



Reading Marvell with John Aubrey (and occasionally Anthony Wood)

Jack Avery, University of Oxford, UK, jack.avery@history.ox.ac.uk

This paper explores how the recent critical reassessment of the biographer and antiquarian John Aubrey (1626–97) and the increasing availability of his writings can reveal new perspectives on Marvell's early reception. Aubrey read all available instances of Marvell's writing and studied them carefully and incisively, but criticism has not yet examined his engagement with Marvell as a comprehensive whole. This reveals that his primary interest was in data gathering: I use Aubrey's letters, unpublished research manuscripts, and his biographical study *Brief Lives*, alongside the papers of his friend and collaborator Anthony Wood, to demonstrate how Marvell's verse and prose were recognized as a valuable source for antiquarian and biographical research by early readers. For example, Aubrey emphasizes the importance of Marvell's often neglected epitaphs. Aubrey also recognized that there were potential limitations for researchers using Marvell's writing, not least his tendency to "severe" representations of his subjects. This severity could also endanger readers themselves, and I show how Aubrey and Wood tried to counteract accusations in the 1690s that they had shared the "Advice to a Painter" satires. This case demonstrates how the printed editions of the 1660s continued to possess an exceptional reputation for sedition which could be reactivated at moments of heightened political tension, and which far outstripped their actual content.



“He had not a generall acquaintance”: so wrote John Aubrey of Marvell’s social habits in *Brief Lives*, no doubt highly conscious of the sharp difference with his own lifestyle.¹ Indeed, Aubrey told his close friend and collaborator Anthony Wood that the latter had persuaded him that he was uniquely “fit” to undertake his biographical studies “by reason of my generall acquaintance” (37). And perhaps Aubrey and Marvell could not seem more different, particularly in the portrait the former gives us of Marvell as a withdrawn and near-paranoid genius who “would not play the good-fellow in any mans company, with whom in his \whose/ hands he would not trust his life” (344). Yet they were also strangely similar: ambiguous Anglicans who had dabbled with popery but who were enmeshed with the nonconformist networks of the Restoration; public spirited (albeit in very different ways), with a strong sense of what public service entailed, and notably alcoholic even to their contemporaries.² They were also writers caught between manuscript and print, a divide which Marvell navigated with much greater alacrity. While the biography in *Brief Lives* has done long service as a minor staple of Marvell criticism, usually furnishing choice quotations to illustrate broader arguments, a full reassessment of what Aubrey and Wood can contribute to scholarship about Marvell and his immediate reception has been lacking. Today a growing body of research is asserting Aubrey’s fundamental credibility and providing much readier access to his manuscripts, with the forthcoming *Correspondence* supplementing Kate Bennett’s magisterial edition of *Brief Lives* (2015). It is time to stop cherry-picking from Aubrey. By finally considering his engagement with Marvell as a whole, we can recognize that he provides a rare record of a close and extensive reader.

Aubrey was highly attentive to both Marvell’s prose and poetry, but not necessarily in the ways that we might expect. He confirms but also complicates Marvellian scholarship, while leaving us with new questions in need of answering: for example, while he is a strong witness to the contemporary prominence of Marvell’s neo-Latin poetry, the verse he was actually interested in disrupts longstanding critical hierarchies. This article collects everything we know of Aubrey’s reading into a new narrative. It supplies an overview of what an Aubreian perspective on Marvell looks like, beginning with the Marvell biography in *Brief Lives*, before examining the evidence for how Aubrey used his works. Characteristically, Aubrey’s testimony is at once specific and elusive. Such a study is also necessarily inseparable from the work of Aubrey’s fellow biographer Wood,

¹ All quotations from *Brief Lives* are from John Aubrey, *Brief Lives, with An Apparatus for the Lives of our English Mathematical Writers*, ed. Kate Bennett, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), I, 344.

² Ashley Marshall and Robert D. Hume, “Marvell and Restoration Wits,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Andrew Marvell*, ed. Martin Dzelzainis and Edward Holberton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 702. Aubrey once asked Wood if he thought it was a good idea to be buried near his friend Edward Bagshaw in the nonconformist cemetery at Bunhill Feilds, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Wood F 39, fol. 360v.

who included a life of Marvell in his entry on Samuel Parker in his *Athenæ Oxonienses* (1691–92). For while their opinions on Marvell’s writing diverged immensely—Wood sided with his friend Andrew Allam in hating Marvell’s guts but grudgingly respecting his pen—they nonetheless collaborated extensively, and their differing approaches to shared information highlights what was unique in the readings of each. This included sharing copies of the “Painter” poems, and this paper will conclude by examining how the jeopardy associated with these documents could be reactivated two decades after they were initially circulated: one misjudged prank was enough to send both Aubrey and Wood into total panic.

Meeting Marvell

First, how reliable is the intimate character sketch found in *Brief Lives*? It is a relatively complete one by Aubrey’s standards, beginning with an educational and career background:

I thinke his father was Minister of \Hull quære/ he was borne. He had good Grammar-education; and was after sent to in Cambridge. In the time of Oliver the Protector he was Latin Secretarie [...] His native towne of Hull loved him so well that they elected him for their representative in Parliament, and gave him an honourable pension to maintaine him. (344)

This was supplemented with a physical description—“He was of a middling stature, pretty strong sett, roundish faced, cherry cheek’t, hazell eie, browne haire”—and choice details about Marvell’s lifestyle that struck Aubrey as significant to the production of his writing:

He kept bottles of wine at his lodgeings and many times he would drinke liberally by himselfe: to refresh his spirits, and exult his Muse. I remember I have been told \[by] Mr Haake and Dr Pell/ that the learned (an high German) was wont to keep bottells of good Rhenish-wine in his studie, and when he had spent his spirits, he would Drinke a good Rummer of it. (344)

Aubrey believed that an attention to details which went beyond teaching exemplary moral lessons was what distinguished his work from rote panegyric, a form which had little to contribute beyond “high style” commemorations that “leave the reader ignorant [...] only tickles his eares with Elogies”: “the Offices of a Panegyrist, & Historian, are much different. A Life, or an Ep \is a short/ Historie: and there minutenes of \a/ famous

person is grateful”.³ The biography was then rounded off by a select bibliography and details of Marvell’s death and burial. Aubrey’s style thus fused a traditional focus on the learned person’s institutional upbringing, works and death (as in Wood’s *Athenæ Oxonienses*) with a new focus on apparently incidental details. Aubrey collected these as a resource to serve “the curiosity and knowledge of a living community”, and to “extend biography into antiquarianism and natural philosophy” where such facts could be transformed into usable data.⁴ Indeed, they were often shown—with exceptional clarity in the case of Marvell’s drinking—to be crucial to the subject’s genius, i.e. “to exult his Muse”.⁵

The “cherry cheek’t” physical description is consonant with the surviving portrait of Marvell, and lest we suspect that the painting was Aubrey’s source, it is strengthened by the fact that he had met Marvell. They were certainly acquainted by May 1675 when he wrote to Wood that he had extracted a promise from Marvell to write “minutes for you of Mr John Milton” in service of Wood’s own biographical research.⁶ Probably busy with the recently recalled parliament Marvell never obliged, and Aubrey had to look elsewhere. But Aubrey also claimed to be a strong witness to Marvell’s behavior in the public sphere through two oral quotations from him, which he trusted enough to transcribe several times. These are Marvell’s declarations that “he would not drinke high or freely with any one with whom he would not intrust his Life”, and that “Rochester was the only man in England that had the true veine of Satyre” (171, 344, 345). Both have the tenor of being picked up from coffee-house or tavern conversation, but before we imagine Marvell holding court like Dryden at Will’s, we should note that one of Aubrey’s great skills was moving between orality and manuscript, and that he was an accomplished writer when it came to reliving—and reinventing—the patter of conversation.⁷ That his list of Marvell’s friends is actually just a list of Aubrey’s friends who knew Marvell, namely James Harrington and John Pell, encourages further caution.

