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Issue 8 (2017) - Scrutinizing Surfaces

‘Such dispersive scattredness’: Early Modern Encounters with Binding Waste

Anna Reynolds

[1] A book’s outer layers speak a very particular language. This article moves wrappers, flyleaves, pastedowns and guards inward from the periphery, focusing in particular on the monastic waste that can be found in many early modern bindings after the dissolution of the monasteries. To decipher the meanings of these waste materials we need to imaginatively inhabit a world populated by torn and scattered sheets, in which pages from manuscripts and printed books regularly moved across a spectrum of legibility and abjection. These ‘leau’s’, according to John Donne, ‘may paste strings there in other books’ (1611: D4^{r}), or, in the words of Thomas Nashe, might serve as ‘*Priuie* token[s]’ (read toilet paper), to ‘drie and kindle *Tobacco* in’, ‘stop mustard-pots’ and for ‘Grocers … to wrap mace in’ (1594: A3$^{v)}$. More than just ‘rhetorical flourishes’ (Smyth 2013: 127), these playful allusions to repurposing paper reveal an ecology characterised by ‘dispersive scattredness’ (Urquhart 1651: A6^{r}), a paper-rich environment captured in Heather Wolfe’s study of ‘Filing, seventeenth-century style’ (2013: passim) and Tiffany Stern’s description of a city ‘covered in texts’, littered with loose playbills, proclamations and title-pages (2006: 87).

[2] Contrasting our tendency to conceive of books as two-dimensional objects, comprised of flat, white and featureless pages, early moderns encountered their books haptically, as three-dimensional, mutable assemblages of parchment, paper, wood and leather. Elaine Scarry, for instance, describes the ‘tactile features’ of a book as being ‘limited to the weight of its pages, their smooth surfaces, and their exquisitely thin edges’ (2001: 5). This is symptomatic of the manufacturing techniques that, since the 1960s, have made books more uniform. Glued rather than sewn, they are ‘paper brick[s], impeccably trimmed and squared’, with each bleached, wood-pulp page of almost identical thickness and whiteness (Bringhurst 2008: 95). Typography is now a digital process, with ink sitting on top of, rather than within, the surface of the page. Letterpress printing, however, sculpts the page, and chain lines and watermarks, visible in certain lights, remember the mould that a rag-based sheet was shaped in. On occasion, flecks of flax and fabric remain embedded in the page, leftover from its past life as linen (Calhoun 2011: 332-33). The quality of the rags determined the colour and coarseness of the sheet, just as the life of the animal determined the quality of a piece of parchment. Scars and blemishes on the animal’s skin are visible as gaping holes, and, if incorrectly treated, a network of veins might show through the translucent skin.

[3] Housed in our rare books libraries and archives, often having been separated and rebound and carefully catalogued, these books appear to be ‘discrete, self-enclosed units’; but these ordering techniques conceal what Jeffrey Todd Knight has described as the ‘relatively malleable and experimental’ nature of early modern books (2013: 4). They were often hybrid things, made of paper and parchment, manuscript and print (see figure one). These objects were, as Adam Smyth argues, always ‘incomplete’, prone to insertion, deletion, cutting and pasting (2012: 461). Book users played a crucial role in the life-cycle of books, commissioning bindings and rebindings, leaving them unbound, or using them as waste. Early moderns, then, were sensitive in different and more nuanced ways to the materials and processes of book-making and unmaking, and grounded their encounter with the book in the tactile and kinetic as well as the visual.

Figure one: Antoine de Chandieu's *De legitima vocatione pastorum ecclesiæ reformatæ* (Morges: Jean Le Preux, 1583) bound with George Buchanan's *De iure regni apud Scotos, dialogus, authore Georgio Buchanano Scoto* (Edinburgh: John Ross, 1579), The Huntington Library, San Marino, California 353529/30. The binding is a leaf of a service-book stuffed with multiple sheets of printed wastepaper. The rear flyleaf is a scriptural commentary. Reproduced by permission of the Huntington Library.

[4] Within this papery landscape, waste pages were far from an inert and invisible frame for

everyday experience. Although a repurposed manuscript sheet might easily be construed as the mundane wrapper for more valuable contents (a hefty folio, for instance, or expensive spices), waste, this article will show, might come intermittently into focus for the early modern book-handler. The experience of waste paper and parchment moved from a scarcely perceived prop at one extreme, to a thoughtfully apprehended object at the other. **[1]** Though much of the experience of early modern waste matter must remain invisible to us, exceptional encounters are available within textual records. This essay begins with *The Laboryouse Journey & serche of John Leylande, for Englandes Antiquities*, printed in 1549 and heavily edited by John Bale. I argue that the authors' drive toward the collection and cataloguing of monastic books is haunted by the tendency of objects to turn to waste, before moving on to a reading based in John Aubrey's later manuscript work. Within *The Naturall History of Wiltshire* sits a 'Digression' which, I suggest, is uniquely 'bio-bibliographical'. In it, Aubrey interweaves his experience of monastic fragments with an autobiographical and a national history.

[5] Leland, Bale and Aubrey are sensitive and responsive readers of waste. Their writings reveal an awareness of the histories contained within wrappers, pastedowns and flyleaves: these materials carry visible traces of their past vagaries in their tears and folds, in the fading of ink and the accumulation of dirt. Monastic waste performs multitemporally, or palimpsestically. The fragments are what Jonathan Gil Harris would term 'untimely matter': they are remnants that puncture the linearity of time, remembering a lost whole, be it a complete manuscript, a monastery library or a Catholic past, offering up 'a play of multiple temporal traces' that tell an object's own story (2009: 8). They describe a world in which things rub against each other and wear away, narrating, to those who choose to read them, a trajectory of fragmentation and decay.

