Herrick, Hollar, and the Tradescants: Piecing Together a Seventeenth-Centur Triptych

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Herrick, Hollar, and the Tradescants: Piecing Together a Seventeenth-Century Triptych

WERE THERE NO OTHER affinities, coincidences of biography alone might justify a synoptic glance at the figures brought together in this paper, the seventeenth-century contemporaries Robert Herrick the poet, Wenceslaus Hollar the engraver, and the John Tradescants, father and son, gardeners and collectors of curiosities for the rich and royal. Herrick, Hollar, and the elder Tradescant all found, and lost, patronage in or close to the court of Charles I. Both Herrick and the elder Tradescant participated in the unhappy military expedition led by the Duke of Buckingham, to the Isle de Rhe, within a year of the Duke's assassination in 1628; Herrick refers to the Tradescants' curiosities in one of his poems ("Upon *Madam* Ursly, *Epigr.*" 232.4.3)[1] and elsewhere pays homage to Thomas Howard, Earl of Arundel, conspicuous collector of arts and artists and patron, for a while, of Hollar;[2] Hollar, in turn, made several engravings of the man from whom the elder Tradescant bought his celebrated house in Lambeth, did the illustrations for the catalogue to the collection prepared by the younger Tradescant and Elias Ashmole in 1656, is cited as "my kinde friend Mr *Hollar*" by the younger Tradescant in the dedicatory epistle to the catalogue ("To the Ingenuous READER," l. 22),[3] and later testified on behalf of Tradescant's widow when she sued, unsuccessfully, to block Ashmole's claim to the Tradescants' collection. As the intersecting careers inscribed in these *vitae* reveal, and reflecting the pressures and vagaries of the times, the productions of each of these figures in varying ways and to varying degrees of success negotiate the passage between the domains of private, royalist patronage, and coterie and public commodification, a passage reflected in what these productions represent and how they represent them.

Nor, though, are the affinities discernible among Herrick, Hollar, and the Tradescants confinable merely to an analogy in career trajectories. In what is to follow—and with due acknowledgment of the great differences in their

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agendas and forms of articulation—I would suggest that Herrick, Hollar, and the Tradescants converge in several culturally symptomatic ways. We see that convergence in the sheer miscellaneousness with which their productions, for better or for worse, have been labeled, for encompassing a great variety of things, mainly small, in a manner that betrays no obvious order or unity; we see it in the interest each evinces in the material, in things and their textures; and we see it also in an ingenuous, perhaps one would call it a pre–Royal Society rationalist, elision of the empirical and the imaginative, wherein curiosity over natural phenomena and attention to taxonomy are inflected by an apprehension of the supernatural and mediated by a vocabulary and affirmation of the uncanny and mythic. Finally, in each we find moments of a shared syntax, moments when nature, representation, and art enact a dialectic wherein nature is represented metonymically and in "pieces," in fragments that displace what they supposedly represent and get aestheticized as objects of interest and pleasure, and are transfigured as, in short, art. That, in turn, might conform to what, in the seventeenth century, fulfilled a criterion of the artful, the "curious": "any thing that is strang," literally the bottom line of a directive from the elder Tradescant to a deputy delegated to gather exotic animal parts;[4] "faire, and unfamiliar," as Herrick at one point puts it in summing up his close inspection of Perenna's "Parts" ("To *Perenna*" 10. 1. 4), "faire," perhaps, hendyadically, because "unfamiliar," empirical observation elided here, as it is in Tradescant's directive, with the vocabulary of the fancy.

It is to Herrick's works then that one looks to find a literary articulation of this curious artfulness. And nowhere, it has generally been thought, does it appear more paradigmatically than in "*The Argument of His Book,*" that exuberant fourteen-line poetic micropedia at the outset of *Hesperides* where Herrick introduces us to the things about which he, or rather "I" sing and write:

> I SING of *Brooks,* of *Blossomes, Birds,* and *Bowers:*
> Of *April, May,* of *June,* and *July*-Flowers.
> I sing of *May-poles,* Hock-carts, *Wassails, Wakes,*
> Of *Bride-grooms, Brides,* and of their *Bridall-cakes.*
> I write of *Youth,* of *Love,* and have Accesse
> By these, to sing of cleanly-*Wantonnesse.*
> I sing of *Dewes,* of *Raines,* and piece by piece
> Of *Balme,* of *Oyle,* of *Spice,* and *Amber-Greece.*
> I sing of *Times trans-shifting;* and I write
> How *Roses* first came *Red,* and *Lillies White.*
> I write of *Groves,* of *Twilights,* and I sing
> The Court of *Mab,* and of the *Fairie-King.*
> I write of *Hell;* I sing (and ever shall)
> Of *Heaven,* and hope to have it after all.
>
> (5.1. 1–14)