How Aubrey frames these quotations may nonetheless indicate something of their provenance. The relative passivity of Aubrey’s claim that “I remember I heard him

³ Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ballard 14, fol. 131r; Kelsey Jackson Williams, *The Antiquary: John Aubrey’s Historical Scholarship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 102.

⁴ Kate Bennett, “John Aubrey and the Rhapsodic Book,” *Renaissance Studies* 28, no. 2 (2014): 326; see also Allan Pritchard, *English Biography in the Seventeenth Century: A Critical Survey* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 181–82.

⁵ Drink as an intellectual lubricant was a focus for the bibulous Aubrey, *Brief Lives*, I, xli.

⁶ MS Wood F 39, fol. 296v. Bennett suggests that Aubrey may have had Cyriack Skinner ask Marvell on his behalf, *Brief Lives*, II, 1618.

⁷ Kate Bennett, “John Aubrey, Joseph Barnes’s Print-Shop and a Sham Newsletter,” *Library* 21, no. 1 (1999): 52; for Marvell’s participation in coffee-house culture, see Sean H. McDowell, “Urban Marvell,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Andrew Marvell*, 282–89.

say” the Rochester example suggests a conversation that Aubrey was observing rather than leading, particularly when compared to the clear formulas found in other lives, such as “He told me” (197) and the familiar “he would say” (110).⁸ “I heard him” only appears on one other occasion, where Aubrey describes listening to a lecture from the astronomer Laurence Rook (19). This is enhanced by the fact that the quotations are highly performative. Aubrey gives us Marvell playing at being Marvell, his reported speech channeling just the sort of over-compensatory macho bravado (which insists a little too hard) that we might expect from the author of “To his Coy Mistress” and *The Rehearsal Transpros’d*. The boast of being a man who attracts danger and a provocative endorsement of England’s foremost provocateur, they efficiently exhibit the contrary impulses between anonymity and showboating that are also found in his letters to William Popple and Edward Harley about “Mr. Marvell [...] the Author” who “walks negligently up & down as unconcerned”.⁹

Despite their unstable provenance these quotations do align therefore with what we know of Marvell’s textual behavior, and at the very least indicate that this was a tension which Aubrey either recognized or accurately imagined in him. That said, we are nonetheless left with the suggestion that Aubrey’s personal acquaintance with Marvell was not a deep one, and would have been restricted to the public meeting spots of Restoration London. One doubts that Aubrey knew him much better than any of the more general of his “generall acquaintance”. Yet his acquaintance with Marvell’s writing was a different story: Aubrey was a contemporary who read almost all of Marvell’s available work, and both his enthusiasm for its artistry and his use of it as a research resource provides crucial evidence for how Marvell’s writing was received by a close and observant reader.

Reading Marvell

Aubrey was extremely unusual among contemporaries in that he did not think of Marvell primarily as a polemicist or an MP, but as a poet. Wood, for example, categorized his satires and *Miscellaneous Poems* among the “other things” written by a notorious prose controversialist.¹⁰ Aubrey, on the other hand, placed Marvell at the front of his section of English poets in the first volume of *Brief Lives*, leading a procession that continued

⁸ Examples from the lives of Aubrey’s friends William Harvey and Seth Ward. The formula “he was wont to say”, used in the second iteration of the Marvell quote (345) and found in lives such as that of Harvey (199), the clergyman John Tombes (246), and Rochester (171), could function as either a witnessed quotation or as one which was gathered second hand.

⁹ *The Poems and Letters of Andrew Marvell*, ed. H.M. Margoliouth and Pierre Legouis, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), II, 346, 357.

¹⁰ Anthony Wood, *Athenæ Oxonienses* (London: Thomas Bennet, 1692), II, 620.

through Denham, Corbet, Jonson, Dryden, Shakespeare, Suckling, Waller, Cowley and more. Only Milton was technically ahead, but Milton's biography was later written on a separate sheet and inserted into Volume 3 (the decision of the unquestioningly royalist Aubrey to begin with these two stalwarts of the 1650s may have been to ease the transition from the previous entry, the republican Henry Marten).¹¹ As with the other poets, Marvell's entry was marked by an illustration of the bays in the left margin, a convention Aubrey picked up from the antiquarian William Dugdale's *Monasticon Anglicanum* (1655–73).¹² Readers thus encountered Marvell primarily as an eminent poet, and, as Bennett notes, Aubrey was "exceptionally well-informed: this was written in 1680", i.e. before the publication of the *Miscellaneous Poems* in 1681.¹³ Marvell was among the "Kalendar of 55 persons" that Aubrey composed over 1680, and which compromised the initial biographical survey which began the project (27). This is supported by the fact that Aubrey does not mention the *Poems*, despite listing Marvell's prose tracts and citing the collected "Poems" of poets such as Denham, Cowley and Milton in their lives (352, 383, 666). As Nicholas von Maltzahn has recognized, his knowledge of Marvell as a poet thus predates what scholarship recognizes as the point at which the true extent of Marvell's poetry was first experienced by most readers.¹⁴

This is a major point which is too easily buried. It means that Aubrey is an exceptional witness and we should ask what sort of poet he thought Marvell to be: was he an exemplary satirist? an occasional writer of public verse? a coterie poet, or a lone lyricist? Aubrey did connect Marvell's poetry to political office, albeit in a more holistic sense, in which his skill appeared to flow out of his protectoral employment:

In the time of Oliver the Protector he was Latin Secretarie. He was a great master of the Latin tongue: an excellent poet in Latin or English: for Latin verses there was no man would come into competition with him. The verses called the advice to the Painter were of his making. (344)

This is a remarkably rounded description of Marvell's poetry for 1680, encompassing proficiency in neo-Latin and English as well as the rougher verse satires. Indeed, the slapdash work of the "Painter" poems that has been used against Marvell's authorship does not trouble Aubrey's account of him as a writer with exceptional finesse (partly, I would argue, because that roughness is an appropriate part of the form). What is not

¹¹ *Brief Lives*, I, cxiv.

¹² *Brief Lives*, I, cxiii.

¹³ *Brief Lives*, II, 1230–31.