'Their Dyspersed Remnaunt': Monastic Libraries and the Dissolution

[6] The re-use of old books pre-dates the dissolution of the monasteries, but the 'great cataclysm' that took place between 1536 and 1540 intensified the process (Leland 2010: civ). **[2]** There was a dramatic influx of manuscripts into the wastepaper trade and, alongside it, a radical shift in the ways the practice of wasting could be conceived. Furthermore, Edward VI's 1550 Act against Superstitious Books and Images led to a second wave of large-scale book destruction a decade later. What had for centuries been a gradual process of replacing redundant texts became violent and visible. Previously, the parchment surfaces of predominantly legal and administrative manuscripts had been scraped clean to make way for the addition of new ink, or had been wasted and replaced by printed copies. After the dissolution, these palimpsestic processes accelerated as service books, theological treatises, and historical chronicles came under threat. These ranged from contemporary sixteenth-century texts to the luxuriously illuminated twelfth-century manuscripts soon to be sought out by antiquarian collectors.**[3]** Additionally, a huge array of administrative documents and financial records, stored haphazardly around the monastery and rarely catalogued, entered the waste market, though this material has been largely neglected by book historians (Harvey 2002: passim). These objects were now valued according to their bulk rather than their contents: in 1549 John Bale described 'a merchaunt man … that bought the co[n]tentes of two noble lybraryes for .xl. [40] shyllynges pryce',**[4]** and in 1557 John Dee records purchasing a manuscript from the dispersed Duke Humfrey's Library at Oxford 'par le poys' (by the pound weight) (Rundle 2004: 116).**[5]** This continued for several decades: in 1564, a Mr Seeres paid 24 shillings 'for old Parchment books weying cc [200] pounde' (Ker 1954; repr. 2004: x).

[7] It is impossible to quantify the number of manuscripts dismembered and destroyed during these decades. Few monastic catalogues survive from the decades leading up to the

dissolution, and Henry VIII's surveyors rarely included books within their inventories of monastic goods (Carley 2006: 256).[6] Neil Ker's *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain* lists 5,200 library and service books extant from the eight hundred or more religious houses of England. Of these, 1,800 belonged to the secular cathedrals that remained relatively unscathed, leaving a total of 3,400 surviving books (Ker 1964: passim). In the words of another historian, '[t]hat tens, even hundreds, of thousands of library books and service-books were destroyed in the course of a few years is undeniable' (Ramsay 2004: 138). Although these fragments are not as conspicuous as the crumbling stones of dissolved abbeys and monastery buildings, a visit to a rare books room reveals the fate of many monastic manuscripts. Ker's *Fragments of Medieval Manuscripts used as Pastedowns in Oxford Bindings* lists approximately 2,200 bindings that contain monastic waste. Outside of Oxford, these manuscript pastedowns were used in books bound in Cambridge and at Canterbury Cathedral throughout the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries (McKitterick 1992:9; Watson 1988: 70).

[8] The university focus of Ker's study should not distract from the widespread use of monastic waste in stationers and binderies across the country; although no other location offers so many manuscript pastedowns as Oxford, old books could be found dismembered and inserted into new books throughout the country and well into the seventeenth century. David Drummond, founder of Innerpeffray Library (ca. 1680), owned a 1654 folio bound with a medieval manuscript waste guard (see figure two), and the Huntington Library possesses a late-sixteenth or early-seventeenth-century *sammelbände* wrapped in a twelfth-century manuscript and with a waste printed vellum flyleaf (see figure three). Medieval manuscripts were most often used as guards or spine supports (see figure four), particularly towards the end of the sixteenth century.

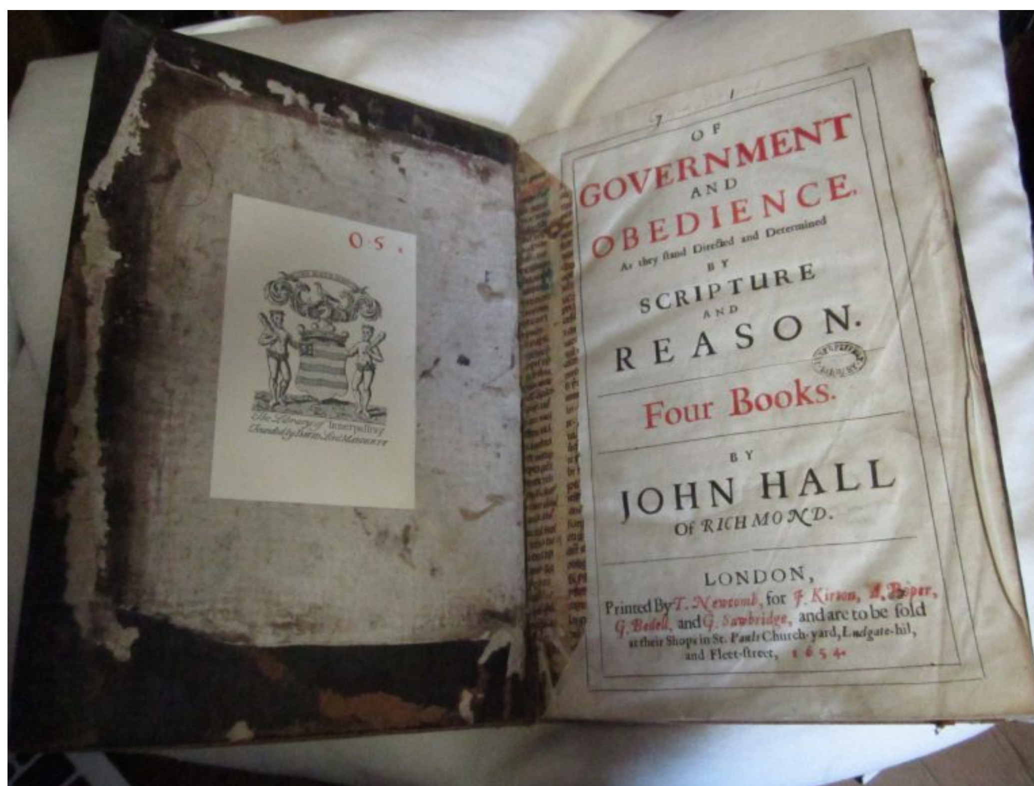

Figure two: John Hall's *Of Government and Obedience as they stand directed and determined by scripture and reason* (London: T. Newcomb, 1654), Innerpeffray Library, Perthshire, O5: a late example of the use of medieval manuscript guards. Reproduced by permission of Innerpeffray Library.

Figure three: *The Compendious Treatise, of Nicholas Prepositas* (London: John Wolfe, 1588) and André Du Laurens' *Discours de la conservation de la veüe* (London: Felix Kingston, 1599), The Huntington Library, San Marino, California 618583: these volumes are bound in a twelfth century English manuscript wrapper and with a printed vellum flyleaf from the Sarum Missal. Reproduced by permission of the Huntington Library.

Figure four: A manuscript, parchment spine support probably removed from Nicolai Gerbelij Phorcensis, *pro declaratione picturae siue descriptionis Graeciae Sophiani : Libri Septem* ([Basel]: [s.n], [1550]), Innerpeffray Library, Perthshire E3; now slipped loose into the repaired binding. Reproduced by permission of Innerpeffray Library.

