting to verbally dissect Hobbes in an effort to reach the wellsprings of the individuality which made him great. The belief underlying this seems to have been that the exceptional could be traced back to identifiable causes, and it was presumably this conviction which caused Aubrey to react with such disgust to Blackburne’s smoothing over of the problematic aspects of Hobbes’s life.
These anecdotal recollections had developed out of Aubrey’s general theory of biography, but they were also indebted to a number of biographical and quasi-biographical texts known across the Republic of Letters. The most obvious antecedent to Aubrey’s *Hobbes* was Pierre Gassendi’s 1641 biography of the French antiquary Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc, which had been translated into English in 1657. Gassendi’s substantial work (239 octavo pages plus supplementary materials) was divided into six books. The first five presented a chronological narrative of Peiresc’s life while the sixth depicted his physical and mental (p.106) characteristics, daily habits, and peculiarities in the same minute detail which Aubrey would praise (‘he went to bed almost as soon as he had supt, and always set his Larum, so as to wake him quickly again’). Aubrey may also have taken some theoretical inspiration from Gassendi’s dedicatory epistle in which he emphasized ‘the simplicity and planness of the Narration’ and insisted that ‘even the very crums which fall from the Tables of the Gods, seem worthy to be picked up’, a sentiment closely aligned to Aubrey’s recrementa.

The other tradition which Aubrey drew upon was the rapidly expanding genre of ‘-ana’ literature and table talk, the collected quips and epigrams of famous scholars. These works, assembled and published by their disciples, played an important role in the cult of personality which surrounded many of the heroic polymaths of the early seventeenth century and were couched in much the same awe-filled but intimate language as Aubrey’s biographies. Aubrey may have been familiar with the 1669 *Scaligerana*, the table talk of the philologist and chronologer Joseph Justus Scaliger, which popularized the genre, and he was certainly acquainted with manuscript copies of the first English example of the type, the *Table-Talk* of John Selden. Many of the sayings attributed in these works danced on the edge of heterodoxy and Aubrey was alert to the tensions inherent in writing too plainly about another’s life and opinions; copying some of Selden’s more free-thinking comments out of a manuscript copy of the *Table-Talk* belonging to the Earl of Abingdon, he noted that it ‘will not endure the Test for the Presse’. Taken together, Gassendi and this tradition offered a minute and straight-talking antiquarian counterblast to the hagiographic biographies which dominated the more literary portions of the genre.
Aubrey developed his own variation on the blueprint laid down by Gassendi by following his physical description of Hobbes with a ‘Catalogue of his Learned familiar Friends & Acquaintance’, setting Hobbes within a larger intellectual context and including several of the mutual friends who would be amongst the first subjects for entries in Aubrey’s Brief Lives (Sir William Petty and Sir Christopher Wren, among others). This catalogue of emotional debts and credits had the same specificity as the physical description, and placed Hobbes in dialogue with his contemporaries, indicating points of difference as well as points of concurrence (the final sheet included a short addendum listing ‘His Chiefe Antagonists’). With it Aubrey cut away at the idea of a great man as a being apart from his fellows and set Hobbes amongst the scholars with whom he interacted, showing how his work was a product not only of his own intellect, but of the intellectual currents of his time.
Blackburne’s *Vita* was finally published in October or November 1680. Prefaced with laudatory poems by Abraham Cowley, Ralph Bathurst, and allegedly Aubrey (in fact, per Wood, Blackburne) it began with Hobbes’s own autobiographical notes, but the vast bulk of the text was taken up with the Aubrey–Blackburne life, the *Vitae Hobbianae auctarium*. The variants between the two are too numerous to list in detail, but they bear out Aubrey’s complaints. Blackburne omitted all of Aubrey’s information on Hobbes’s family and vastly curtailed the account of his early education, noting only that he studied under Robert Latimer and, while still a schoolboy, translated *Medea* into Latin verse. The anecdote of the *Medea* offers a characteristic example of Blackburne’s method. Aubrey had written, ‘it is not to be forgotten, that before he went to the University, he had turned Euripidis Medea out of Greeke into Latin Iambiques, which he presented to his Master. Mr H. told me, that he would fayne have had them, to have seen how he did grow.’ Blackburne, however, gave a subtly different story: ‘moreover, he made such great progress in Greek and Latin letters while still at grammar school that he had elegantly translated Euripides’ *Medea* into Latin verses of a similar meter’. What for Aubrey is a schoolboy folly, albeit an admirable one, is for Blackburne an integral step in Hobbes’s literary development. The—it may be presumed rather rough—iambics of the original narrative have become polished ‘Latin verses’ which Hobbes ‘tastefully formed’.
Blackburne’s *Vita* does retain the structure of Aubrey’s *Life*. After the narrative chronology of the life itself, he gives, though in an attenuated and shortened form, Aubrey’s account of Hobbes’s character, and this is followed, as in the *Life*, by the list of his friends. In Blackburne’s account the *amici* have two notable additions. One is Anthony Wood, whose appellation of ‘Author celeberrimus’ may have been more of a politeness by Blackburne towards one of his sources of information than a true estimation of Wood’s fame in London circles. The other is Aubrey, who is described as Hobbes’s oldest friend and he ‘who first gave me [i.e., Blackburne] the opportunity of writing, and humanely furnished me material’. This faint praise, characterizing Aubrey as little more than a source of information, would seem to support the evidence of a parting of ways that comes from his letters. Nowhere in the printed *Vita* is Aubrey credited as Blackburne’s sole source for the biographical material, nor is it stated that the *Vita* is, ultimately, a loose and partial translation of Aubrey’s original.