¹⁴ Nicholas von Maltzahn, "Marvell's Ghost," in *Marvell and Liberty*, ed. Warren Chernaik and Martin Dzelzainis (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), 57.

here, despite the political connection with “Oliver the Protector”, is any recognition of Marvell’s protectorate panegyrics. Rather than being reticent to mention protectoral connections, Aubrey often went out of his way to highlight them, pointing out the close relationship between his friend James Long and Cromwell “which made the strict Cavaliers looke-on him with an evill eye” (561), happily including Waller’s panegyric on Cromwell (379), and even writing to Wood of Milton’s panegyrics that “Were they made in the commendation of the Devill, ’twere all one to me. tis the ὑψος [sublimity] that I looke after”.¹⁵ If Aubrey knew of Marvell’s panegyrics, there is a good chance he would have included them; that he did not may indicate that they remained relatively obscure in 1680. Stephanie Coster has recently demonstrated how the printer Robert Boulter made these poems available on demand for buyers of the *Miscellaneous Poems*, but if Aubrey appeared at Boulter’s shop he would not have known to request them, save—as Coster also suggests—by noting their obvious excision.¹⁶ The field of potential readers in the know may thus have been a limited one, and Aubrey’s ignorance suggests that it that may have been up to Boulter to advertise the nature of the missing Cromwell poems to sympathetic customers.

As this example indicates, Aubrey’s failure to provide details on which English-language poems he had in mind beyond the “Painter” poems means that it is often easier to rule out poems with a known circulation before 1680, rather than identify positive examples. So while Aubrey noted in a section on Francis Villier’s death at Kingston upon Thames in his chorographical survey of Surrey that “There is a Poeme in 8^o \entitled Vaticinium Votiuim ad Carolum Secundum. printed by - - - y^e Kings Binder by Gray-fryers/ wherein amongst other things, is an \good/ Elegie on this Lord Francis Viliers”, this was not Marvell’s “Elegy Upon the Death of My Lord Francis Villiers”. Marvell’s “Elegy” was only published anonymously in quarto and was not included in the *Miscellaneous Poems*: thus, given another excellent cue to mention Marvell’s English-language poetry if he knew it, Aubrey again completely passed it by.¹⁷

For Aubrey it was Marvell the neo-Latinist who was the most eminent, and whose verses were the greatest technical accomplishment, but the same problem of positive

¹⁵ MS Wood F 39, fol. 372r.

¹⁶ Stephanie Coster, “Robert Boulter and the Publication of Andrew Marvell’s *Miscellaneous Poems*,” *The Review of English Studies* 69, no. 289 (2018): 274–75.

¹⁷ Oxford, Bodleian Library, Aubrey 4, fol. 42v. Edmund’s Curl’s edition completely misread Aubrey’s supralinear additions, John Aubrey, *The Natural History and Antiquities of the County of Surrey* (London: 1719), I, 47. Aubrey’s Surrey manuscript was transcribed and revised in 1691. See Michael Hunter, *John Aubrey and the Realm of Learning* (London: Duckworth, 1975), 87. Aubrey also wrote to Wood on 7 August 1680 to “pray let me know if Vaticinium Carolinum a little 8^o Poem in English is in Oxo library or &c: There is an Elegie not very long & indifferently good on the Lord Francis Villers. which I much want”, MS Wood F 39, fol. 343r. He also made notes to consult the book in *Brief Lives*, I, 147, 444.

identification occurs. As Estelle Haan notes, by judging that “no man would come into competition with him” Aubrey placed Marvell’s neo-Latin poetry well ahead of contemporaries such as Milton and Cowley, but her survey of this writing focuses on prestigious verses with a highly limited circulation, and which we may doubt that Aubrey had access to before the publication of the *Miscellaneous Poems*.¹⁸ Indeed, our excitement at taking Aubrey’s testimony as a generalized judgement on Marvell’s neo-Latin poetry is in danger of rushing past the peculiarity of it, and the important question of which neo-Latin works he could possibly have been thinking about. Victoria Moul has recently shown the benefit of casting the net more widely by highlighting the “clever, elegant, and suggestive Latin” in the Blood epigram, “one of Marvell’s most unprepossessing poems”, but one with a much broader manuscript circulation.¹⁹ The same may be asked of Marvell’s other “unprepossessing” neo-Latin poems: in his life of the poet John Hoskins, Aubrey highlighted in language similar to that found in his life of Marvell that “He [Hoskins] made the best Latin Epitaphs of his time” (415–20). It is worth considering whether Aubrey’s focus was actually on Marvell’s epitaphs and commemorative poems, the genre which Aubrey best understood, but which modern criticism has been most willing to pass over.

Reading Marvell’s epitaphs

Aubrey’s antiquarian and biographical research focused heavily on the collection of epitaphs (verse and otherwise), and his correspondence provides many examples of his own visits to grave sites and how he solicited transcriptions from others. We know that Marvell’s prose was also ransacked as a potential source: in his life of the theologian Herbert Thorndike, Aubrey noted that “He made his owne Inscription, which is mentioned by Mr Andrew Marvell in his Rehearsal Transpros’d”, and he transcribed it directly from Marvell’s tract (155–6).²⁰ Aubrey cast a critical eye on such writing: Peter Hausted’s epitaph for the poet Thomas Randolph was “puerile”, while Charles

¹⁸ Estelle Haan, *Andrew Marvell’s Latin Poetry: from text to context* (Brussels: Latomus, 2003), 1. There is no record of Aubrey owning Robert Witty’s *Vulgar Errors* (1651); only the astrological play of the “Letter to Maniban” stands out as indisputably of interest to him.

¹⁹ Victoria Moul, “Marvell and Bilingual Verse Culture,” in *Imagining Andrew Marvell at 400*, ed. Matthew C. Augustine, Giulio J. Pertile, and Steven N. Zwicker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 111–12. See also Matthew Augustine, *Andrew Marvell: A Literary Life* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 214.

²⁰ Dzelzainis and Patterson point out that Marvell himself appears to have taken the inscription from Thorndike’s will, rather than his grave, *The Prose Works of Andrew Marvell*, ed. Annabel Patterson et al., 2 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), I, 14, 154. Aubrey’s copy of *The Rehearsal Transpros’d* is extant, but its only annotation comments on John Ogilby’s otherwise lost “Character of a Trooper”, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 1591, fol. 21.

II's physician George Bate "writes like a Doctor not to express his wives surname".²¹ In October 1673 Aubrey closed a letter to Wood with a line from a Latin verse epitaph "Qui Tumulos cernis cur ne mortalia spernis?" [you who look at tombs, why don't you scorn mortal things]; it had evidently stuck with him since April, when he had sent Wood the complete original.²² When Wood sent him a gift, Aubrey quoted a "well saied" verse epitaph commending charity.²³ Aubrey even drafted a Latin epitaph for Sir Edward Leech, the father of his friend Dorothy Long, which was to be set up in St Clement Danes church. This pointedly omitted the names of her stepmother's children:

Now you must know that an Epitaph is the short History of the person interred: and when the Parsons make it, they are presently in a panagyrique rapture & give no account of his countrey &c: [...] I must mention the 2^d wife in spight of my teeth. it cannot be evayded. but \I/ have not sett downe the names of her Issue. nor matches.²⁴

Aubrey was thus able to judge commemorative writing with some authority, and with an understanding that it featured a "panegyrique rapture" that he was often obliged to decrypt.