An ostensible inventory—though whether a literally accurate inventory of *Hesperides* it is left for critics to decide, who must debate whether Hell and Heaven actually make it into *Hesperides,* and whether Herrick's scads of crude epigrams can possibly be what the apparent oxymoron, "cleanly-Wantonnesse" (6) refers to—"The Argument" is an enactment in miniature of the Renaissance delight in plenitude,[5] and illustrative of the heterocosmic variety to be found in *Hesperides.* It makes a feint in its catalogue of seven declarative two-line, end-stopped units at the rigorous methodology of a taxonomic sorting only to level distinctions in its paratactic syntax, embracing and conflating everything cited as things, objects to be encountered as subjects in the miscellany of Herrick's "Booke." Hence, the visible and invisible, matters material and abstract, human and fairy, social customs and historical processes, "*Brooks. . . . Blossoms, Birds,* and *Bowers*" and the presumably weightier subjects of heaven and hell are given equal billing as things about which our poet sings and writes; with "heaven" alone, it would seem, getting preferred status as the thing the poet "hope[s] to have . . . after all" (14). And in the liquid substances of *Hesperides,* the poet gives equal place to things natural *and* refined: "I sing of *Dewes,* of *Raines,* and piece by piece / Of *Balme,* of *Oyle,* of *Spice,* and *Amber-Greece*" (emphasis mine 7–8). Much of value has been produced in the critical effort to read these natural and refined substances figuratively[6]; less, perhaps, has been said of the poetic interest Herrick takes here and throughout *Hesperides* in the substances themselves as objects of poetic interest, an interest that rivals that displayed in the other topics recounted in "The Argument," or the value these substances may hold for what they "represent." The phrase "piece by piece" is at once enumerative and partitive; it gives a pleonastic advertisement of the liquids as the subjects Herrick's verse will treat, poem by poem—or epigram by epigram; it also forecasts that at least part, as it were, of their significance may lie in their material pleasure—in the delight provoked by the thing itself—and will be encased in fractional, fragmentary "pieces," or, as Harold Toliver aptly put it, in "a piecemeal manner" (431–2).[7]

Forecast here as well are the complex interplay and reversals we encounter throughout *Hesperides* of representation, and of figures of synecdoche and metonymy, where an avid, some might say, fetishistic attention to the part threatens to displace what we might think the part ostensibly represents. Consider, for instance, Herrick's numerous poems about women, particularly about Julia, or rather about things belonging to Julia, her voice, her lips, her clothes, her tears, and, most unforgettably, "Her Legs," in the couplet featuring "Julia's dainty Leg, / Which is as white and hair-less as an egge" (139.1–2), a poem guaranteed to make one rethink both legs and eggs, but not the woman to whom the legs belong. Encountered as a group, these celebrations of parts of Julia's person and attire would seem the elements of an expansive blazon

signifying an outpouring of desire, but the energy of this blazon runs centrifugally, and desire is diffused and displaced onto its many pieces, so what precisely these fictions transact, has resisted ready critical comment, indeed, even simple paraphrase. Witness the humorously prim, if shrewd, debate—a forerunner to more recent debates about metaphor and metonymy—conducted in print years ago by C. S. Lewis and E. M. W. Tillyard over the deceptively opaque "Upon Julia's Clothes":

> When as in silks my *Julia* goes,
> Then, then (me thinks) how sweetly flowes
> That liquefaction of her clothes.
> Next, when I cast mine eyes and see
> That brave Vibration each way free;
> O how that glittering taketh me!
>
> (261.2)

As if written to be Exhibit A in a formalist exordium on the heresy of paraphrase, "Upon Julia's Clothes" has yielded little agreement as to what even happens in it, let alone, the sticking point of the debate between Lewis and Tillyard, what role exactly Julia's clothes play in the pleasure the voyeuristic poetic narrator derives from what he describes. Lewis claims that the poem is "about" the poet's experience of silk, about "seeing silk as [one] never saw it before," while Tillyard takes the silks to be a transparent metonym for a body the silks do or do not encase, but the hint of which "beneath," as Tillyard puts it not unlitotically, "is not absent."[8] Collectively, that is, the poems on Julia would seem to attest to the power of obsession, but obsession with what? Moira Baker may well be right in seeing these poems as rehearsals of male sexual anxieties and fantasies of textual control that pursue a "strategy of inscribing the female body by segmenting it and fixing the reader's vision upon the fetishized parts" the better to exert a "textual mastery over female sexuality for the erotic pleasure of male poet and reader."[9] Yet in their absorption with Julia's material parts and accessories, anatomical and sartorial, does Julia herself not emerge from these "pieces" de-materialized, and as less than the sum of her wondrous parts? Does she not become less the Petrarchan object of desire than a metonymic site for the things one could assume had been intended to represent her? Surely she becomes an "uncanny stranger," to recall, with Baker, Hélène Cixous's phrase for the alienating effect produced by the representation of the woman's body,[10] though here a stranger uncannily, *not* on display.