**Dangerous Biography and ‘my Booke of Lives’**

Composing the *Life of Hobbes* evidently inspired Aubrey to begin another, more substantial biographical project. In two letters to Anthony Wood, he recalled that on the night of Sunday, 15 February 1680 (three days after finishing the third draft of the *Life*),

> taking a pipe of Tobacco in my chambers it came into my mind to ingrose a sheet of paper close, which I shall enlarge (much) with the Lives of the worthy & ingeniose Knight Sir W. Petty from his cradle; Sir Chr. Wren the like. as also Mr Rob Hooke; which I thinke fitt to be lodged in your hands.

This is the first mention of what Aubrey later came to describe as his *Brief Lives*. His initial inspiration seems to have been to write an independent life of William Petty, but this thought led him to recall a series of ‘sheets of (p.109) Minutes’ of the lives of John Dee, Francis Bacon, Christopher Wren, Robert Hooke, William Aubrey (his great-grandfather), John Pell, and the 1st Earl of Cork, which he had deposited in the hands of Elias Ashmole about 1675.
From the start, Aubrey conceived of these lives as something quite different from the *Life of Hobbes*. Writing to Wood on 21 February about the projected life of Petty he mused that it ‘will be a fine thing, & ... he shall passe [it] himselfe, & then it shall be left among your papers, for Posterity hereafter, to read (published)’. It is likely that, in the wake of his disagreements with Blackburne (and, through Blackburne, with the more powerful figures of Dryden and Vaughan), Aubrey had decided that, although he believed intensely in the biographical methodology which he had outlined in his *Life of Hobbes*, such biographies should not be immediately published lest they give offence, a conclusion echoing his judgement of Selden’s *Table-Talk*. His initial conception seems to have been to write biographies of several of his closest and most respected friends (Petty, Wren, and Hooke), to be preserved in Wood’s nascent archive until an imagined posthumous publication.

The following month was one of intense composition. Writing to Wood on 27 March, he reported that,

> I have to my Booke of Lives made a Kalendar of 55 persons, & have donne 10 of them: 3 or 4 leaves in fol a piece ... it will be a pretty thing ... I doe it playingly. This morn: being up by 10 I writt two.\(^74\)

To this letter he appended a list of eight of the ten completed lives, though evidently not in the order in which they were written.\(^75\) This list included William Petty, Edward Davenant, Sir John Suckling, Edmund Waller, Thomas Randolph, William Camden, William Oughtred, and Lucius Cary, Viscount Falkland.\(^76\) By 22 May the *Lives* had expanded to fill two quires ‘close written’ and Aubrey, newly recovered from an illness, wrote again to Wood, worrying about their ultimate fate:

> (p.110) They are fine things, but few fitt to be printed in my Life or yours, if you die, your papers will be all in the possession of Dr. J. Wallis (ex officio) as keeper of the Archives: so there ‘twill be stifflled, for I am like Almansar in the Play, that spare neither friend nor Foe. but a religious John Telltroth.\(^77\)
Aubrey, always concerned with the fate of his papers, had already decided that the *Lives* should ultimately be lodged with Wood, his former collaborator on the *Historia*.