Aubrey's frequent visits to churches to search their monuments would thus have put him in close proximity with Marvell's epitaphs, such as his English verse "Epitaph upon Frances Jones" erected in St Martin-in-the-Fields around 1671. The church hosted many high-profile funerary monuments and Aubrey knew it well, having visited it to correct Wood's copy of the epitaph of the churchman Nathaniel Hardy against the original.²⁵ However, there is no evidence to suggest that he knew the unsigned epitaph of Frances Jones was Marvell's until its publication without her name in the *Miscellaneous Poems*.

There is a stronger connection with "Janæ Oxenbrigiæ Epitaphium" at Eton College chapel, as two of the three seventeenth-century manuscript witnesses to that inscription were Aubrey's close collaborators Wood and Elias Ashmole.²⁶ However, while Wood judged that the verses were "a large canting inscription" and noted that it

²¹ *Brief Lives*, I, 386; Aubrey did not include the epitaph, which had been sent to him by Randolph's brother, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Wood F 43, fol. 282r; MS Wood F 39, fol. 173v. Aubrey was likewise stung by the lack of an epitaph for the poet William Cartwright: "pitty 'tis so famous a Bard should lye without an ISS", MS Wood F 39, fol. 138v.

²² MS Wood F 39, fol. 199v; MS Ballard 14, fol. 96r.

²³ MS Wood F 39, fol. 241r;

²⁴ Chippenham, Wiltshire and Swindon Historical Centre, MS 2493B/1/26/1.

²⁵ Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Wood F 46, fol. 53r; MS Wood F 39, fol. 431.

²⁶ See Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Wood B. 12, fols. 251-2; MS Ashmole 1137, fol. 119.

had been “daub’d or covered over with paint” since the Restoration, he did not provide an attribution.²⁷ Given that Wood sought to play up Marvell’s links with nonconformists and his “buffooning” style, it is doubtful that he recognized Marvell’s authorship of the epitaph, even after its publication in *Miscellaneous Poems*.²⁸ It would be unusual for Aubrey to consult Wood’s copy and not provide a known attribution, especially as he had visited the chapel for research.²⁹ And our skepticism may be encouraged by the fact that Marvell was not in the business of circulating his epitaphs anyway: the versions in the *Poems* were composed from fair manuscript copies which Marvell never brought into line with the actual inscriptions.³⁰

However, despite lacking an incontestable connection to any surviving inscriptions, Aubrey did nonetheless believe that Marvell was a writer of exemplary epitaphs. In his life of their mutual friend the political theorist James Harrington, who died in 1677 after an extended period of mental illness, Aubrey claimed that “Mr Marvell made a good Epitaph for him: but would have given offence” (323). This epitaph was not published in *Miscellaneous Poems*; indeed, it may not have existed. Yet Aubrey’s note to “quære Mr Marvells epitaph on him” (530) indicates that three years after Harrington’s death he thought he knew someone who would have access to a copy. Thus Aubrey claimed to know of at least one Marvellian epitaph which was circulated to some degree in manuscript, judged that it was “good” verse, and finally noted that it was suppressed for being too politically audacious. While Nigel Smith suggests that Aubrey was mistaken in thinking that the poem ever existed, the fact remains that he considered it wholly reasonable that Marvell would write such a “good Epitaph”.³¹ As the “Painter” satires were the only poems that Aubrey specifically attributed to Marvell in 1680, he may have had little trouble combining his expectation (from an unknown source) that Marvell wrote good epitaphs with his knowledge of Marvell as a politically adventurous poet who had a habit of crossing those in power. Real or imagined, the Harrington epitaph thus reveals much about Aubrey’s understanding of Marvell’s poetry before the publication of the *Miscellaneous Poems*.

²⁷ Anthony Wood, *Athenæ Oxonienses* (London: Thomas Bennet, 1692), II, 392.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, II, 619.

²⁹ MS Wood F 39, fols. 368r-v.

³⁰ Hilton Kelliher, “Some Notes on Andrew Marvell,” *The British Library Journal* 4, no. 2 (1978): 139. Marvell’s neo-Latin epitaphs to John and Edmund Trott in Hampshire were outside of Aubrey’s usual routes, and the Oxonian Trott is not mentioned by Wood in his *Athenæ*.

³¹ Nigel Smith, *Marvell: The Chameleon* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 320; compare Nicholas von Maltzahn, *An Andrew Marvell Chronology* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 191–92.

Reading “Tom May’s Death”

Additional cases of Aubrey reading Marvell’s English poetry can be firmly dated to after 1681, when he had access to the copy of “Tom May’s Death” in the *Miscellaneous Poems*.³² Again his attention was drawn to satire rather than lyric, and again Marvell’s poetry was to be mined for biographical information. Aubrey and Wood both recognized that decades-old satirical poetry could preserve “minute” details otherwise only recorded by oral gossip.³³ In January 1691 Wood had written to Aubrey that “I desire you to recollect what you know of the said Thomas May & write it downe [...] I shall have occasion to speak of him in my book”, noting that he was “choaked by tyinge his cap too close under his chin—Translation of lucan made him encline to a reipub[lic]—that fancy stuck to him alwaies after”.³⁴ A fortnight later Aubrey replied that:

Mr Edmund Wyld told me that he was acquainted with him when he was young: and then he was as other young men of this Towne are, sc: [that is] he said he was debauched ad omnia [in everything]. but doe not by any meanes take notice of it: for we have all been young. But Mr Marvel in his Poems upon Tom May’s death, falls very severe upon him. he was choaked by tyeing his cap: That of Lucan is true — sc. that it made him incline to a Republ[ic].³⁵

While Wood’s letter is damaged, it does not appear that he mentioned May’s debauching. Aubrey took this detail from his drinking companion Edmund Wyld, and then corroborated it by using “Tom May’s Death” as a contemporaneous written witness to that oral testimony. Recent scholarship emphasizes that this “patience and persistence in research [was] entirely typical” of Aubrey.³⁶ However, his description of youthful indiscretion which Wood should “not by any meanes take notice of” naturally became central to the narrative of May’s fall from grace in *Athenæ Oxonienses*, where Wood combined Aubrey’s letter with his other sources to connect this behavior to May’s political betrayal. After Cambridge he was:

³² If Aubrey owned a copy of *Miscellaneous Poems* it has not been traced.

³³ See for example MS Wood F 39, fol. 340r; MS Aubrey 12, fol. 66v; London, British Library, MS Add. 72850, fol. 134r; London, British Library MS Add 32553, fol. 37r; MS Wood F 39, fol. 328r.

³⁴ MS Wood F 46, fol. 337r. Twenty years previously in 1671 Aubrey had provided Wood with May’s epitaph, and “had much adoe to find out: after severall enquiries, severall yeares”, eventually locating it stored upside down in St Benedict’s Chapel, Westminster Abbey, MS Wood F 39, fol. 155v.

³⁵ MS Wood F 39, fol. 414r.