The interest in the partitive and the material we find in Herrick's poems on women's clothing and appurtenances finds a pictorial complement in the *oeuvre* of Hollar. Although best known in subsequent ages for his aptly named

Long View of London, Hollar was, in fact, like Herrick, a compelling miniaturist—the "curiosity" of whose work, Aubrey exclaims, "is not to be judged without a magnifying-glasse"[11]—and an artist who completed numerous studies of women and women's costumes in, as Katherine S. Van Eerde has maintained, evidently marketable "costume books."[12] One set of these in particular, the series *Theatrum Mulierum,* was largely completed during the early 1640s, in the years immediately following the Civil War–induced relocation to the continent of his patron, the Earl of Arundel, and in the view of one commentator, reflects, in the absence of the financial security he had enjoyed through his patron, the need Hollar had to generate commissions for himself by doing "what he did best: miniatures and figures of women."[13] Unlike the intensely, if ambiguously, eroticized studies of women's parts and accessories we find in Herrick, however, *Theatrum Mulierum* pursues a stolidly sociological principle of organization, offering full-length studies of women costumed according, largely, to social status and even, though to a lesser extent, by region. Attention to distinguishing detail commands these studies in their effort to convey a sense of fashion decorum. "The woman of fashion," Roland Barthes observed, "is a collection of tiny, separate essences";[14] Hollar's women of fashion are a collection of tiny, separate sartorial details which, no less effectively than Herrick's exercises in metonymy and synecdoche, make the woman herself dissolve, masked, at times literally so, by painstakingly detailed and particularized masks, hats, gloves, fans, kerchiefs, gowns, petticoats, and, for that matter, fur muffs.[15]

Indeed, in none of the studies Hollar completed of individual sartorial accessories is his attention to detail fused with a more sensuous evocation of the material substance than in the no fewer than nine etchings he did of muffs.[16] A reminder of the favor that fur had enjoyed among Tudor female aristocracy, and perhaps, more pointedly, of the disfavor it correspondingly endured as an object of vanity among puritans,[17] these etchings seem at a glance to fulfill a plausibly utilitarian function: the muffs Hollar draws as separate pieces find their way into a number of his full-length studies of women, such as the "English Lady in a Winter Costume" (P/P 1999).[18] And, one etching in particular ("Muffs," P/P 1952), displaying five muffs at different angles, underscores their functional purpose by sketching in the outlines of women's arms to show how the muffs could actually be worn and carried, the appeal of the muff as a consumer object enhanced by the sheer proliferation of the perspectives at which it is displayed. Yet for the most part the etchings, seventeenth-century prototypes in fashion illustration, embody an interesting tension between the practical uses the muffs are intended to serve and the appeal they project as sensuous and ultimately aestheticized objects. So, for example, we see in one of the representations (Fig. 1) several muffs displayed very much as a still life,

Figure 1. Etching, Wenceslaus Hollar, several muffs lying in a heap, illus. courtesy Coll. Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, Rotterdam.

in an interlocking heap that blurs their identity as items of apparel while highlighting, indeed, celebrating, the material appeal of their texture as pieces of fur—an appeal which Hollar seems to have enjoyed capturing during this period, as shown by the studies he completed on groupings of hounds (P/P 2046, 2047) and other furry creatures, such as cats (P/P 2107), dead moles (P/P 2106) and live poodles (P/P 2097), the animal sketched in its full length to give prominent play to one of its more materially appealing, or valuable, parts, its pelt.

And even when the muff is displayed in such a way as to underscore its identity as a fashion accessory, the accent of its representation falls more on its fashionableness than on its function or utility. One example is the study displaying several muffs arranged in studied negligence, with various other accessories, including gloves, lace collars, a mask, and fans, an ensemble arrayed to achieve a neat balance of textures and designs: muff as art object (Fig. 2)! And here, as in Herrick's poems on women, the pictures call into play, only to suppress, a metonymic relationship; the metonymic potential of the objects is subsumed by their aesthetic appeal, as piece by piece, the muffs and the other accoutrements acquire an interest that displaces what it is they are intended to be pieces of.

Nature represented in parts, parts aestheticized and rendered objects of interest and scrutiny for their curiosity, the dialectic we encounter in Herrick and Hollar, finds its most popular and material expression in the collection of

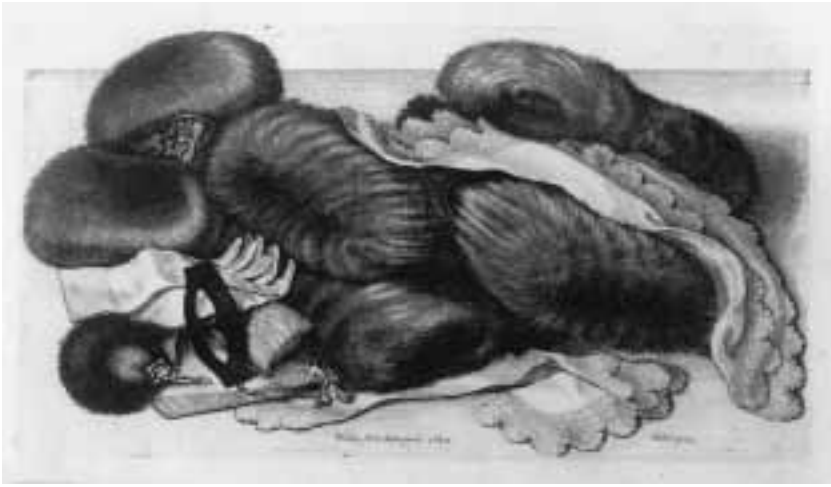

Figure 2. Wenceslaus Hollar, "Fur Muffs and Other Costume-parts" etching, B&H-5174; courtesy Coll. Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, Rotterdam.