The structure and content of the first lives followed straightforwardly on from the *Life of Hobbes* and its sources. The biography of Petty closely imitated the structure of the *Hobbes*, beginning with a narrative of his life from birth upwards followed by a written physiognomy and concluding with a list of his writings. All that had been jettisoned was the catalogue of friends. In March, the same month in which he was composing this life, Aubrey had also convinced Petty to sit for a portrait by the engraver David Loggan, probably with a view to matching it with his pen portrait (he seems at this time to have still been planning to prepare Petty's biography for eventual publication).

Subsequently, however, Aubrey changed tack. In his letter to Wood of 17 February, he had considered pairing the life of Petty with those of their mutual acquaintances Wren and Hooke, but instead the lives he wrote after Petty’s were of men of the previous generation: the mathematicians Davenant and Oughtred, the antiquary Camden, the poets Randolph, Suckling, and Waller, and the politician Falkland. The overall rationale behind his order of composition seems to have been one of association. Petty and Waller appear amongst his list of Hobbes’s friends in the *Life of Hobbes*. In the life of Waller Aubrey noted that he was a familiar acquaintance, not only of Hobbes, but also of Viscount Falkland. In turn, Waller and Hobbes are both listed as intimates in the life of Falkland. Suckling and Davenant seem to be linked in the form of Aubrey’s late friend the poet laureate Sir William Davenant (friend to one and relation of the other), who was another friend of Hobbes. The only odd men out are Oughtred and Camden, who, it may be speculated, Aubrey included due to their pre-eminence in two of his favoured subjects: mathematics and antiquarianism.
Aubrey was not, then, jotting down recollections so much as reconstructing patterns of sociability that had existed in the previous generation and following through the implications of the list of friends he had appended to the *Life of Hobbes*. Though he described writing the *Lives* ‘playingly’, elsewhere he indicated a sober sense of urgency, recalling to Wood that ‘after I had begun it I had such an impulse on my spirit that I could not be at quiet till I had donne it’. As with the *Life of Hobbes*, Aubrey viewed the writing of the *Lives* as an act of conservation, preserving the telling minutiae of individual lives for future generations, as well as highlighting the friendships and debts that linked them together. The number of his early lives which take pains to note the chief friends and acquaintances of the subject underlines this last concern. Aubrey, who was himself at the centre of a circle of scholarly acquaintances and whose autobiography includes a similar catalogue of ‘amici’, was keen to place each life within its social context.
By 15 June 1680, Aubrey had finished the first set of Lives and transmitted them to Wood. Writing on that date he credited Wood with first encouraging him towards the project, an acknowledgement which also appeared in a letter of 27 March in which he had written that ‘I am glad you put me on it.’ In other letters of February and March, however, Aubrey had identified the original inspiration as his own. He also asserted his credentials for the job by citing his ‘generall acquaintance’ and praised ‘the moderne advantage of Coffee-houses in this great Citie; before which men knew not how to be acquainted, but with their owne Relations, or Societies’. Such claims would no doubt have rung true for Wood, indebted as he was to Aubrey for a host of oral tradition which subsequently found its way into both the Historia and the Athenae. When it came to the fate of the Lives, however, Aubrey was of two minds. First, he wrote to Wood that ‘after your perusall, I must desire you to make a Castration (as Raderus to Martial) and to sewe on some (p.112) Figge-leaves (i) to be my Index expurgatorius’. This seems to imply at least some thought of immediate use or publication, but it may be that Aubrey was simply thinking of the Lives’ potential use by Wood in his Athenae, for elsewhere in the letter he cautioned, ‘now these arcana are not fitt to lett flee abroad, till about 30 yeares hence; for the author & the Persons (the Medlars) ought to be rotten first; But in whose hands must they be deposited in the meane time?’ Aubrey’s recurring concern that the Lives should not ‘flee abroad’ too soon is in itself evidence that he did envisage their eventual publication, albeit after his death, and the question of their fate, combined with his worry about their potential ‘stiffling’ should they fall into the hands of John Wallis, may also suggest that he found Wood to be a less than ideal custodian in the meantime. Nonetheless, when in 1681 he drafted an Auctarium—a supplement—to the Lives, it was subscribed on the title page ‘For Mr Anthony Wood at Oxford’. 
Both surviving volumes of the *Brief Lives* written by Aubrey in 1680 and 1681 are headed with the same quotation from Bacon with which he began the *Life of Hobbes*: ‘tanquam tabula naufragii’, ‘like planks from a shipwreck’. This explicitly ties the Lives back into his larger antiquarian project and, together with their structure and contents, indicates his continued adherence to the principles of biography set out in the preface to the *Life of Hobbes*. The Lives were not antiquarianism in a conventional sense, but used antiquarian techniques to develop a lively biographical form which drew on the lionizing culture of early modern scholarship as well as traditional *historiae literariae*. They grew out of a desire to memorialize the great thinkers and men of action with whom he had been acquainted, but Aubrey firmly rejected contemporary hagiographic traditions. Instead he applied the techniques of his own discipline, its systematization, its concern with minutiae, with networks and patterns, to create biographies that focused on individuality, drawing a portrait of their subject for posterity through the enumeration of physiognomy, personality, habits, and characteristic actions.