³⁶ *Brief Lives*, I, iv; William Poole, *John Aubrey and the Advancement of Learning* (Oxford: Bodleian Library, 2010), 98; Hunter, *Aubrey and the Realm of Learning* (1975).

graciously countenanced by K. Ch. 1. and his royal Consort; but he finding not that preferment from either, which he expected, grew discontented, sided with the Presbyterians upon the turn of the times, became a Debauchee *ad omnia*, entertained ill principles as to Religion, spoke often very slightly of the *Holy Trinity*, kept beastly and atheistical company.³⁷

While Aubrey had worked hard to separate behavioral debauchery “ad omnia” from debauchery in political thought, “for we have all been young”, Wood emphatically attached them as Marvell had done: “Tell them of liberty, the stories fine, / Until you all grow consuls in your wine. / Or thou, Dictator of the glass, bestow / On him the Cato, this the Cicero” (45–8).

Aubrey’s reference to “Mr Marvel in his Poems upon Tom May’s death” performs an elision of volume and title common in his rushed letters, and indicates that at some point he had seen a copy of *Miscellaneous Poems* sufficiently well to read this poem; evidently he also expected Wood to have access to one as well. Wood certainly consulted a copy when writing his extended biographical digression on Marvell in *Athenæ Oxonienses*, which is otherwise indebted in its summary of Marvell’s prose writings to the research and opinions of Wood’s friend Andrew Allam, vice principal of St Edmund Hall and an expert on prose controversy.³⁸ Yet while Wood lifted his description of the publication of the *Poems* from Mary Marvell’s opening epistle he does not seem to have examined the volume beyond this introduction.³⁹ He failed to recognize Marvell as the author of “Janæ Oxenbrigiæ Epitaphium”, and preferred to side with Allam over Aubrey in characterizing Marvell as a prose polemicist.⁴⁰ “Tom May’s Death” is thus another reminder that Marvell’s earliest readers may not have approached the poems as we expect: in 1691 Aubrey was already treating them as an academic resource that contained valuable but otherwise ephemeral information about previous generations.

³⁷ Wood, *Athenæ Oxonienses*, II, 295.

³⁸ Von Maltzahn, *Marvell Chronology* (2005), 228–29, 248–49. For a relevant study of Allam’s research for Wood’s life of Milton in its Exclusion Crisis context, see Nicholas von Maltzahn, “Wood, Allam, and the Oxford Milton,” *Milton Studies* 31 (1994): 159–64.

³⁹ “Afterwards his Widow published of his Composition *Miscellaneous Poems*. Lond. 1681. fol, which were then taken into the hands of many persons of his perswassion, and by them cried up as excellent”, Wood, *Athenæ Oxonienses*, II, 620.

⁴⁰ Wood transcribed Allam’s notes that Marvell was “an untowardly Combatant so hugely well vers’d and experience’d in the then, but newly, refin’d art (tho much in mode and fashion almost ever since) of sportive and jeering buffoonry”, Wood, *Athenæ Oxonienses*, II, 619–20.

Reading and collecting the “Painter” poems

Aubrey’s discomfort with a too credulous biographical reading of “Tom May’s Death” reflected his more general anxieties about Marvell: that while his “very severe” style made him a useful source of gossip, and produced daring works such as the supposed Harrington epitaph and the “Painter” poems, it also made him far more dangerous to his readers than other writers. This may be seen in the strange omission of the *Account of the Growth of Popery* (1677) from the list of Marvell’s prose publications in *Brief Lives*. Given its widespread attribution to Marvell, its clear markers of his authorship, and Wood’s awareness of it, it is inconceivable that Aubrey would not have known of the *Account* by 1680.⁴¹ Rather, its absence may be due to the acute sensitivity to anti-popery which also led him to completely ignore the Popish Plot in his life of his friend Israel Tonge (152–53).⁴² Aubrey’s anxieties about Marvell also came to the fore after the 1692 publication of the *Athenæ*, when he was accused of sharing the “Painter” poems with Wood. While Diane Purkiss has recently touched on this episode to demonstrate the important role of shame in the circulation of these satires, her predominant focus was on the tactile experience of their manuscript iterations.⁴³ Aubrey and Wood, on the other hand, demonstrate dangers particular to the antiquarian collection of print satires. The “Painter” poems were at once invaluable historical artefacts like “Tom May’s Death”, which demanded to be gathered, codified and used for public research, and yet they were also forbidden print objects which incubated a uniquely hazardous potential. The final section of this paper examines how Aubrey and Wood collected the “Painter” poems, how the satires’ seditious reputation was reactivated in the early 1690s, and how they sought to exonerate themselves.

Wood gave an account of the original print publication of the “Painter” poems in his life of Denham:

In the year 1666 were printed by stealth in oct, certain poems entit. *Directions to a painter*, in four copies or parts, and each dedicated to K. Ch. 2 in verse. They were very satyrically written against several persons engaged in the War against the *Dutch*, an. 1665, and at the end of the said four parts, is a copy entit. *Clarindons house-warming*, Sir *John Denhams* name is set, yet they were then thought by many to have been

⁴¹ *Prose Works*, II, 197–98. Wood mistitled it as “*The rise and growth of Popery*, &c. Lond. 1678”, *Athenæ Oxonienses*, II, 620; he also owned at least one copy, in *State Tracts: being a collection of several treatises relating to the government* (London: 1689), in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Wood 560 (1).

⁴² Aubrey confessed his Catholic sympathies to Wood, “you know what I am, no Enemy to them, unles Irish Bigotts [...] I say a little superstition is a good Ingredient in Government” before adding, “pray burne or blott out some arcana of AW [Anthony Wood] & JA [John Aubrey] in this letter”, MS Wood F 39, fols. 256r–v.

⁴³ Diane Purkiss, “Touching Words: Marvell’s Satires in Hand,” in *Imagining Andrew Marvell at 400*, 313.

written by *Andrew Marvell* Esq. and after that his epitaph; both bitterly reflecting on *Edw. E. of Clarendon*, his house called *Clarendon house* and his ways of scraping up wealth.⁴⁴

We should note that this account described the satires as “bitterly reflecting” on the Earl of Clarendon in particular, and that the mock “epitaph” on Clarendon House may have helped to confirm a Marvellian authorship to Aubrey and Wood.⁴⁵ Wood’s description was derived from Ashmole 1632 (7), a copy of *Directions to a Painter [...] Being the last Works of Sir John Denham. Whereunto is annexed, Clarindon’s Housewarming, By an Unknown Author* (1667), that Aubrey had probably given to him: it appears in a bound collection otherwise filled exclusively with Aubrey’s books. However, thanks to the over-enthusiasm of the Ashmolean Museum’s binders the page edges have been shorn off, leaving only small traces of several annotations on the title page.⁴⁶ These include Wood’s characteristic item number in Arabic numerals (34), and that of the Museum in roman numerals (VII).⁴⁷ All but the very edge of a set of notes above these has been destroyed, and while “viduae Ja[...]” survives in the right margin in an unclear hand, what appear to be further annotations there have been almost wholly lost.⁴⁸ There are no more annotations inside the pamphlet, and the errata has not been followed.