This was no doubt to conserve the supply of durable parchment waste, putting it to use in the area of the book that needed the most reinforcement (the spine), rather than as flyleaves and pastedowns. This eking out of a dwindling supply is perhaps behind the structure of several bindings in Bishop Cosin's Library (founded 1668): a number of volumes contain wastepaper guards in addition to a combination of twelfth-century and contemporary waste parchment spine-supports (see figure five). Although as the seventeenth century progressed these fragments shrank in size and stopped circulating, they were still widely available to the readers and owners of earlier books.

Figure five: Detail of the early seventeenth-century binding of *Luciani Samosatenis philosophi opera omnia quae extant* (Lutetiae Parisiorum: P. Ludouicum Feburier, 1615), Durham Library Cosin W.1.10. Leaves from an early seventeenth-century English Bible have been used as guards, reinforced with fragments of a contemporary document and a twelfth-century liturgical manuscript. Cosin W.1.11 and Cosin K.2.14 have almost identical binding structures. Reproduced by permission of Durham University Library.

[9] The fragments of manuscripts extant in bindings perhaps give the impression that waste was relatively static, stitched tightly within other books. This was, however, far from the case: waste moved in and out of a variety of contexts and spaces. Richard Layton, a principle commissioner of the dissolution, told Cromwell that, on his return to New College Oxford, he had 'fownde all the gret quadrant court full of the leiffes of Dunce [the 13th century theologian Duns Scotus], the wynde blowyng them into evere corner'.**[7]** Duns Scotus' windy and worthless words are, as Layton demonstrates, both rhetorically and literally lightweight: the manuscript's material qualities marry with those attributed to its contents by the reformers. He goes on to describe how a student, Mr Grenefelde, was found 'getheryng up part of the saide bowke leiffes (as he saide) therwith to make hym sewelles or blawnsherres [scarecrows, scaring sheets] to kepe the dere within the woode' in his home

county of Buckinghamshire (quoted in Aston 1984: 327).

[10] No longer bound and chained within libraries, manuscripts moved beyond the highly literate and homosocial centres of monasteries and universities. John Bale describes how

> A great nombre of the[m] whych purchased those superstycyouse mansyons, reserued of those lybraye bokes, some to serue theyre iakes [toilets], some to scoure theyr candelstyckes, & some to rubbe their bootes. Some they solde to the grossers and sope sellers, & some they sent ouer see to ye bokebynders ($B1^r$).

The monastic fragments, according to Bale, passed frequently through grocers' shops and kitchens, rubbing and wrapping any number of mundane objects. Despite retaining legible text, they were no longer experienced as textual objects. Instead the old manuscripts provided more haptic forms of knowledge, or, to borrow Matthew C. Hunter's phrase, a 'materialized intelligence', on a larger scale than ever before. Dismembered books prompted a series of 'generative … imaginings' through their 'physical manipulation' (2013: 549, 564). This manipulation was, for Mr Grenefelde, grounded in their lightness, their capacity to shiver and rustle in a Buckinghamshire breeze, and, for other users described by Bale, in their pliability and relative durability: their capacity to wipe, rub, fold and wrap. Encounters with monastic manuscripts had been transformed. No longer situated within sacred spaces and reserved for elite use, they entered everyday experience. This ubiquity meant that the 'imaginings' generated by manuscript waste were especially capacious: the 2,200 binding fragments catalogued by Ker, and those that we encounter in our own archival research, only skim the surface of early modern waste.

Leland and Bale among 'Monumentes of Learninge'

[11] John Bale and John Leland's *The Laboryouse Journey* is a product of this transformation, born from the religious and bibliographic turmoil of the dissolution. Both authors sought out manuscripts in monasteries with the aim of producing 'bio-bibliographies', catalogues that outlined the history of Britain through its ancient writers (Carley 2010: xxvii). They travelled through England and its libraries independently between 1533 and 1536, and both undertook a second series of bookish itineraries after the dissolution.**[8]** There was now a sense of urgency: no longer simply recording, they saw themselves as salvaging British history from the dank oblivion of mould, decay and wasted parchment. Leland's journeys took place between 1541 and 1544, in the immediate aftermath of the dissolution, and Bale's between 1548 and 1552, sandwiched between two periods of exile on the continent and in the midst of Edward VI's iconoclastic reforms.

[12] Leland envisaged an immense body of work, beginning with *De uiris illustribus* (a chronology of Britain's literature), and taking in a history of Britain (in fifty volumes), a history of the islands neighbouring Britain, a topography of British place names, a history of British universities, and an ecclesiastical history. But instead, several weeks after Henry VIII's death in 1547, Leland was incapacitated. According to a friend, quoted by Bale, Leland had fallen into madness because 'he was vayne gloryouse, and that he had a poetycall wytt' ($B4^r$). He left behind some printed Latin verse, a mass of unedited manuscript material, and a letter composed after his 1543 itineraries and perhaps presented to the King as a 'New Year's Gift' on January 1st 1544. It described his bibliographic achievements and outlined plans for the expansive projects listed above.

[13] Bale printed his *Summarium* of British manuscripts, compiled in exile, in 1548. Returning to England later in the year, he began editing Leland's incomplete manuscript *De uiris illustribus* whilst pursuing his own ambitious bibliographic work, assembling a list of

the authors, titles and opening lines of all extant and noteworthy British books.**[9]** In 1549, Bale printed and enlarged Leland's 'New Year's Gift'. Inserting a lengthy dedication, commentary and conclusion as well as details of his own antiquarian labours, he titled it *The Laboryouse Journey*. This text is representative of Bale's concerted efforts to rewrite Leland's life and labours in service of his own 'evangelical' ends. Whereas Bale was a passionate reformer, Leland remained, like his patron Henry VIII, religiously conservative. Leland was a humanist scholar, 'personally loyal' to the King and eager to uncover the literary triumphs of the nation's past (Ross 1998: 51-64; Simpson 2002: 7-33). He was, therefore, an ideal candidate to seek out Anglo-Saxon manuscripts that might provide theological support and a historical precedent for Henry VIII's divorce and break with Rome.

[14] Leland's efforts at textual retrieval, then, were patriotic and politically expedient. In his 'New Year's Gift', he describes his work in triumphalist terms, reminding the King that he had 'encorage[d]' him 'to peruse and dylygentle to searche all the lybraryes of Monasteryes and collegies ... to the entent that the monumentes of auncyent wryters ... myghte be brought out of deadly darkenesse to lyuelye lyght' (B8^{r}). In the Journey, Bale resituates Leland's rhetoric of darkness and light within the rhetoric of the Reformation. These books had been 'tyed vp in cheanes' (C3^{r}), concealed, like the scriptures, in 'vncertayne shadowes' (C6^{v}). Leland's labours were, according to Bale, Christ-like, as he harrowed the 'deadly' dark spaces, dragging their contents into Protestant light. Leland 'wold clerely redeme them from dust and byrdfylynges' (C2^{v}), granting the manuscripts salvation from a uniquely bibliographic kind of hell.