*(p.113)* Mathematical Lives and the Limits of Aubrey’s Method

Nine years after the *Brief Lives*, Aubrey began a final biographical project: *An Apparatus for the Lives of our English Mathematical Writers*. This small work, only fifteen sheets in length, is dated 25 March 1690 and was composed at the same time as the *Remaines of Gentilisme*, notes towards which are scattered across its title page. Aubrey’s intention was to write the framework of the Apparatus, then ask Anthony Wood to ‘find-out one that is master of a good Latin stile; and to add what is already in his printed Booke’. He appears to have envisaged a collaboration between Wood, himself, and another figure (presumably a more tractable version of Richard Blackburne), resulting in the publication of a Latin history of English mathematicians. He planned to limit his scope to mathematicians living in the reign of Henry VIII or later, but intended to preface the work as a whole with John Selden’s poem and accompanying commentary on the English mathematicians of the Middle Ages prefixed to Arthur Hopton’s 1612 *Concordancy of Yeares*. 
Aubrey’s projected work, which would have been one of the first major publications on the history of English mathematics, never materialized, probably due to a cooling of relations with Wood soon after the composition of the Apparatus. However, even in its incomplete state, the Apparatus is an important antiquarian text and a work different from either the Life of Hobbes or the Brief Lives, though they share a similar biographical style and methodology. In the Apparatus, Aubrey, for the first time, found himself considering figures with whom he had no oral link to build a biography upon, only their published writings or a biographical entry in one of Wood’s collections. As such, the earliest lives in the collection are little more than bibliographies, with an occasional assessment of the works’ value by a contemporary mathematician. In many cases, also, there was overlap with the existing biographies in the Brief Lives, in which instances Aubrey only referred back to the earlier biography rather than tailoring a new one for the Apparatus.
The *Apparatus* is thus noticeable not for what it does, but for what it attempts. It reflects the same preconceptions as Aubrey’s *Nouvelles* or tracts on innovations and inventions: an interest in individual achievements, as opposed to a gradual increase in knowledge, and a curiosity to establish a distinctly English lineage of invention and progress. To do this Aubrey turned again to the repertoire of the antiquary, but while the *Brief Lives* had allowed him to make use of his keen observation, the *Apparatus* did not play to his strengths. Though he knew how to use the relevant records, Aubrey’s antiquarian interests did not tend towards the methodical searching of parish registers and public archives engaged in by scholars such as Wood and Sir William Dugdale. Instead he was concerned with the visual and the physical: strengths for which biographies of sixteenth-century mathematicians offered little scope. This suggests both the limits and the purpose of Aubrey’s unique form of biography. It lacked interpretative power when it ventured beyond the oral history and autopsy upon which his more nuanced lives were based. This was not necessarily a failing, however, for the purpose of Aubreian biography was not to recover, but to preserve. Both the *Life of Hobbes* and the *Brief Lives* were urgent, feverish attempts to preserve knowledge as it was in the process of becoming lost, as ‘by and by, comes the crepusculum; then, totall darknes’.