things, animal, vegetable, and mineral, gathered, and crammed and put on public and commercial display by the Tradescants in their house in Lambeth from the early 1630s until the death of the younger Tradescant in 1662. The careers of the Tradescants, the history of their green yet growing "Ark," as it came to be known, and the evolution of the best known example in seventeenth-century England of the "cabinet of curiosities" or, as it was called on the continent, "*Wunderkammer*" into the foundational collection of the Ashmolean Museum have been well chronicled by Arthur MacGregor and Prudence Leith-Ross.[19] And very recently Lisa Jardine has seized upon the acquisitive solicitude for the collection shown by the Tradescants' chief cataloguer and eventual neighbor Elias Ashmole, lawyer, alchemist, and man of science—whose attitude towards the collection might be likened to Herrick's toward heaven at the end of "The Argument": he hoped to have it after all—as an object lesson in the competitive energies that fueled the development of science in the mid- and later seventeenth century.[20] And indeed, as the accounts of Leith-Ross, MacGregor, and Jardine all show, impulses acquisitive and competitive propelled the Tradescants in their collecting pilgrimages in ways and to climes that mirror England's ventures into imperialism, on the one hand recalling the voyages of discovery chronicled by Hakluyt, and on the other sharing in the produce of England's colonial operations in the Americas. What began for the elder Tradescant, chief gardener in the early decades of the seventeenth century to a succession of nobles: Sir Robert Cecil, Sir Dudley Digges, and ultimately to the Duke of Buckingham—as adventures in competitive gardening and errands of reconnaissance and acquisition in estates and floral bazaars in

France and the Lowlands, evolve into expeditions for ever more exotic species to ever more exotic sites, gradually turning the quest for different species of flora into a quest for species of difference *per se,* or, to recall the postscript to that directive cited earlier which Tradescant addressed to Edward Nicholas, while in the employ of Buckingham, "any thing that is strang."

The *desiderata* of difference and "strangeness" are very much in evidence, for example, in the account Tradescant is believed to have authored of the sea voyage he made to Russia in 1618 with his employer Sir Dudley Digges—the only extended piece of writing credited to Tradescant. Here an avidity for new and different species of flora embraces interesting species of fauna as well, both of the four-footed and two-footed kind. Hence, sightings of "strang" large birds (55)[21] and snakes are intermingled with ethnographic observations, *pace* Mandeville and Othello, of "that people whom the fixion is fayned of that [they] should have no heads, for they have short neckes, and commonly wear their clothes over [their] head and shoulders" (57) along with derogations of the seemingly incessant Russian winter (56) and the "baseness" of the Russian people, at least as evinced by their undiscriminating palates: "For we had a comander withe us who was glad to be partaker of coorce cates, as we thear could get, which was sower creame and otmeall pasties very poorli mad, which to them was a great bankit" (58). These sights yield in turn a haul of collected odd pieces: the "case" of the bird, (55) a "peace of the snake-skin," (57) and, of the people a vest, some stockings and boots, and shoes "to walke on Snow without sinking"[22]—along with an expression of rue over the souvenir that got away (57).

Now, how, or whether, or when the Tradescants themselves first categorized these non-floral contributions to their collection is unclear, since it is only in 1656, about two decades after the collection began to attract comment, that its first catalogue is published. Whatever the Tradescants' collection actually offered, and however it was arranged, early eyewitness accounts testify less to the comprehensiveness of its holdings and its taxonomic strategies than to the novelty of its novelties, to its miscellaneous delights, and to the unnatural effects in its natural history. An *omnium gatherum,* yes, an "Ark," even, but a *gatherum* and ark of all "rarities," rarities upon which the paratactically arrayed juxtapositions of the fullest early account has a "curiously" disintegrative and homogenizing effect, rendering them of interest less as representative pieces of certain classes of objects than as pieces of the *genus* rarity:

> In the museum itself we saw a salamander, a chameleon, a pelican, a remora, a lanhado from Africa, a white partridge, a goose which has grown on Scotland on a tree, a flying squirrel, another squirrel like a fish, all kinds of bright coloured birds from India, a number of things changed into stone, amongst others a piece of human flesh on a bone,

> gourds, olives, a piece of wood, an ape's head, a cheese, etc.; all kinds of shells, the hand of a mermaid, the hand of a mummy, a very natural wax hand under glass, all kinds of precious stones, coins, a picture wrought in feathers, a small piece of wood from the cross of Christ . . .[23]

And if, as Leith-Ross has noted, the Tradescants' collection provided an archive for serious taxonomists of plant and bird life and for other scientific and educational inquiries,[24] still, in contemporary references the Tradescants' "rarities" offer a recurrent trope for the unfamiliar—and not always the "faire"—serving Cleveland and Herrick, for example, as a standard by which to wonder, or smirk, at "curiosity" in their poetic subjects, with "curiosity" in these instances a synonym for the unusual, and with the "unusual" occupying a precarious proximity to the ugly in varying degrees aesthetic and moral. Certainly we see this elision of the unusual with the unsightly both aesthetic and moral in Cleveland's partisan royalist satire "Upon Sir Thomas Martin," pillorying the eponymous Martin, dissenting preacher, parliamentary functionary, and one-man sequestration tribunal, by invoking the Tradeskins' collection as one of a characteristically breathless barrage of disparate topical images mashed together to convey a sense of mock-wonder at the physical improbability and moral enormity embodied in his subject, the cumulative catachresis of the array a poetic tribute to the person no one of these images is outlandish enough to do justice to. Here, in its catalogue of curious images the poem itself becomes a cabinet of curiosities with the allusion to the Tradeskins' Ark simply one of the diverse attendant oddities:

> Hang out a flag, and gather pence! A piece
> Which *Africke* never bred, nor swelling *Greece*
> With stories timpany, a beast so rare
> No *Lecturers* wrought cap, nor *Barthemew* Fare
> Can match him; Natures whimsey, one that out-vyes
> *Tredeskin* and his ark of Novelties.[25]

Herrick, on the other hand, less censorious in his agenda and displaying a greater insight into the "whimsey" of fashion that turns nature's excremental pieces, and not always the prettiest ones, into things to be put on display as artifacts in the Tradescants' Ark, cites the collection in one of his more unsettling but startlingly acute explorations of anatomical ugliness as costume and performance art, "*Upon Madam* Ursly, *Epig.*" Here, we are told, "For ropes of pearle, first Madam *Ursly* showes / A chaine of Cornes, pickt from her eares and toes / Then, Next"—the pause enforced by "Next" a parodic reminder of the curiosity catching the voyeuristic observer of and in "Upon Julia's Clothes" (261.2.4)—"to match Tradescant's curious shels, / Nailes from her fingers

mew'd, she shewes: what els? / Why then (forsooth) a Carcanet is shown / Of teeth, as deaf as nuts, and all her own" (232.4.1–6).

The kind of taxonomic algorithm we find in Herrick's poem that would juxtapose "curious shells" with fingernails may actually offer a more generic and less "whimsical" evocation of the Tradescants' collection than it first seems. Indeed, in a recent essay on the phenomenon of "collections" in the early modern period, Claire Preston has argued that "[w]hat all the cabinets and their encyclopedias share is a syntax of resemblance or identity which is nearly always signaturist in its insistence on occluded and idiosyncratically selected likeness; their patterns are to be read as comparative contingencies or juxtapositions, as a system of potential *matches*."[26] For an itemization of the "curiosities" the Tradescants' collection actually contained—and of the juxtapositions, "idiosyncratically selected likeness[es]," and "potential *matches*" it effected—we depend, of course, exclusively upon the *Musaeum Tradescantianum,* the descriptive catalogue published in 1656 by the younger Tradescant through the exertions of Ashmole and Thomas Wharton.[27] A document that maps the transformation of the *disiecta membra* of a cabinet of curiosities into the ordered phyla of a museum, the *Musaeum,* like Herrick's "Argument," is at once an inventory and an abstract; a guide to the contents of the collection—and how accurate, of course, cannot be verified—it testifies to its sheer magnitude and to the catholicity of its procurement criteria, while yielding, in its effort to organize the miscellaneous, "curious" juxtapositions of taxonomies and elisions of the empirical and fanciful, nature and art, nature appropriated as art. And though, to be sure, in the prefatory apparatus of the catalogue, the younger Tradescant casts the mission of the collection in accents by turns pious, nationalistic, and scientifically heuristic, yet the very effort to posit a unifying value to the "wonders" of the collection hints at the hybridity of those wonders and heralds the dialectic by which the wonderful things of nature become wonderful things. Hence, investing the elder Tradescant's collecting activity with a prelapsarian pedigree, and likening his father's "Artes" to "those / Which *Adam* studied ere he did transgresse" (A4^{r}), the younger Tradescant proceeds to note that the impetus for the catalogue came from "some friends," and recalls that these "friends" "pressed me with that Argument, *That the enumeration of these Rarities, (being more for variety than any one place known in Europe could afford) would be an honour to our Nation, and a benefit to such ingenious persons as would become further enquirers into the various modes of Natures admirable workes, and the curious imitators thereof"* (AL^{r}).

In the catalogue itself we find, on the one hand, under *"Insecta & Serpentes,"* an alphabetized list of insects and invertebrates, sedulously inscribed in Latin notation, and symptomatic of the interest in detailed

depictions of insect anatomies typified by the engravings Hollar did of butterflies and other insects in the 1640s (e.g. P/P 2165–2185). On the other hand, under "*Mechanick artificiall Works in Carvings, Turnings, Sowings and Paintings*" (39–41), we find a list of objects in no discernible order, where the labeling, done in English, conflates physical identification and aesthetic appreciation, and where what gets included, be it natural or synthetic, owes its selection, elusively, to its "artificiality," or to its ability to appear artificial and "*Mechanick.*" Hence are catalogued man-made objects: "several curious paintings in little forms, very antient"; artificial objects made from natural substances: "Severall things rarely cut in Corall"; and natural substances that happen to produce a fashioned, artificial effect: "Divers sorts of Ambers, with Flyes, Spiders," counterparts to the flies encased in the classically inherited amber Herrick so memorably mined in "*Upon a Flie*" (185–6) and "*The Amber Bead*" (269).