[15] In Bale's account, the authors of these texts could be made to participate in the Reformed agenda of reclaiming England's religious past through its old books (Fritze 1983; Schwyzer 2004: 49-75; Summit 2008: 101-35). These '[m]oste olde and autentyck Chronycles' (C2^{v}) provided ample evidence for 'the vsurped autoryte of the Byshopp of Rome and hys complyces' (C5^{r}). The monuments and antiquities provide the building blocks for a new national faith, legitimizing the young religion in the face of Catholic attacks on its novelty. England, as Leland's (on occasion erroneous) discoveries make clear, was in the process of returning to a purer, pre-Popish past, where, for instance, 'Kynge Athelstane' had 'the scriptures ... translated into the Saxonysh or Englyshe speche' (D2^{v}). Leland's labours, he proclaims in *Journey*, uncovered both popish lies and English truths: the salvaged manuscripts provided the foundation for a chauvinistic narrative of patriotic and Protestant renewal.

[16] Although the *Journey* is principally concerned with ideologically useful and physically whole manuscripts, the text is rooted in the material context of the 'dyspersed remnaunt' (F4^{v}) of the monastic libraries. The vagaries of waste paper and parchment provide a subversive undercurrent that pulls against Bale and Leland's homogenizing narratives. 'Remnaunt[s]' haunt the text as they tend, disobediently, toward waste. In addition to providing evidence of proto-Protestant accomplishments, the dispersed libraries are a source of melancholy for the antiquarian duo. Ultimately, the loose leaves frustrate attempts at collection and coherence: fragmentary books are only able to produce fragmentary texts. The products of Leland and Bale's labours are a series of catalogues, or lists: Leland had hoped that 'the names of the[m]' who 'hath bene learned and who hath written from tyme to tyme in this realme' would be listed 'wyth their lyues and monumentes of learnynge' (C7^{v}), seeking to reduce whole manuscripts to titles and abstracts. Bale describes how he 'put fourth a worke of the same argument' (D1^{v}), and details the practicalities of putting such a

catalogue together:

> Among the stacyoners & boke bynders, I found many notable Antiquitees, of whom I wrote out the tytles, tymes, and begynnynges, that we myghte at the leaste shewe the names of them, though we haue not as now, their whole works to shewe (G2^{v}-3^{r}).

[17] The narrative of national monuments snatched from monkish clutches falters as Bale reveals the nitty-gritty of antiquarian labour. Ultimately, he and Leland were attempting to gather together a flood of dissolving and disintegrating objects: if only, he laments, 'ye had their whole workes in dede, as they were in substaunce & fashyon, whyche now for the more part are peryshed, ye shoulde haue seane most wonders of all' (H5^{v}). The monuments and antiquities are typically, but unspokenly, incomplete: they offer only 'tytles, tymes and begynnynges'. In addition to proclaiming the triumphs of England's past, the broken bits of books announce the violence and fragmentariness of England's present. Their absent parts are palpable. Despite attempts to gloss over them with orderly lines of text, the wasted objects continued to tell their own stories through the negative presences of gaps and silences.

[18] The 'broaken vp, and dyspersed lybraryes' (D1^{v}) are, therefore, the source of a contradiction at the heart of the *Journey*. This duality is encapsulated by the term 'disperse', meaning to 'scatter, or spread abroade' (Cawdry 1604: D2^{r}), which describes both Leland and Bale's triumphant spreading abroad of books and knowledge for the benefit of the nation, as well as a much more literal spreading abroad: the dismembering and scattering of a book's pages. Leland and Bale, as agents of the dissolution, were complicit in the destruction of what they sought to preserve (Simpson 2002: 14-17; Summit 2008: 109-10). The selective nature of an antiquarian's labours condemned the majority of manuscripts to a waste fate, with only the prioritized categories of histories and chronicles salvaged. Leland was only able to gather a limited number of books for the Royal Library, which was dispersed after Henry VIII's death (Carley 1999: 274-82), and Bale's personal library of 150 books, lost when he fled from Catholic priests in Ireland in 1553, was comprised largely of chronicles (McCusker 1935: 144-65).

[19] A number of collections containing early manuscripts, gathered by Leland and Bale's contemporaries and near contemporaries, do survive. These libraries, made up of from bits of other, dispersed libraries, demonstrate the manner in which collection and fragmentation go hand in hand. In the early seventeenth century, Sir Robert Cotton dismembered his duplicate or unwanted medieval manuscripts, inserting them as 'stuffing' or binding waste into other, partially disassembled books (Carley and Tite 1992: 94-99). His ''cut and paste' approach' was often aesthetically driven, with fragments of highly illuminated works used as decorative borders, frontispieces and end-leaves in other manuscripts and printed books (Brown 1998: 291-98). Archbishop Matthew Parker's books are similarly composite. He glued and stitched leaves from Anglo-Saxon and medieval manuscripts into his own volumes according to his political and theological needs (Knight 2013: 41-50; Graham 2006: 328). These 'auncient monumentes' were, like all books in early modern England, malleable objects, hybrid things that left behind a trail of trimmings and offcuts.

[20] Antiquarians like Leland, Bale, Parker and Cotton did not collect old manuscripts to keep them whole. Collections did not lead to coherence or completion, but highlighted discontinuity and acts of disposal. In a process of de-accession and replacement intensified by the dissolution, even the most prized manuscript sheets might ultimately be relinquished

to the stationers' and grocers' shops: the 'notable Antiquyte[es]' should, according to Bale, 'be stayed in time, and by the art of pryntynge be brought into a no[m]bre of coppyes' (B2^{r}). This proto-Eisensteinian view of the printing press as a stabilizing force is at odds with the mutable objects described above. Instead, in a continuation of scribal practice, printing an old manuscript replaced an individual object with a number of new ones, releasing its parchment leaves into a mundane world of binderies, merchants' shops, and kitchens.