The *Apparatus*, in contrast, was an attempt to recover and enumerate the already lost lives of Elizabethan mathematicians and Aubrey’s insistence that his work once again be complemented by that of Anthony Wood, who was skilled in understanding the records of the previous century, indicates that he was well aware of his weaknesses and planned to supplement them with the strengths of his friend.
Aubrey had collaborated with Anthony Wood on his *Historia et antiquitates Universitatis Oxonienses* and its sequel the *Athenae Oxonienses* long (p.115) before the composition of his own *Lives*, and he continued to do so afterwards, depositing the manuscripts of the *Lives* with Wood for long periods and encouraging him to draw upon them, wholesale, for the biographies contained within the *Athenae*. This generosity was repaid by Wood’s complete failure to acknowledge Aubrey’s assistance in the published *Athenae*, which were printed in 1691–2.100 Worse, however, was the aftermath. The second volume of the *Athenae*, containing a biography of Edward Hyde, 1st Earl of Clarendon, was published in July 1692. On 11 November of that year, the earl’s son dragged Wood into court for libel, having taken exception to Wood’s assertion that his father took bribes from office-seekers.101 It seems likely that the contested statement must have originally derived from the second part of Aubrey’s *Brief Lives*, for some time between 11 and 29 November Wood removed pages nine to forty-four of that volume as well as four folios from the first part and perhaps other materials.102 Aubrey noted with considerable concern that therein were:

>> Conteined Trueths; but such as I entrusted no body with the sight of but himselfe: whom I thought I might have entrusted with my Life. There are several papers, that may cutt my throate. I find too late, Memento diffidere was a Saying worthy one of the Sages [sic]. He hath also embezzl’d the Index of it.103

Not long after this, Aubrey established a rapport with Edward Lhuyd, the keeper of the Ashmolean Museum, and proceeded to transfer a large portion of his manuscript writings to him, including the *Lives*.104 The exact date of deposition is uncertain, but it is likely that they were in the ‘Boxfull of Antiquities’ which Aubrey sent to Lhuyd on 31 August 1693 and which he did not give outright, but only deposited in the Museum, ‘for there are some things reflecting upon Dr Wallis &c not fitt to be seen (yet) by every body’.105 What he deposited must have been parts one and (p.116) three of the *Lives* (now Bodleian MSS 6 and 8) bound in vellum wrappers, together with the loose sheets remaining from part two, which had been ‘gelded’ by Wood the year before.106
Despite Wood’s intervention, Aubrey had substantially succeeded in carrying his plan for the Lives through to completion. Having composed them privately he had deposited the manuscripts with his younger contemporary and protégé Lhuyd until such time as they could safely be brought to light. In effect, having performed an act of preventative antiquarianism—the gathering of material which would otherwise have been lost—Aubrey was setting up his own writing to become part of the archive of later generations. More clearly than any of his other antiquarian projects, the Lives show Aubrey participating in the sociable memorialization of the Republic of Letters which took the form of historiae literariae, lives of great men, editions of correspondence, table talk, donations of archives, lavish funeral monuments, and all the other paraphernalia through which early modern scholars expressed their debt to and continuity with the humanist past. Pertaining to a very different sort of antiquarianism than the Monumenta or his architectural works, they nonetheless drew upon similar methodologies and assumptions to preserve the lives of the English virtuosi in much the same way as Aubrey had begun to reconstruct pre-Roman Britain a decade before.

Notes:
(1) Aubrey, Lives, i. 430.

(2) Bodleian MS Aubrey 9, fol. 34r (= Aubrey, ‘Hobbes’, i. 329).


(6) William Fulman, Academiae Oxoniensis notitia (Oxford, 1665),

(8) Bodleian MSS Aubrey 13, fol. 262r, Wood F 39, fol. 123r. For Hoskins see Powell, Aubrey, 251–2.

(9) Wood, Life and Times, ii. 172.


(11) Aubrey’s determination in seeking out sources shines through in his letters to Wood. On 27 January 1671 he wrote, ‘Yesterday I was at Dr Twisses sonnes howse, & left sufficient Instructions for him to wrote to you & answer your method of Queries: which if he does not, he is the turdy son of a Presbyterian’ (Bodleian MS Wood F 39, fol. 163r).