The literal objectification of nature here, that is, the representation of nature in objects and aestheticized objects of interest and pleasure, is one conspicuous by-product of the materialism that governs the Tradescants' collection and its representation in the catalogue, a materialism that in the paratactic inclusiveness of the catalogue emulates—if on a comparatively massive scale of enumeration—the genial associationism of Herrick's "Argument" in ignoring hierarchies and collapsing distinctions between categories of knowledge and experience. To sample the splendors of the collection, the lists of the catalogue imply, is to experience them, like the "things" of *Hesperides,* piece by piece, and often in pieces. So it is, for example, that the catalogue, opening with a section on birds, gives over the first four subsections to "Egges," "Beaks, or Heads," "Feathers," and "Clawes" before working its way up to "Whole Birds"! Nor, of course, is it only in its representation of wildlife that the collection displays its wonders in the particular and in material pieces. Nowhere is that more so, perhaps, than under the section labeled "Variety of Rarities," where, for example, the anaphoric recitation of "A piece of the Stone of" such special places as John the Baptist's tomb, the castle where Helen of Troy was born, the Oracle of Delphi, and Diana's tomb (43), at once effaces distinctions between sacred and mythic history by locating their truth in the evocative and talismanic power of these stones, while grounding truth itself in the natural, material history of the collection.

But what of history itself? What place does history have in this cabinet of curiosities and the catalogue that enumerates its holdings? Recent history gets a silent if politically resonant testimony, of course, in the list of "Benefactors" from the erstwhile Royalist establishment who are grafted on without comment in an appendix of the catalogue as if one more class of objects to be viewed in the collection. In the catalogue as a whole, history, dissolving in the materially arranged categories of objects, appears in the form of citations of

actual events and personages and in bits and pieces of contextualization, making those events and personages more "real" by associating them with "curious" objects, investing "real" but otherwise commonplace objects with a "curiosity" they would otherwise lack. With its empirical focus upon things the catalogue levels distinctions between the popular and the august, near and far, ancient and modern, and renders history with variable and seemingly undiscriminating debts to the anecdotal, apocryphal, and faintly lurid, using "curious" objects to hint at and compensate for the ellipses in discursive accounts. Certainly we feel in the presence of many of these traits, the anecdotal, apocryphal, and historically elliptical, when we come upon the entry for one of the objects in one of the less "curious" sections labeled "Utensils," where, under the rubric, "Letter-cases made of the rindes of trees and grasses," we find "A copper Letter-case an inch long, taken in the *Isle of Ree*"—presumably a souvenir gathered by the elder Tradescant during the military expedition there with the Duke of Buckingham in 1628—"with a Letter in it, which was swallowed by a Woman, and found" (54). And to these we may add the less faintly lurid in the section labeled "Warlike Instruments," included among which we find "Knife wherewith Hudson was killed in the *Northwest Passage* or *Hudson's Bay*" (46). Leaving aside Preston's quip that the Tradescants' was not the only collection that housed a knife rendered famous by association with the famous,[28] and whether contemporary observers were aware or concerned that it had not been legally established how Hudson had been killed, let alone killed with a knife, or the knife in the Tradescants' collection,[29] the detail in its grim particularity and material immediacy asserts its own historical narrative and deflects attention from its own grammatical and geographical imprecisions: "a" knife or "the" knife "wherewith Hudson was killed"? and was it in "the *Northwest Passage*" *or "Hudson's Bay*"?

One may recall here the survey Barthes makes of the object-strewn materialism of seventeenth-century Dutch paintings in his essay, "The World as Object"; the agglomeration of things these paintings present, the product of commerce, piled on docks and laden in houses, is of interest less, Barthes maintains, for the attention they draw to the particular shapes and qualities of the things themselves than as a collective secular *blazon* to human power, a site on which "men inscribe themselves upon space."[30] A survey of the *Musaeum Tradescantianum* strikes, I would suggest, a very different balance. For though the items in its catalogue in their very inclusiveness may well be parsed as a testament to human acquisitiveness, the attention they draw from us is very much to their particularity; like the works we have considered by Herrick and Hollar, the items enumerated in the catalogue, while evocations of larger groupings, are simultaneously decontextualized and aestheticized as things of interest and pleasure in themselves. We feel the power of the particular and material most forcibly operant on history, perhaps, in the extensive array the

catalogue presents of "Medalls," included among which is the subdivision for "*Moneyes from beleagured Cities, etc. viz*":

> Breda, 1625. Newarke 1645, 1646
> Bruxells. *and divers other places.*
> Bergen up. Zoon. (72)
> Pomfract.

Narrative traces of the "troublesome times" Europe as a whole endured in the seventeenth century—and Newarke seems to have been especially favored—we do not know how these medallions were actually displayed. But would the metonymic force of such objects, that is, their power to represent their times, have been enhanced by their material appeal as medallions, as aesthetic "curiosities," or would it have been displaced by it?