[21] This fragmentary drive remains submerged within the *Journey*. The violent wasting of monastic manuscripts is something that *others* do. Bale recounts his trip to Norfolk and Suffolk, where 'all the library monume[n]tes, are turned to the vse of their grossers, candelmakers[,] sope sellers, and other worldly occupyers' (G3^{r}–^{v}). This rough-handling, or 'vngentilnesse', stems from the failure of the wider public to conform to Bale's categorisation of monastic manuscripts. They misread the dispersed pages, neglecting to distinguish between godly monuments of national importance and disposable popish trash. Instead, they treat both as 'worldly' things. These materialistic book-wasters, according to Bale, fail to transcend the grossly corporeal: their fixation with the physical features of a manuscript is inseparable from their carnal appetites. They are 'bellygoddes', or gluttons (A8^{r}). They prioritize 'belly ba[n]kettes & table tryu[m]phes' over 'the conseruacyon of … Antiquytees' (B1^{v}-2^{r}). This carnal approach condemns manuscripts to a grotesque fate: they 'geue them leaue to rotte in vyle corners, or drowne them in … iakes' (E7^{r}), entering them into the digestive and excremental cycles of the everyday.

[22] Bale hypothesizes an alternative state of affairs, one in which material attributes marry up with textual content. Imagine:

> Yf the byshop of Romes lawes, decrees[,] decretals, extrauagantes, cleme[n]tines and other suche dregges of the deuyll … and frutes of the bottomlesse pytte, had leaped out of our libraries, and so become couerynges for bokes … we might wele haue ben therwith contented (G3^{r}).

Ideally, confessional labels would determine the material fate of manuscripts, with popish pages enacting a suicidal agency, voluntarily leaping from library shelves and cases to become book-wrappers and binding waste. This would neatly align the manuscripts' corrupt nature with an appropriately base function. Peeking from the margins of reformed texts, binding waste might demonstrate Protestant supersession of the Catholic past as Bale so desired. In one particularly pertinent example, fragments of a monastic service-book sit as guards within John Bale's anti-monastic treatise, *The Acts of English Votaries* (London: John Tysdale, 1560) (See figure six). But this supersession depended on the sympathies of the viewer, and waste might just as easily interrupt the text it bound, triggering nostalgia for a lost way of life. Regardless, all manuscripts, whether 'auncient Chronicles', 'noble hystoryes', 'learned co[m]mentaryes and homelyes vpo[n] ye scriptures' were put 'to so homely an office of subieccyon & vtter conte[m]pte' (G3^{r}).

Figure six: John Bale's *Acts of English Votaries* (London: John Tysdale, 1560), The Huntington Library, San Marino, California 12963: in a sixteenth-century limp parchment binding with fragments of an old service-book used as guards. Reproduced by permission of the Huntington Library.

[23] Despite this, or perhaps because of it, Bale and Leland work to distort the organic physicality of the dispersed libraries. In their descriptions they seek to enshrine books as godly objects, linguistically transforming them into abstracted 'monumentes'. Although 'monument' can refer to a written document or record (OED, def. 3.a), the term is laden with a particular set of temporal and material attributes. It is rooted in the Latin 'monere', to remind: it both refers backward to a past event or person, and refers forward to their expected endurance in repeated acts of recollection. This is inextricable from a monument's material qualities: it is synonymous with 'Sepulchre, Statue, Pillar, or the like', granting perpetuity to a transient event or decaying body through its relative solidity and permanence (Phillips 1658: CC4^{r}). Leland and Bale's 'monuments of learnyng' and 'Antiquite' are, therefore, petrified objects: rather than mouldering manuscripts that disperse and disintegrate across the Reformation landscape, they are fixed and lasting tokens of England's recently recovered past.

[24] The manuscripts, however, refuse to be monumentalized. Their sheets are not stony but soft and pliable. Loosened from wooden boards, stiff covers, metal clasps and chains, old books became mobile. Having begun this article by celebrating Leland and Bale as 'readers of waste', it is perhaps more appropriate to describe Leland and Bale as *mis*readers of waste. They misrepresent the material reality, redescribing objects to fit the frame of their triumphant narrative. But crucially, the authorial pair attend (albeit begrudgingly) to the vagaries of manuscript fragments. The counternarrative of disintegration and violent dispersal is a consequence of Leland and Bale's thoughtful, physical encounters with waste: the text's terminology of monumentality is internally unravelled because the fragments, though apparently peripheral, are the contextual frame for the *Journey*.

[25] Bale does offer a more appropriate epithet, terming the manuscripts 'lyuely memoryalles of the nacyon' (A7^{v}). 'Lyuely' nicely captures the organic nature and mobility of the fragments, and conveys the manner in which lively things move along a temporal

trajectory of atrophy and decay. Monastic waste flaunts the fact that it is, in the words of Margreta de Grazia and Peter Stallybrass, 'a provisional state in the circulation of matter' (1993: 280). 'Memoryalle' is also fitting. Whereas a monument is a category of object, memorial is relatively empty of concrete associations. Memorials were widely, and rather enigmatically, defined as 'remembrancer[s], or that which puts one in mind of any thing' (Phillips 1658: BB4^{r}). The dispersed manuscripts sit neatly within this category: they are malleable memorials, present remembrancers that act as palimpsests of past events and encounters.

[26] These manuscript 'memoryalles' circulated alongside other remembrancers in early modern England, keeping company with a category of objects commonly acquired after the death of a loved one and the dispersal of their goods. These *memento mori* took the form of mourning rings, typically bearing death's heads and engraved conceits, and perhaps containing fragments of the deceased, such as a lock of hair (Llewellyn 1997: 95-96). The relationship between these two types of tokens or relics shed light on the apocalyptic undercurrent of the *Journey*. Bale writes that whereas men of old laboured:

> ...to holde thynges in remembraunce, whych otherwyse had most wretchedly peryshed. Our practyses now are ... to destroye their frutefull fou[n]dacyons. ... [W]e in these dayes are as prompte to plucke down (I mean the monumentes of lernynge) as though the worlde were now in hys lattre dottynge age, nygh drawynge to an end (E6^{v}-7^{r}).

In a text that attacks monastic corruption and celebrates the nation's return to godliness, Bale momentarily falters, lamenting the destructive tendencies of the preceding decades. The 'fou[n]dacyons' of early modern England and its 'remembraunce' of the past are unstable and under threat after the dispersal of the monastic libraries. They have been corroded because people find it hard to 'hold' fast onto godly 'thynges', and instead abject and expel them as waste. In this construction of history, the 'practyses' of 'pluck[ing]' and pulling apart books takes on an eschatological significance. The manuscripts are lively, millennial things: their passage in and out of bindings, grocer's shops and privies highlights their movement toward degeneration and decay.