(14) Anthony Wood, Athenae Oxonienses, 2 vols. (London, 1691–2), sig. Ar. Wood owned a copy of John Pits, Relationum historicarum de rebus Anglicis (Paris, 1619), now Bodleian Wood 658 and cited Bale throughout the Athenae. Aubrey was equally well versed in English historia literaria, referring at various points in his manuscripts to Bale (Bodleian MS Aubrey 2, fols. 4r, 5r–6r, 20r, 21r–22r) and Pits (Bodleian MS Aubrey 2, fol. 19r), as well as more recent contributions to the tradition such as Francis Godwin’s Catalogue of Bishops (Bodleian MS Aubrey 2, fol. 5r), Thomas Fuller’s 1662 History of the Worthies of England (Bodleian MSS Aubrey 1, fol. 106v, Aubrey 2, fols. 2v–3r, 5r, 16r, 61r, 62v, 116r, Aubrey 6, fols. 21r, 119r, and Aubrey 8, fol. 98r), and David Lloyd’s 1670 State Worthies (Bodleian MS Aubrey 8, fols. 25r, 28r).

(15) Bodleian MS Wood F39, fol. 172r, 173r.
(16) ‘Tumulum accepit in Ecclesia Westmonasteriensii juxta ostium quod ducit ad munmenta, & non procul à tumulis Poetarum’ (Wood, Historia, ii. 80).

(17) The Life is now Bodleian MS Aubrey 9 and has been published in Aubrey, ‘Hobbes’, i. 321–403.

(18) Now Bodleian MSS Aubrey 6–8, and most recently and accurately edited by Kate Bennett in Aubrey, Lives. Its modern title ultimately derives from Aubrey’s own short title for Bodleian MS Aubrey 6, ‘Σχεδίασμα. Brief Lives’, but this obscures a more complex manuscript history (see Aubrey, Lives, i. cvii–cxxx). The alternative Greek title is from Σχεδιάσμα, a whim or caprice, but Aubrey’s usage probably more closely approximates its naturalized form in English, ‘schediasm’, an extempore work or jotting (OED, s.v.).

(19) The Lives of our English Mathematicians is now in Bodleian MS Aubrey 8 and has been published in Aubrey, Lives, i. 719–56.

(20) Bodleian MS Aubrey 9, fol. 18.

(21) Bodleian MS Aubrey 9, fol. 18r. Sir George Ent, physician and friend of William Harvey, appears on the list of Hobbes’s friends which makes up part of the Life (Aubrey, ‘Hobbes’, i. 370). Ent and Wood had been at loggerheads in the past, with Wood complaining that the physician was ‘quarrelsome in his liquour’ in a letter to Aubrey, 28 February 1675, but were presumably reconciled by this date (Bodleian MS Aubrey 13, fol. 265v).

(22) This would accord well with Wood’s note in his diary for 1 January 1680 that he ‘sent to Mr. [John] Aubrey a transcript of what I say of Mr. [Thomas] Hobbs with other notes’, indicating that Aubrey’s biographical project was already in full swing (Andrew Clark, ed., The Life and Times of Anthony Wood, Antiquary, of Oxford, 1632–1695, 5 vols. [Oxford, 1891–1900], ii. 475–6).

(23) Bodleian MS Ballard 14, fol. 125r. Blackburne was otherwise undistinguished and was elected an Honorary Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians in 1685 (see ODNB, s.n.).
(24) Blackburne matriculated as a pensioner at Trinity in 1665 and appears to have been taught by Gale throughout his degree (ODNB, s.n.; John and J. A. Venn, Alumni Cantabrienses, 2 pts. in 10 vols. [Cambridge, 1922–54], part I, i. 160).

(25) Bodleian MS Aubrey 12, fol. 88r. Their concern was perhaps justified, given the sudden market for Hobbesiana. Hobbes’s Latin autobiographical poem had been published towards the end of December and Anthony Wood reported that only a ‘fortnight after’, around 10 January 1680, The Life of Mr. Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury, Written By Himself in a Latine Poem, and Now Translated into English (London, 1680) appeared, so Aubrey and his associates were hardly making the first inroad into the biographical market. Evidence for the publication dates of the poems comes from Wood’s copy of the latter, now Bodleian Wood 657 (6).