This was one of many “Painter” poems owned by Wood, and he made no effort to hide them among his immense collection of political and poetical ephemera; in fact, they were conspicuously highlighted by his own finding guides.⁴⁹ This is despite the fact that Aubrey identified his library as a potential vulnerability, and worried about the consequences of Wood’s papers being searched “for feare that all my MSS &c: should be rifled by the Mobile”.⁵⁰ One of Wood’s handwritten contents pages lists his “Collection of Poems on affaires of state viz. Advice to a paynter &c”.⁵¹ On the title page of each of his three volumes of *A Collection of the Newest and Most Ingenious Poems, Songs, Catches, &c. Against Popery* (1688–89) and *Poems on Affairs of State* (1689) Wood wrote the date

⁴⁴ Wood, *Athenæ Oxonienses*, II, 302.

⁴⁵ *Directions to a Painter* (1667), 44.

⁴⁶ When having his papers bound Wood was much more careful, and instructed his binders not to remove such information, Nicolas Kiessling, *The Library of Anthony Wood* (Oxford: Oxford Bibliographic Society, 2002), 693.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, xlvii.

⁴⁸ Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ashmole 1632 (7), sig. B1r. This volume is not listed in Kiessling’s bibliography of Wood’s library, possibly because Wood returned it (see below).

⁴⁹ Wood also owned additional printed copies of the “Second” and “Third Advice” in Wood 382 (6); “Third Advice” in Wood 84 (7); an Exclusion Crisis “Advice to a Painter” in Ashmole F 4 (39); also in Wood 417 (11); an Exclusion Crisis “New Advice to a Painter”, in Wood 417 (21a).

⁵⁰ MS Aubrey 12, fol. 2r.

⁵¹ Wood followed the original title page of *Poems on Affairs of State* (1689), which included a list of poems headed by the “Advice to a Painter” beneath the title, Oxford, Bodleian Library, Wood 382 (6), fol. 1v. The Ashmolean librarians were not reticent to record “The 3^d Advice to a Painter” in their own contents page to Wood 84.

he bought them along with their price, all in his very identifiable hand.⁵² There is no sense that his ownership of these satirical anthologies caused him any concern.

Occasional annotations indicate that Wood was reading these satires closely. What is probably a correction to a poorly printed “B” in “Backside” is found in one version of the “Third Advice”, although it is emphatic enough that any misprint cannot be discerned.⁵³ Wood’s reading was biographically driven: his annotations marked authorship attributions (e.g. Rochester and Waller) and extracted data from within satires, albeit with little attention to the poetic framework. For example, in a non-Marvellian “Painter” broadside of 1673 Wood corrected “Darby” in a list of the conspirators “Father Patrick, Darby, and [...] Teague” to “Danby”.⁵⁴ He thus ignored the context of the line to supply a better-known but anachronistic name (Thomas Osborne was only made Earl of Danby in June 1674).⁵⁵ However, Wood’s reading again focused on Clarendon in particular: in a copy of “On the Young Statesmen” (1680) Wood filled in “C— — had law and sense” with “Clarendon”, but left the rest of the names blank, while in a non-Marvellian “Directions to a Painter” he filled in the rather obvious “Draw a Veil of Displeasure, one to H—de” as “Hyde”.⁵⁶

Wood’s obsessive drive to make Clarendon’s corruption a fixed part of the historical record ultimately got him into serious trouble.⁵⁷ In the life of the royalist judge David Jenkins in *Athenæ Oxonienses* Wood recycled information from Aubrey’s letters and *Brief Lives* to describe how:

After the Restoration of K. Ch. 2. ’twas expected by all that he [David Jenkins] should be made one of the Judges in *Westminster* Hall, and so he might have been, would he have given money to the then Lord Chancellour.⁵⁸

⁵² *The Poems* was “bought at Oxon 26 Feb. 1688 – 6d”; the three *Collection* volumes: “published in Lond. In the latter end of Dec. 1688 6d.”; “14. Feb. 1688–6d – ox”; “Bought at Oxo. 12. March 1688.–6d”; “Bought at Oxo. 30. Mar. 1689”; on title pages of Oxford, Bodleian Library, Wood 382 (4), (5), (7), (8).

⁵³ Oxford, Bodleian Library, Wood 84 (7), 27.

⁵⁴ Oxford, Bodleian Library, Wood 382 (6); Wood 417 (11), 1. Wood did not collect any of the pro-regime “Painter” poems which tried to reappropriate the form, and which were empty of useful biographical information, e.g. *New Advice to a Painter; A Poetical Essay describing the last Sea-Engagement with the Dutch* (London: 1673); *Further Advice to a Painter. Or, Directions to draw the Late Engagement* (London: 1673).

⁵⁵ The poem’s modern editors were likewise stumped for a plausible identification, *Poems on Affairs of State: Augustan Satirical Verse, 1660–1714*, ed. George deForest Lord et al., 7 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964–75), I, 215.

⁵⁶ Oxford, Bodleian Library, Wood 382 (6), 8, 19.

⁵⁷ Wood also attacked Clarendon’s “7 years a-getting” in his diary, *The Life and Times of Anthony Wood, antiquary, at Oxford, 1632–1695, described by himself*, ed. Andrew Clark, 5 vols. (Oxford: Oxford Historical Society, 1891–95), II, 122.

⁵⁸ Wood, *Athenæ Oxonienses*, II, pp. 303, 212; Wood transcribed this directly from Aubrey’s letter of 16 January 1671, “he might have been (he told me) if he would have given Mony to the Chancellour; but he scorned it”, MS Wood F 39, fol. 160v.

Clarendon's son Henry Hyde, the second Earl of Clarendon, was furious, and prosecuted Wood for libel. Wood was brought to the Vice-Chancellor Court at Oxford on 18 November 1692, and his nephew Thomas Wood appeared as proctor for him on 8 and 9 December.⁵⁹ The case ended with Wood being fined and temporarily expelled from the university, but what is important here is the perceived role of Aubrey's copy of the *Directions to a Painter* on the fringes of this prosecution.

By December 1692 Aubrey was deeply worried about the case. Wood had drawn on Aubrey's evidence for the life of Jenkins, and Wood's rather dubious defense rested on the argument that "those things that are excepted against [...] are not of the author's invention but what he found in letters sent to him from persons of knowne reputation".⁶⁰ Aubrey was also getting news of the case from other sources: while he only knew the second Earl of Clarendon casually, his key patron the Earl of Abingdon was close to Hyde.⁶¹ He was sufficiently spooked that on 3 December he wrote to Wood to "Pray doe me the kindnesse to looke-out my papers (for I find severall missing) and also that piece of a booke (Advice to the Painter) and send them to me".⁶² The "piece of a book" was probably the *Directions* that Wood had used as a source in the *Athenæ*, and which was filed among Aubrey's other pamphlets.⁶³ Aubrey was unwell at this time and he allowed his letter to sit around for eleven days until a rapid addition dated 14 December, where his tone changed to border on the hysterical:

on Sunday I went to my Lord Abington, who saluted me with a sad aspect, and a sadder Intimation: sc: [that is] That he was exceedingly grieved for the Trouble that was comeing upon me: I was mightily surprized: sayd he, the Earl of Clarendon hath told me, that Mr Wood had confessed to him, that he had the Libell (Advice to the Painter.) from me: as also the other informations: I do admire that you should deale so unkindly with me, that haue been so faithfull a friend to serve you ever since 1665, as to doe so by me: The Libell was printed, and not uncommon: Could not you haue sayd, that you bought it? or had it of George Ent; or some body that is dead? To be short, my Lord is resolved to ruine \undoe/ me: pray let me know by the next post,

⁵⁹ For an outline of the case and papers relating to this prosecution, see *Life and Times*, IV, pp. 1–50. This was Thomas Wood's only recorded case, Robert Robinson, "The Two Institutes of Thomas Wood: A Study in Eighteenth Century Legal Scholarship," *The American Journal of Legal History* 35, no. 4 (1991): 433.