[27] As Leslie P. Fairfield has demonstrated, Bale ascribed loosely to a Lutheran religious chronology, espousing a 'general low-key pessimism', a 'sense of senescence and decay, of living at the "latter end of the world"' (1976: 75-85). Bale's catalogues were concerned with revealing the progression of the 'seven ages of the world' through a chronology of British authors, from apostolic purity to the dawning of an enlightened age with the writings of Wycliffe. The present day was situated well into the sixth and penultimate age, and the seventh and last age was fast approaching (King 1982: 66-67; Fairfield 1976: 99-120). The waste 'remnaunt[s]' of monastic manuscripts shaped this morbid historiography. It seemed reasonable to think that the post-Reformation world was teetering on the brink of destruction: it was full of corruptible things that were, like waste sheets, 'nygh drawynge to an ende'.

[28] Waste sheets prop up this religious timeline because, found 'amonge wormes and dust' (E7^{r}) in monastic libraries, rotting in private hands or privies, they highlighted the atrophy of all organic things. They rubbed against the leather of 'boots' and the soap, spices and foodstuffs of the 'grosser's shop'. When turned to 'serue our iakes', or privies, skin met skin, or pulped and pressed vegetable matter, subsequently wasted, met expelled excrement (B1^{r}). In Bale's formulation, wasted manuscripts became excremental in nature. He

describes how 'we abhorre & throwe fourth' our valuable books 'as most vyle, noysome matter', regarding them as little '*ye* parynges of our nayles' (E7v). A noisome thing is something that is 'hurtful', 'vnholsome, corrupt ... pestilent', capable of infiltrating and 'infect[ing]' the body (Cawdry 1604: F8r). Once the manuscripts had been abjected and become waste, they threatened to permeate the skin, blurring unsettlingly with the surfaces that they encountered and compromising the body's boundaries.

[29] Bale's comparison of the trimmings of cut-up and discarded manuscripts with the offcuts of the human body is quite striking. Parchment and fingernails share a distinctive, milky off-white colour, and both become easily ingrained with dirt. Both are stiff but flexible and might contain traces of other corporeal textures, such as hair, follicles and veins. The narrow strips of manuscript waste scattered across the work surfaces in binders' shops and visible as guards in books reminded Bale of the body's 'matter', triggering sentiments analogous to those brought about by more traditional 'memoryalls' and tokens. Nails, like hair and bone, endured after death. When set in jewellery, they reminded their owner not only of their loved one in death but also the transience of their own lives. Manuscript waste generated similar meanings: it was a relic of what had been lost (a whole manuscript, a monastery and way of life), and a reminder of what will come to an end (the body and the world). Transitioning from usefulness to waste and from wholeness to fragment, the movements of manuscript fragments resembled the temporal trajectory of the body to an uncanny degree.

John Aubrey: Reading Wrack and Ruin

[30] A number of Leland and Bale's near-contemporaries were engaged in similar activities of gathering manuscripts dispersed from the monastic libraries, and an account of early modern encounters with binding waste might limit itself quite justifiably to this lineage of sixteenth-century antiquarians. This study, however, favours a binocular view of the period in which manuscript waste circulated. One of the striking features of monastic waste is its capacity to endure, and so a proper assessment of these waste objects should consider and seek to account for their manifold afterlives. John Aubrey lived over a century after the dissolution in a vastly different political and theological context, one in which the nature of antiquarian practice itself had shifted. As Daniel Woolf has argued, in the late seventeenth century remnants of the past were likely to be perceived as curiosities, collected as much for their aesthetic as their philological value (2003: 141-44). But despite Aubrey's distance from the dispersal of the monastic libraries, his writings are more sensitive to waste than any of his contemporaries or predecessors. He looked across two centuries of bibliographic turmoil through the lens of local recollection and the objects themselves. Growing up in the decades when the use of monastic waste began to dwindle, Aubrey's approach to the past was discernibly shaped by these fragments. He began compiling his *Natural History of Wiltshire* in 1656, and the 1690-91 version, copied at the request of the Royal Society, contains an unusual 'Digression'.**[10]** In it, Aubrey structures a miniature autobiography, genealogy and local chronology through traceable encounters with wasted manuscripts.

[31] Here he describes past environments of waste, how '[i]n my grandfathers dayes, the Manuscripts flew about like Butterflies'.**[11]** These were the days of his maternal grandfather, Isaac Lyte (1576-1660), demonstrating that as late as the last quarter of the sixteenth century, decades after the dissolution, monastic waste was considered to be ubiquitous. At this time, 'All Musick bookes, Account bookes' and 'Copie bookes &c.' were, according to Aubrey's grandfather, 'covered with old Manuscripts. ... And the Glovers at Malmesbury made great Havock of them; and Gloves were wrapt up no doubt in many good pieces of Antiquity'.

[32] Although by the second quarter of the seventeenth century the world no longer brimmed with lively fragments, monastic waste was a memorable participant in Aubrey's childhood. He recounts that in 1633, aged seven and a pupil of 'the Latin-Schoole at Yatton-Keynel', it was the 'fashion then ... to save the Forules of their Bookes with a false cover of Parchment sc{ilicet} old Manuscript'. He credits his childhood self with an appreciation of and detailed attention to these objects, writing that although 'he was too young to understand' the textual content of the sheets, he 'was pleased with the Elegancy of the Writing and the coloured initiall Letters'. Aubrey recalls a sensual interaction with the manuscripts, which would prove to be a prominent antecedent for the antiquarian engagements of his adult life.**[12]**

[33] The school that Aubrey next attended, in the nearby parish of 'Leigh-Delamer', undertook 'the like use of covering Bookes', but 'Blandford-Schoole' in Dorset, which he attended from the age of 12, did not. Although the schoolboys covered their books with 'old Parchments' such as 'Leases &c.', Aubrey 'never saw any thing of a Manuscript there'. This was because 'Here about were no Abbeys or Convents for Men'. The 'Digression', therefore, suggests both the longevity and the geographical distribution of monastic waste. In parishes containing and bordering dissolved monasteries, ecclesiastical manuscripts were available for wasting long into the seventeenth century. Elsewhere, waste practices were founded on a more diffuse range of disposable texts (see, for instance, figure seven).