(26) Aubrey would have known of Aristarchus as a critic or editor through the reference in Horace, Ars Poetica, l. 450, among many others, and frequently used the ancient critic’s name to refer to the (hoped for, but non-existent) editors of his own works.

(27) Bodleian MS Aubrey 9, fol. 28v.

(28) Bodleian MS Tanner 456a, fol. 23r.

(29) Evidence for the involvement of Dryden and Vaughan comes from Aubrey’s letter to Wood of 27 March (Bodleian MS Ballard 14, fol. 131r).

(30) Bodleian MS Wood F 39, fol. 340r.

(31) [Richard Blackburne and John Aubrey], Thomae Hobbes Angli Malmesburiensis philosophi vita (Carolopoli [sic], 1681).

(32) It is likely that the fair copy he envisaged was never written. Bodleian MS Aubrey 9, the surviving version of the Life, appears to be that which was sent to Blackburne (cf. fol. 55v).

(33) Bodleian MS Ballard 14, fol. 131r.

(35) Bodleian MS Ballard 14, fol. 131r.


(38) Dryden, ‘Plutarch’, 274.


(41) Aubrey, Lives, i. 38.


(43) Bodleian MS Aubrey 9, fol. 29r (= Aubrey, ‘Hobbes’, i. 18).

(44) ‘The Recrementa of so learned a Person \will/ are valuable’ was written in the margin to replace an earlier, cancelled, passage: ‘But, for that the recrementa of such a Person are valuable. It is with matters of Antiq.’ (Bodleian MS Aubrey 9, fol. 29r).

(45) Aulus Gellius, Noctes Atticae, 17.11.2.


**) Bodleian MS Aubrey 9, fol. 29r (= Aubrey, ‘Hobbes’, i. 18-19).

(49) See Bodleian MS Aubrey 9, fol. 28v (= Aubrey, ‘Hobbes’, i. 19) for it being the third draft (noted in a letter from Aubrey to Wood of 12 February 1680).

(50) Bodleian MS Aubrey 9, fol. 55v.


(53) Bodleian MS Aubrey 9, fol. 45v (= Aubrey, ‘Hobbes’, i. 348). The Latin tag (‘coarse skin, coarse brain, coarse nature’) does not translate perfectly into English, *crassus* having the additional meaning of dull or stupid. Bacon did not endorse this, but merely observed that ‘thick and sponge skin (like, as they say, goose-skinned)’ did *not* betoken long life, unlike a firm skin that was ‘at once hard and compact’ (Francis Bacon, ‘Història vitae & mortis’, in *The Instauratio Magna, Part III*, ed. Graham Rees with Maria Wakely [Oxford, 2007], 227).


(57) Gassendi, *Mirrour*, sig. (a)2r. Aubrey cites Gassendi’s *Life* (probably the English translation) elsewhere at Bodleian MS Aubrey 1, fols. 18r; 158r.


BL MS Lansdowne 231, fol. 133r (= Aubrey, *Remaines*, 55).


Bodleian MS Aubrey 9, fol. 54r (= Aubrey, ‘Hobbes’, i. 373–4).

Wood received his copy, given by ‘his affectionate friend, and humble Servant Jo: Aubrey’, on 6 November 1680 (now Bodleian Wood 434).

Blackburne and Aubrey, *Hobbes vita*, passim. The *auctarium* is at 21–218. In Bodleian Wood 434, Wood has noted against the Latin poem attributed to Aubrey that it was written by Blackburne (sig. A8v).


Bodleian MS Ballard 14, fols. 126r, 127r.

Bodleian MS Ballard 14, fol. 127r.
(73) Bodleian MS Ballard 14, fol. 127r.

(74) Bodleian MS Ballard 14, fol. 131r.

(75) This may be presumed as Aubrey speaks of writing the life of Suckling that morning in the same letter, but Suckling is placed third in the list of eight.

(76) Bodleian MS Ballard 14, fol. 132v. These lives are now in Bodleian MS Aubrey 6, fols. 13r–15v (Petty), 39r–42v (Oughtred), 43r–45r (Davenant), 93r–94r (Carey), 109v–110v (Suckling), 111r–113r (Waller), 113v–114r (Randolph), 119ar–v (Camden), and are published in the same order at Aubrey, Lives, i. 40–52, 123–32, 132–7, 295–9, 367–72, 373–80, 383–6, 394–7.