Nor, of course, is this the only question the *Musaeum Tradescantianum* and the collection it catalogues ask us to consider. Drawing us into the binary complexities of that "curious" word "curiosity," they ask us to ponder the relationship of curiosity as a property of an object to the state of mind that property excites in the "curious" consumer. And as the most prominent *exemplum* of what Susan M. Pearce has described as the "widespread mania" for collecting that erupted in England in the seventeenth century only to continue unabated to the present day,[31] the Tradescants' collection ineluctably prompts us to ask what impulses are addressed when we collect and what it is that we do when we visit collections in a museum. More narrowly, the recurrent symptoms we have charted in the Tradescants' collection and in the poems of Herrick and the engravings of Hollar, inscribing as they do their attention to the material and their problematic interplay of metonymy and representation, inscribe as well a syntax for the interests and appetites of a culture.

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Notes

1. Unless otherwise specified, references to Herrick's poems are to Martin, *The Poetical Works of Robert Herrick* and follow his method of citation (page, number of poem on page, line).
2. Hollar encountered and began enjoying the patronage of Howard in 1636 in Cologne, where the latter had been sent on a diplomatic embassage; Hollar followed Howard to England, remaining when Howard left England for Holland in 1642, near the outset of the Civil War, never to return. According to Jacqueline Burgers, *Wenceslaus Hollar: Seventeenth-Century Prints from the Museum Boymans-van Beuningen Rotterdam* (Alexandria, Virginia: Art Services International, 1994), 18, "[w]hat Hollar did in the years of Arundel's absence is not well documented." According to Aubrey, "[w]hen the Civil Warres broke-out, the Lord Marshall [Howard] had leave to goe beyond sea. Mr. Hollar went into the Lowe-Countries where he stayed till about 1649," though one of Aubrey's editors, Oliver Lawson Dick,

adds the gloss that Hollar "fought in the ranks for the King, but was captured by Parliament and escaped to Antwerp" (*Aubrey's Brief Lives,* ed. Dick (1949; rpt. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1962), 162–3. Hardly inactive, however, Hollar does seem to have shifted his center of activities to Antwerp after 1644, returning to London in 1652, where, *modulo* expeditions abroad, including England's colonial venture in Tangier, on which he accompanied Henry Howard, grandson of Arundel, he remained until his death in 1677.

3. Published in 1656, the catalogue lists in its closing entry among the "Principall Benefactors in the precedent Collection" a number of the luminaries of the Caroline court, including King Charles and "Queen Mary," and the "Countess of Arundell," Thomas Howard's widow. Unless otherwise noted, all citations of the catalogue are to *Musaeum Tradescantianum Or A Collection of Rarities Preserved At South-Lambeth neer London By John Tradescant* (London: 1656). I am indebted to Dr. Arthur MacGregor of the Ashmolean Museum for the perusal of the Museum's copy of the *Musaeum Tradescantianum.*
4. "To Edward Nicholas," 31 July 1625, cited in Prudence Leith-Ross, *The John Tradescants: Gardeners to the Rose and Lily Queen* (London: Peter Owen, 1984), 80.
5. Though, as Martin, 498, *et alia,* have noted, it is most closely reminiscent in size and rhetorical form of the fourteen-line poetic catalogue of conditions social and matters cosmic, of crimes and criminals local and events and personages grand, of things "hidden and open" (9) that the satiric epigrammatist Thomas Bastard announces as his subjects at the outset of his *Chrestoleros* (1598), I, i, in *Poems: English and Latin,* ed. Alexander B. Grosart (Oxford: St. George's, Blackburn, Lancashire, 1880); Ann Baynes Coiro examines this resemblance closely in building her case for reading Herrick's "Book" as a scion of the epigram book tradition, in *Robert Herrick's Hesperides and the Epigram Book Tradition* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 33–42. See also Grosart, xvi and A. Leigh DeNeef, "Herrick's 'Argument' and Thomas Bastard," *Seventeenth-Century News* 29 (1971): 9–10.
6. See Roger Rollin, *Robert Herrick,* rev. ed. (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1992), 6–7; DeNeef *"This Poetick Liturgie": Robert Herrick's Ceremonial Mode* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1974), 9–11; Avon Jack Murphy, "The Self-Conscious Critic in *Hesperides,*" in *"Trust to Good Verses": Herrick Tercentenary Essays* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1978), 54.
7. Harold Toliver, "Herrick's Book of Realms and Moments," *ELH* 49 (1982), 431–2. Indeed, when read as celebrations of their material pleasures and shorn of their figurative associations, Herrick's assorted liquids bring to mind the kind of apprehension Gaston Bachelard delineates in the oneiric and material imagination in *Water and Dreams [L'Eau et les Reves]: An Essay on the Imagination of Matter,* trans. Edith R. Farrell (Dallas: The Pegasus Foundation, 1983).
8. C. S. Lewis and E. M. W. Tillyard, *The Personal Heresy: A Controversy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), 8, 47.
9. "The Uncanny Stranger on Display," *South Atlantic Review* 56 (1991), 21–2.
10. Hélène Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," trans. Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen, in *The New French Feminisms,* ed. Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980), 250; Baker, 7.
11. Aubrey, 163. Implying an ophthamological anomaly in the fineness, the "curiosity" of Hollar's work, Aubrey mentions in the same sentence that Hollar "was very short-sighted." That Hollar was opthalmically challenged is later cited, from another source, by Arthur M. Hind, in *Wenceslaus Hollar and His Views of London and*

Windsor in the Seventeenth Century (London: John Lane the Bodley Head Ltd., 1922), 9, who cites a letter from a friend of Hollar and amateur etcher, Francis Place, who comments that Hollar "had a defect in one of his eyes, which was the left, so that he always held his hand before it when he wrought; he never used spectacles."