Figure seven: *The essaies of Sr Francis Bacon Knight* (London: for [John Beale], [1617]), Huntington Library, San Marino, California 6010136: bound in a contemporary legal document. Reproduced by permission of the Huntington Library

[34] Aubrey's local environment brimmed with ecclesiastical estates, 'for within half a dozen miles of this place' were Malmesbury, Stanley, Monkton Farleigh, Bath, and Cirencester Abbeys, along with Bradenstoke Priory. Of these, only Malmesbury and Bath had been adapted for parish use. The others had been 'digged up', plundered for building materials and left to ruin. Stone ruins and malleable manuscript sheets were experientially interconnected, both manifesting, in the words of Margaret Aston, 'the gashes' and 'scars of earlier destruction', shaping, in her formulation, a nostalgic and historically driven 'sense of

the past' (1973: 243). Aubrey imaginatively reconstructs these scars, repopulating the library shelves and reading the absent wholes of potentially precious library books into the waste fragments encountered in his schooldays: 'it may be presumed the Library' of Malmesbury Abbey 'was as well furnished with choice Copies, as most Libraries of England', he writes, teasing himself with what-might-have-beens, conjecturing that 'perhaps in this Library we might have found a correct Plinys Naturall History'.

[35] The 'Digression' moves on to delineate local personalities through their encounters with loose parchment pages. He describes the rector of Malmesbury, one William Stump, great grandson of a wealthy clothier who had purchased the site of the Abbey and its neighbouring lands after the dissolution. '[S]everall Manuscripts of the abbey' had passed down the generations of Stumps, surviving for more than a century, stowed away for special use. '[W]hen He brewed a barrel of speciall Ale', Aubrey recalls, 'his use was to stop the bung-hole (under the Clay) with a sheet of Manuscript: He sayd nothing did it so well which me thought did grieve me then to see'. Whereas the young Aubrey relished the luxurious (if faded) shapes and surfaces of waste sheets, Stump appreciated their capacity to mould and fold within a bung-hole whilst remaining relatively water-tight. Although this 'grieve[s]' the grown up Aubrey, both engagements, ostensibly dissimilar, are rooted in the hapticity of waste.

[36] Stump's sons, we learn, take after their father. In 1647, when Aubrey was 21 years old and Civil War had ravaged the landscape for several years, he returned to the rector's house 'out of curiosity to see his Manuscripts, whereof I had seen some in my Childhood'. They were, however, 'lost, and disperst: His sonns were Gunners, & Soldiers, and scoured their Gunnes with them'.

[37] This anecdote is indicative of Aubrey's fluctuation between different scales of storytelling. He intermittently expands from the autobiographical and local to the wider cultural histories contained within waste sheets. Aubrey's description of a secondary 'los[s] and dispers[al]' of manuscripts in the 1640s blurs the religious and political turmoil of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. 'Before the late warres', Aubrey writes, 'a World of rare Manuscripts perished here about'. At first glance, he seems to be referring to the relatively recent events of the Civil War, when ecclesiastical buildings and objects underwent a new wave of iconoclastic violence (Aston 1988: 84-95). It is, after all, a critical commonplace to credit the Civil War with shaping Aubrey's antiquarian mindset, lending him an 'acute sense of … impermanence' (Parry 1995: 276). But for Aubrey, the chronology of destruction was not so clear-cut. Although Civil War iconoclasm was primarily directed at the early seventeenth-century 'innovations', in practice it was largely indiscriminate, with late medieval survivals destroyed alongside Laudian introductions. It is unlikely, however, that large numbers of monastic manuscripts survived outside of private hands in the 1640s.**[13]** Instead, it is probable that 'Before the late warres' refers to a much longer, more vaguely defined stretch of time, reaching backward across a century from the period of Civil War to the dissolution of the monasteries. Throughout these decades, the old parchment books comprised an inhabitable 'World', undergoing repeated acts of dispersal and dismemberment, until, following the violence of the Civil War, they eventually fell out of circulation.

[38] The 'Digression' is a multitemporal text. Moving between descriptions of the days of grandfathers, great-grandfathers and his own experiences, Aubrey dips in and out of traditionally discrete events and periods of time. This multitemporality is grounded in the waste objects themselves. They are carried through the decades, accumulating traces and wearing away as they pass through hands and spaces. The sheet's surface layers condense

common historiography as they offer up a palimpsest of several centuries, from monastic composition, binding and storage, to dissolution and dispersal, to an indefinite period of fragmentation and wasting. As Harris argues, we cannot 'separate time into a linear series of units'. Instead, 'objects collate many different moments' (2009: 2-4). Rubbing, wrapping and barrel-bunging leave indelible marks as the frictive give-and-take of surface layer on surface layer records where an object has been and what it has touched.

[39] If bound in other books, waste might tell further stories of collection and archiving. Aubrey reads the same stories told in rare books rooms of the twenty-first century, describing how 'One may also perceive by the binding of old Bookes, how the old Manuscripts went to wrack in those dayes'. Shifting to the present tense, Aubrey puns on the violence endured by the manuscripts, eliding the frame on which parchment was stretched with its namesake, the instrument of torture. This observation echoes a motto, borrowed from Bacon who borrowed it from the fifteenth-century Italian antiquary Flavio Biondo, that Aubrey employs frequently throughout his writing: '*Tanquam tabula naufragii*', 'like planks from a shipwreck' (Williams 2016: 103). Antiquities and anecdotes are both salvage, the residue of a passed present and a lost whole, but, as Bacon makes clear, these fragments are legible: 'ANTIQVITIES, or Remnants of History, are, as was said, *tanquam Tabula Naufragii*; when industrious persons by an exact and scrupulous diligence and obseruation out of Monume[n]ts, Names, Wordes, Prouerbes, Traditions, Priuate Recordes, and Euidences, Fragments of stories, Passages of Bookes … doe saue and recouer somewhat from the deluge of time' (1605: CC3^{r}). The wreckage might seem trivial but it reveals, to an attentive reader like Aubrey, its own biography, as well as the wider, cultural trajectories that impact on the fate of an object.

[40] Whereas Bale and Leland fought hard to fit monastic waste within the Protestant programme of the *Journey*, Aubrey, at first glance, allows waste to speak for itself. His readings, in contrast to his Reformation counterparts, seem relatively objective. Typically reticent on matters of religion, Aubrey's grief at the destruction of manuscripts is framed as wistful aestheticism, rather than closet Catholic nostalgia, with his interpretive voice largely concealed behind a strategy of Baconian empiricism (Aubrey 2015: xxxiv). The distinct contexts of mid-sixteenth-century religious polemic and late seventeenth-century antiquarianism produce disparate types of text, but, when placed side by side, they do more than demonstrate the surprising longevity of monastic fragments. They are both waste narratives, constructed from parchment palimpsests, and both signal the complex relationship between waste as a concrete thing and waste as a rhetorical construction. Crucially, waste both tells its own stories and speaks its own language. Attentive handlers might read the historical trajectory of waste through its traces, situating its folds, tears and marks within their own interpretive framework. These handlers might go on to author an interrelated but incontrovertibly distinct narrative about the object, as Leland, Bale and Aubrey did. Translated into textual format, waste becomes a trope or emblem, moulded to sit within a variety of authorial narratives and rhetorical programmes. Waste metaphors and metonyms are, however, persistently haunted by their concrete counterparts. Regardless of literary trappings, these tropes will always, at some level, speak the language of a material thing that moves along a trajectory of fragmentation and decay.