(77) Bodleian MS Wood F 39, fol. 340r. Aubrey compared himself to Almanzor, the hero of Dryden’s Conquest of Granada (cf. Works of John Dryden, xi. 1–100).


(79) Aubrey, Lives, i. 48.

(80) Bodleian MS Aubrey 9, fol. 51r (= Aubrey, ‘Hobbes’, i. 367–8).

(81) Aubrey, Lives, i. 374.

(82) Aubrey, Lives, i. 297.

(83) Bodleian MSS Ballard 14, fol. 131r; Wood F 39, fol. 340r.

(84) Bodleian MS Aubrey 7, fol. 4v.

(85) Bodleian MS Ballard 14, fol. 131r.
Bodleian MS Aubrey 6, fol. 12r. Aubrey wrote from experience. In the years leading up to 1680, he was one of the members of a coffee-house club which met at Jonathan’s in Change Alley, later to become the London Stock Exchange, and which also included Edmond Halley, Robert Hooke, and Edmund Wylde (cf. Bodleian MS Aubrey 12, fols. 147–8, for a letter from Halley to Aubrey, dated 26 November 1679, giving a partial list of ‘our friends that used to meet at Jonathans’).

Martial, P. Sullivan, Martial, the Unexpected Classic: A Literary and Historical Study [Cambridge, 1991], 294

Bodleian MS Aubrey 6, fol. 12r.

Bodleian MS Aubrey 8, fol. 4ar.

Bodleian MSS Aubrey 6, fol. 2r; Aubrey 8, fol. 4ar. Bodleian MS Aubrey 7 contains fragments of the second part of the Lives, largely destroyed by Wood, for which, see ‘Mathematical Lives’ and Aubrey, Lives, i. cxxx–cxxxiv.


Bodleian MS Aubrey 8, fol. 69r.

Bodleian MS Aubrey 8, fol. 70r.

Although it seems unlikely that Aubrey would have considering collaborating with him a second time, Blackburne did play a role in the composition of the Apparatus, suggesting to Aubrey that he might ‘putt-out in print the Lives of our English Mathematitians’ at some point before 12 March 1689 (Aubrey, Lives, i. 452, ii. 1695).

Arthur Hopton, A Concordancy of Yeares ... (London, 1612); Bodleian MS Aubrey 8, fol. 70r. See Gerald Toomer, John Selden: A Life in Scholarship, 2 vols. (Oxford, 2009), i. 17.

Sherburne, The Sphere of Marcus Manilius Made an English Poem With Annotations and an Astronomical Appendix [London, 1675], sep. pag. 1–126, Apparatus

See the discussion at Aubrey, Lives, ii. 1694–6.
(98) For the Nouvelles see Hunter, Aubrey, 163–4.

(99) Bodleian MS Aubrey 9, fol. 29r (= Aubrey, ‘Hobbes’, i. 18).

(100) Wood, Athenae, i. sig. ar-v.


(102) Aubrey, Lives, i. cxxx–cxxxii.

(103) Bodleian MS Aubrey 7, fol. 2r. ‘Memento diffidere’ (‘remember to distrust’) was a saying ‘from one of the sages’ quoted in Lucian’s Hermotimus, 47. Aubrey was quoting the standard Latin version of the Greek original, ‘μέμνησο ἀπιστεῖν’.

(104) See Chapter 6. On 10 October 1694 he asked Edward Lhuyd to remove the sheet on which his comments were written from the manuscript, ‘which (though true) would make him [i.e., Wood] angry’ (Bodleian MS Ashmole 1814, fol. 117r). His rage was evidently not permanent.

(105) Bodleian MS Ashmole 1814, fol. 92r. The ‘things reflecting upon Dr Wallis’ were no doubt the unflattering life of him at Bodleian MS Aubrey 6, fol. 94v–95r (Aubrey, Lives, i. 299–302).

(106) The modern Bodleian MS Aubrey 7, containing those sheets, was compiled by Edmund Malone during his study of the Lives in September 1792 (Bodleian MS Aubrey 7, fol. 1r). For Malone’s interventions with Aubrey’s manuscripts, undertaken as part of an attempt at editing the Lives, see Aubrey, Lives, i. cxxxiv–cxxxvii.