12. Katherine S. Van Eerde, *Wenceslaus Hollar: Delineator of His Time* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1970), 22.
13. Burgers, 146.
14. Roland Barthes, *The Fashion System,* trans. Matthew Ward and Richard Howard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 254.
15. Nowhere is this metonymic particularity better exemplified than in the title page of *Aula Veneris* (1644), taken variously as a sequel to *Theatrum Mulierum* or an alternative title, where strewn across the bottom one encounters a cluster of fashion accessories, gloves, shoes, muffs, ribbons, or, in Van Eerde's words, with a nod to Hollar's poetic and ideological contemporary, "an agglomeration of feminine finery piled together, reminiscent of a 'sweet disorder in the dress' " (22).
16. For Graham Parry, *Hollar's England: A Mid-Seventeenth-Century View* (Salisbury: Michael Russell, 1980), 20, the studies Hollar completed of muffs and sea shells "are marvels of delicacy and fineness," with each plate "admirable both as a still life and as a consummately fine rendering of texture."
17. See the synoptic history of fur as a commodity in England provided by Captain John Sachs, *Furs and the Fur Trade* (London: Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, Ltd, 1923), 9–11. According to T. S. Willan, *The Early History of the Russia Company* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1956), 279–80, furs had been a staple import from Russia, and though the Hudsons Bay Company would not be formally organized until 1670, the pelts of fur-bearing animals from North America were among the objects put on display in the Tradescants' collection and classified in the *Musaeum Tradescantianum* (1656) under the rubric *"Fourfooted Beasts, with some Hides, Hornes, Hoofs,"* Section II.
18. Hollar's prints bear their standard Parthey/Pennington designations. See Richard Pennington, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Etched Work of Wenceslaus Hollar 1607–77* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). For perusal of the hundreds of prints by Hollar in the museum's collection, including those to which I call attention in this paper, I am indebted to the curatorial staff of the Prints Room of the Museum Boymans-van Beuningen in Rotterdam, The Netherlands.
19. Leith-Ross, *passim.;* Arthur MacGregor, "The Tradescants: Gardeners and Botanists," and "The Tradescants as Collectors of Rarities," in *Tradescant's Rarities: Essays on the Foundation of the Ashmolean Museum 1683 with a Catalogue of the Surviving Early Collections,* ed. MacGregor (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1983), 4–23; also Martin Welch, "The Foundation of the Ashmolean Museum," in *Tradescant's Rarities,* 40–58.
20. Lisa Jardine, *Ingenious Pursuits: Building the Scientific Revolution* (New York: Anchor Books, 2000), 253–62.
21. Tradescant's account of his trip to Russia is included in full in Leith-Ross, and page references of citations, given in parentheses, follow the pagination of her text.
22. These items ultimately appear in *Musaeum Tradescantianum* dispersed among the entries for X: "Garments, Vestures, Habits, Ornaments," 47–8: "A Russian vest," "Boots from . . . Muscovy . . . Russian (sic)," "Shoes to walk on Snow without sinking," "*Russia* stockens without heels," "Shooes from . . . *Russia* shod with Iron."

23. From an account by Georg Christoph Stirn of his visit to the Tradescants' house in 1638, cited in MacGregor, "The Tradescants as Collectors of Rarities," 21, and in Leith-Ross, 153.
24. Leith-Ross, 90–1.
25. "Upon Sir Thomas Martin, Who subscribed a Warrant thus: *We the Knights and Gentlemen of the Committee, &c.* when there was no Knight but himself," *The Poems of John Cleveland,* ed. Brian Morris and Eleanor Withington (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1967), 53, ll. 1–6.
26. Claire Preston, "In the Wilderness of Forms: Ideas and Things in Thomas Browne's Cabinets of Curiosity," in *The Renaissance Computer: Knowledge Technology in the First Age of Print,* ed. Neil Rhodes and Jonathan Sawday (London: Routledge, 2000), 175.
27. Leith-Ross, 120; Jardine, 255.
28. Preston, 173.
29. That Hudson, his son, and several others were "exposed" by his mutinous crew and set adrift without adequate provisions in the environs of Hudson's Bay in July, 1611 has generally been surmised, but no further evidence exists of physical mayhem. A transcript Llewelyn Powys uncovered, in *Henry Hudson* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1928), 183–6, and Appendix, of the lone formal trial of but four members the crew, deferred seven years for, among other reasons, Powys claimed, another commercial quest for the Northwest involving members of the same crew, shows that the crew members were charged with exposing Hudson and seven others and fleeing from justice, and were acquitted on both counts.
30. Barthes, "The World as Object," in *Critical Essays,* trans. Richard Howard (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1972), 4–5.
31. Susan M. Pearce, *Museums, Objects, and Collection: A Cultural History* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992), 92.