[41] Aubrey's life-long encounters with waste paper and parchment are translated into just such a trope in his *Brief Lives*: the pages that contain Aubrey's own life story are 'to be interponed [interposed] as a sheet of waste paper only in the binding of a book' (Aubrey 2015: I.429). Employing a common modesty topos, Aubrey subordinates his own biography to the multitude of lives he has recorded, offering it as a protective wrapping, a prop or

frame for the book's more valuable contents. But, as we have discovered, far from playing an insignificant part, waste was an active participant in Aubrey's life. Kate Bennett has suggested that this might in fact be a literal instruction, as Aubrey stored valuable manuscript sheets and papers within his books. At the very least, she argues, it is a 'melancholy' or 'ironic reference' to the waste practices of his schooldays (Aubrey 2015: I.393-94).

[42] Regardless of its relative playfulness, the meta-material direction demonstrates the manner in which Aubrey shaped his self-identity through the vagaries of waste fragments. Although apparently humble and peripheral, sitting on the edge of extinction, waste is a time-traveller telling stories of the past, and the fragility of the survival of such stories. Aubrey evidently saw himself as sharing at least some of these traits. Typically self-effacing, Aubrey described himself as a 'wheatstone', only useful for sharpening the wit of others, and his works as 'only Umbrages' and 'ruines' (Aubrey 2015: I.433-34). But it was Aubrey and his scattered papers that, like ruins and waste sheets, shored up past fragments against the 'deluge of time'.

[43] That which sits on the periphery, like fly-leaves, pastedowns, wrappers and guards, might be what becomes, every now and again, most important. The shipwrecked remnants are 'as planes and lighter things'. They 'swimme, and are preserved, where the more weighty since are lost. … In like manner is it with matters of Antiquitie' (Aubrey 2015: II.761). The lightweight sheets, easily dispersed but fortuitously preserved, speak a language of wrack and ruin, grounded in the traces of past encounters and the vagaries of survival. Far from being ventriloquized or enlivened by authors such as Leland, Bale and Aubrey, waste told of multilayered histories. These authors and their texts are indicative of a wider early modern sensitivity to the waste fragments, which, though no longer flying through the air like butterflies, scattered across the post-dissolution landscape for well over a century.

University of York

NOTES

[1] This essay's understanding of the experience of objects borrows from, and takes issue with, the work of Daniel Miller: things 'direct our footsteps, and are the landscapes of our imagination' but are not, as Miller argues, 'invisible and unremarked upon' or 'familiar and taken for granted' (2009: 50-54).**[back to text]**

[2] Knowles (1959; repr.1976) and Youings (1971) are the foundational studies of the dissolution, although they do not discuss the dispersal of the monastic libraries in any detail. See Carley (2002 and 2006), Fritze (1983), Ramsay (2004) and Wright (1951).**[back to text]**

[3] For the chronological trends of sixteenth and seventeenth-century manuscript destruction see Ker (1954; repr. 2004: ix-x). **[back to text]**

[4] Bale and Leland (1549: B1^{v}). All further page numbers given parenthetically in main text.**[back to text]**

[5] This note can be found within the volume itself. The inscription reads: '*et a ceste heure voyre en L'an de notre seigneur 1557 a moy Jehan Dee Angloys: lequel ie achetay par le poys*'. This might indicate that much of Duke Humfrey's collection, sold in bulk, found its way into binders' and stationers' shops. Fragments of manuscripts, traceable to the old

library, have been found in bindings. See de la Mare and Gillam (1988: 124). **[back to text]**

[6] The catalogue of the house of Syon, compiled between c. 1500 and c. 1524, is the only extant and intact monastic library catalogue from these decades (Carley 2006: 265). It reveals the acts of incorporation and disposal that a major monastic library undertook between the introduction of print and the advent of the dissolution. By 1504, the collection was over 1300 volumes strong, but only 30 books of Syon providence have since been identified. As with most monastic collections, the exact fate of the collection is unclear. De Hamel's hypothesis is an evocative one. He suggests that because the extant books are predominantly 'from the middle of the alphabetical range of class-marks', they most likely sat moulding in the abandoned library for a number of years after the monastery's dissolution in 1539, with the outer edges of the book-cases most vulnerable to the elements, thieves and rodents. See Gillespie (2001) and de Hamel (1991).**[back to text]**

[7] On the concerted wasting of the works of Duns Scotus, see Summit (2008: 88-90). **[back to text]**

[8] There is some debate over the dating of Leland's itineraries and 'New Year's Gift'. This chronology is taken from Carley's recent and exhaustive edition of *De uiris illustribus* (2010). See also Chandler (1993) and, regarding Bale, Fairfield (1976) and King (1982). **[back to text]**

[9] These notebooks are held in the Bodleian Library (MS Selden Supra 64) and were the foundation for Bale's *Catalogus* (1557-59).**[back to text]**

[10] As quoted in Yale (2009: 1-2). All further references to Aubrey's 'Digression are from these pages.**[back to text]**

[11] See Yale for an explanation of Aubrey's terminology regarding manuscripts ('those written on parchment or vellum before the advent of printing') and papers (contemporary 'loose sheets, notes from experiments and observations' etc.) (2009: 4).**[back to text]**

[12] Kate Bennett gives an interesting example of one such later engagement. Aubrey records removing a parchment 'Cover' (a ninth or tenth-century text of Ecclesiasticus) from a contemporary astrological work, and inserting it into his manuscript *Monumenta Britannica*. He sought to analyse the manuscript as part of his larger paleographical project (2013:94).**[back to text]**

[13] Spraggon records several instances of the destruction of 'old books' during the Civil War, for instance, in Peterborough, Lichfield and Winchester in 1642 and 1646 when 'divers larg[e] p[ar]chm[e]nts' were used to make 'Kytes w[i]thall to flie in the Ayre'. These books, however, seem to have been predominantly administrative documents, such as charters and parish registers (2003: 209, 235).**[back to text]**

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