⁶⁰ Wood, *Life and Times*, IV, 8.

⁶¹ Aubrey visited Hyde in the Tower in May 1691, looking for biographical information on the first Earl for Wood, MS Wood F 39, fol. 427r; for Hyde and Abingdon, see *The State Letters of Henry Earl of Clarendon: Volume 2* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1764).

⁶² Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Tanner 456a, fol. 41r.

⁶³ Bennett names Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ashmole F 4 (39) as a candidate, but this was an Exclusion Crisis libel unrelated to the prosecution, *Brief Lives*, I, cv.

what 'tis that you have donne against me, that I may be the better enabled to make my Defence: I must be faine to fly some whither ere long: but nothing grieves me more than that I shall not be able to see my Booke printed. I much feare I shall never see you, or Oxford again: so I desire you, as a dying person, to looke out my papers for me & send them to Dr Gale, who is my faithfull friend. My heart is ready to breake.⁶⁴

Wood also panicked as soon as he received this. In an “angry letter” (Aubrey’s words) several years later he quoted this section back at Aubrey, and complained that with it “you [went] forward to plague & disturb my thoughts without examination”.⁶⁵

Wood rapidly followed Aubrey’s advice that he should say that he “had it of George Ent; or some body that is dead”. Probably hoping that Aubrey would show his reply to Abington, he wrote back immediately on 17 December that:

As for the book concerning the advice to a painter; this is to assure you in the name of God, that I did once see it in the hands of Mr Charles Perot sometimes Fellow of Oriell coll. & if I mistake not in those of George Ent, & am so great a stranger to Henry Earl of Clarendon, that I never yet spoke a word to him, nor ever wrot any letter or note to him, nor ever yet saw him but only at a distance; of which I am now ready to take my oath in any court of Judicature—therefore I pray rest satisfied as to that matter, & acquaint the noble Earl of Abendon of it.

[...]

*The said Mr Perot was sometimes a writer under Sir Joseph Williamson in Secr[etariat] Office at Whitehall.⁶⁶

Despite his panic Wood probably took some pleasure in implicating Ent, a friend of Aubrey’s with whom he had repeatedly clashed, and who had previously called him Aubrey’s “animall”.⁶⁷ Ent was also an astute choice: his manuscripts at the Royal Society contain a number of Restoration satires.⁶⁸

Wood also thought carefully about the second “some body that is dead”. Here he was characteristically over-literal in reading Aubrey’s instructions: given that Ent had

⁶⁴ In a final postscript he also defended himself that “As to that of Judge Jenkins, I told you, I could attest from his owne mouth”, MS Tanner 456a, fol. 41r. Following standard practice for Aubrey “undoe” is offered as an alternative above the line to “ruine”.

⁶⁵ MS Tanner 456a, fol. 48r.

⁶⁶ Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Wood F 45, fol. 208r.

⁶⁷ MS Aubrey 12, fol. 105r.

⁶⁸ London, Royal Society Library, MS/32 and MS/83. I thank Martin Dzelzainis for pointing this out.

died in 1679, Aubrey had meant that Wood supply one name, with Ent merely serving as an example of someone that was dead. Wood nonetheless made another strategic choice in fingering Charles Perot, who had died in 1677. While he did frequent Oxford, there is little evidence of personal contact between him and Wood beside occasional notes in the latter's papers.⁶⁹ Furthermore, as an early editor of the state newspaper *The London Gazette* under Arlington and Williamson during the late 1660s Perot was an emblematic establishment figure. If he had the "Advice" it was obviously through the course of his work combating sedition with the Secretariat, rather than as a dissident. Wood's anxiety that Perot's unimpeachability be recognized nonetheless spoiled his clever play once he drove the point home unsubtly with the postscript that "The said Mr Perot was sometimes a writer under Sir Joseph Williamson".

It appears that Aubrey then left Wood hanging. Any letters from this point in December 1692 until April 1693 have been lost, although Aubrey's letter of 4 April indicates that some intervening correspondence may have existed.⁷⁰ Wood emphasized the stress this caused in his later "angry letter":

At length when you came to towne an yeare after you told me it was a Banter. Now I appeale to all the world whether this was not an unworthy thing in you as to the particulars. First, that which was bad, you let me know it in your letter to disturb my thoughts & rest: but that which proved good (the Banter) you neuer did let me know it by your letter to comfort my thoughts, only by word of mouth a yeare after & that by accident.⁷¹

Aubrey disagreed with this account, and insisted that "I thinke I told you [much earlier] that my Lord Abingdon told me, that my Lord Clarendon never sayd any such thing—but he only spoke it to me, to banter me & putt me in a fright".⁷² Either way, it was all a joke. Yet we should not lose sight of the fact that Abingdon's prank relied on either the knowledge or the (correct) assumption that Aubrey and Wood had shared these satires in the first place: a reasonable enough conjecture for anyone who understood the relationship between the well-connected Aubrey and the kleptomaniac Wood. It also shows that while the "Painter" poems could function as historical resources to be passed around and discussed fairly openly—and catalogued without restraint by Wood—in moments of heightened tension they were reimbued with their original

⁶⁹ Wood, *Life and Times*, II, 275–76, 373.

⁷⁰ I.e. "I told you, I was invited into Hartfordshire", Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Wood F 51, fol. 5r.

⁷¹ MS Tanner 456a, fol. 48r.

⁷² MS Ballard 14, fol. 155r.

hazardousness. Even before Abingdon's joke, Aubrey foresaw that his copy in Wood's library might endanger him; afterwards, Wood tried to disavow ever seeing documents that any inspection of his finding guides would reveal.

In this the "Painter" poems were unlike other, more ephemeral, satires. Their unique ability to be reactivated in the 1690s was connected to the growing cultural narrative which portrayed them as foundational to what Harold Love described as the school of "Marvellian satires" (a deliberate anachronism), and which was exemplified in the 1689 *Poems on Affairs of State* volume.⁷³ Despite their relative moderation the "Second" and "Third Advice" acquired an outsized reputation for sedition which far outstripped the later, more radical satires which Wood also owned in abundance, but which lacked that original notoriety.⁷⁴

Recognizing the period's focus on the earlier crises of the 1660s also adds further context to the second Earl of Clarendon's prosecution of Wood. Clarendon was working on a reputational defense of his father—Aubrey noted in 1691 that "he cannot doe his fathers life right, till, he is at liberty, and come to his papers"—but this had already been threatened by the stream of historic anti-Clarendon libels published from 1688 onwards.⁷⁵ Wood's prosecution was part of this contest over the first Earl's legacy. While direct inquiries into a link between the original "Painter" poems and the *Athenæ* were a false report, that Abingdon, Aubrey and Wood all considered this to be completely credible emphasizes the understood connection between Wood's supposed libel and Marvell's poetry. Clarendon made an example of Wood because he was reachable in a way that dead poets and underground publishers were not.

Conclusion

Aubrey certainly admired Marvell as an accomplished artist, and as a writer whose work underpinned his own research, but he also believed that readers had to be wary of the arch-satirist's severity. The "Painter" poems remained uniquely incriminating, while accusations in satires such as "Tom May's Death" had to be strictly corroborated. Aubrey also believed that this severity influenced the politicized Harrington epitaph. Yet this performative refusal to "play the good-fellow" was also what made Marvell such a compelling character study for *Brief Lives*, and made his work so valuable to antiquarians. As a civic writer of epitaphs, satire and controversy Marvell produced

⁷³ Harold Love, *English Clandestine Satire, 1660-1702* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 105.

⁷⁴ Wood had no qualms about quoting from a more recent satire in a complaint to Clarendon following the case, see *State Tracts* (1689) in *Life and Times*, IV, 48.

⁷⁵ MS Wood F 39, fol. 427r; see the combative defense of Clarendon's reputation in the introduction to Edward Hyde, *The History of the Rebellion: Volume the First* (1702), xii–xxii.

grounded writing that could be mined carefully for facts in a way that the work of other writers, such as Milton and Dryden, could not. However challenging, severity was preferable to panegyric. The absence of any specific reference to Marvell as a lyric poet remains striking, but a wider view of Aubrey's writing indicates that naming Marvell as "an excellent poet in Latin or English" may have been considered sufficient. Aubrey greatly admired Waller's lyric poetry, for example, but his life of Waller similarly only named his published "Poems", "his Panagyrique to Oliver", and his "verses of the Bermudas" (375). In the end our evidence for Aubrey's reading remains heavily skewed by the antiquarian focus of his note-taking. What remains without question amid this wider elusiveness is Aubrey's appreciation for and interest in Marvell, and he is a fine reminder that Marvell's readers can be as hard to pin down as the man himself.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Esther van Raamsdonk, Edward Holberton and William Poole for valuable discussions about Marvell and Aubrey.

Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

References

Aubrey, John. *The Natural History and Antiquities of the County of Surrey*. 5 vols. London: 1719.

— . *Brief Lives, with An Apparatus for the Lives of our English Mathematical Writers*. Edited by Kate Bennett. 2 vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018.

Augustine, Matthew. *Andrew Marvell: A Literary Life*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-59287-5>

Bennett, Kate. “John Aubrey, Joseph Barnes’s Print-Shop and a Sham Newsletter.” *Library* 21, no. 1 (1999): 50–8. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/library/21.1.50>

— . “John Aubrey and the Rhapsodic Book.” *Renaissance Studies* 28, no. 2 (2014): 317–32. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/rest.12056>

Coster, Stephanie. “Robert Boulter and the Publication of Andrew Marvell’s *Miscellaneous Poems*.” *The Review of English Studies* 69, no. 289 (2018): 259–76. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/res/hgy013>

Haan, Estelle. *Andrew Marvell’s Latin Poetry: from text to context*. Brussels: Latomus, 2003.

Hunter, Michael. *John Aubrey and the Realm of Learning*. London: Duckworth, 1975.

Hyde, Henry. *The State Letters of Henry Earl of Clarendon: Volume 2*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1764.

Kelliher, Hilton. “Some Notes on Andrew Marvell.” *The British Library Journal* 4, no. 2 (1978): 122–44.

Kiessling, Nicolas. *The Library of Anthony Wood*. Oxford: Oxford Bibliographic Society, 2002.

Love, Harold. *English Clandestine Satire, 1660–1702*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199255610.001.0001>

Marshall, Ashley and Robert D. Hume. “Marvell and Restoration Wits.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Andrew Marvell*, edited by Martin Dzelzainis and Edward Holberton, 687–702. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.

Marvell, Andrew. *Miscellaneous Poems*. London, 1681. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/oseo/instance.00017806>

— . *The Poems and Letters of Andrew Marvell*. Edited by H.M. Margoliouth and Pierre Legouis. 2 vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971.

— . *The Prose Works of Andrew Marvell*. Edited by Annabel Patterson, Martin Dzelzainis, N.H. Keeble, and Nicholas von Maltzahn. 2 vols. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003.

McDowell, Sean H. “Urban Marvell.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Andrew Marvell*, edited by Martin Dzelzainis and Edward Holberton, 280–97. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198736400.013.17>

Moul, Victoria. "Marvell and Bilingual Verse Culture." In *Imagining Andrew Marvell at 400*, edited by Matthew C. Augustine, Giulio J. Pertile, and Steven N. Zwicker, 111–30. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5871/bacad/9780197267073.003.0007>

Poems on Affairs of State: Augustan Satirical Verse, 1660–1714. Edited by George deForest Lord, E.F. Mengel, H.H. Schless, G.M. Crump, W.J. Cameron, F.H. Ellis. 7 vols. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964–75.

Poole, William. *John Aubrey and the Advancement of Learning*. Oxford: Bodleian Library, 2010.

Pritchard, Allan. *English Biography in the Seventeenth Century: A Critical Survey*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3138/9781442686250>

Purkiss, Diane. "Touching Words: Marvell's Satires in Hand." In *Imagining Andrew Marvell at 400*, edited by Matthew C. Augustine, Giulio J. Pertile, and Steven N. Zwicker, 299–319. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5871/bacad/9780197267073.003.0016>

Robinson, Robert. "The Two Institutes of Thomas Wood: A Study in Eighteenth Century Legal Scholarship." *The American Journal of Legal History* 35, no. 4 (1991): 432–58. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/845654>

Smith, Nigel. *Andrew Marvell: The Chameleon*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.12987/yale/9780300112214.001.0001>

von Maltzahn, Nicholas. *An Andrew Marvell Chronology*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

—. "Marvell's Ghost." In *Marvell and Liberty*, edited by Warren Chernaik and Martin Dzelzainis, 50–74. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230376991_3

—. "Wood, Allam, and the Oxford Milton." *Milton Studies* 31 (1994): 159–64. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/26395579>

Williams, Kelsey Jackson. *The Antiquary: John Aubrey's Historical Scholarship*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198784296.001.0001>

Wood, Anthony. *Athenæ Oxonienses*. London: Thomas Bennet, 1692.

—. *The Life and Times of Anthony Wood, antiquary, at Oxford, 1632–1695, described by himself*. Edited by Andrew Clark. 5 vols. Oxford: Oxford Historical Society, 1891–95.

Manuscripts

Chippenham, Wiltshire and Swindon Historical Centre, MS 2493B/1/26/1.

London, British Library, MS Add. 72850.

London, British Library MS Add 32553.

Manuscripts at Bodleian Library, Oxford:

MS Aubrey 4.

MS Aubrey 12.

MS Ashmole 1137.

MS Ashmole 1591.

MS Ashmole 1632 (7).

MS Ballard 14.

MS Tanner 456a.

MS Wood B. 12.

MS Wood F 39.

MS Wood F 43.

MS Wood F 45.

MS Wood F 46.

MS Wood F 51.

