

The Books of Tho. Hobbes

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The Books of Tho. Hobbes

Abstract: There are four books that have been advertised in sales catalogues as possessing the inscription ‘Tho. Hobbes’ and having once been owned by Thomas Hobbes. But how confident can we be that they belonged to the famous philosopher? This research note gathers together evidence for assessing whether or not this quartet of books were once in the possession of Hobbes of Malmesbury, with particular attention given to a previously undiscussed edition of Josuah Sylvester’s *Devine Weekes and Workes* (1611) sold to the University of Illinois in 1951 as Hobbes’s copy. The evidence is insufficient to connect any of the four books to Hobbes securely, and in at least one case an Oxford undergraduate of the same name emerges as a stronger candidate. This conclusion confirms that the catalogues at Chatsworth are our principal source for knowing which books Hobbes might have read.

Keywords: bibliography, attribution, catalogues, libraries, annotations

The seventeenth-century catalogues of the libraries at Hardwick Hall and Chatsworth House are our best guides for knowing which books Thomas Hobbes had access to and might have read.¹ Most significant is the Old Catalogue of the Hardwick library, which contains around 1400 entries, most of them in Hobbes’s hand and written before he left the Cavendish family’s

¹ The eight principal catalogues or book lists are listed in the section ‘Hobbes’s Library’ in [P. Beal], ‘Thomas Hobbes’, in *Catalogue of English Literary Manuscripts 1450-1700 (CELM)* (<<http://www.celm-ms.org.uk/introductions/HobbesThomas.html>>, all web-links accessed May 2017). Future references to *CELM* are to this web-page. The three unnumbered items have now been catalogued: the second, fourth and fifth items in the list correspond to HS/ADD/1, 2 and 5. (HS/ADD/3-4 contain later book lists based on the Old Catalogue; see James Rhedon’s description of Hobbes Manuscript Additional in the information file on the Hobbes manuscripts at Chatsworth.)

service in 1628.² John Aubrey asserted that Hobbes was heavily involved in the collection's formation, maintaining that William Cavendish, second Earl of Devonshire, 'stored [i.e. stocked] the library with what books [Hobbes] thought fitt to be bought'.³ Reviewing Richard Talaska's edition of the Old Catalogue for this journal, Noel Malcolm reminds us that William's father, the first Earl of Devonshire (also called William), had intellectual interests and so may well have taken an active role in shaping the library, as well as financing it.⁴ Although this manuscript and the other Chatsworth catalogues cannot be read as though they itemized the contents of Hobbes's personal library, they do inform us about what books were available to Hobbes, and which editions he might have had close to hand when drawing from particular texts in his writing.

These catalogues notwithstanding, James Jay Hamilton was right to state back in 1978 that there is 'direct evidence of only a few of the books Hobbes read'.⁵ In the introduction to Hobbes manuscripts in the online *Catalogue of English Literary Manuscripts 1450-1700 (CELM)*, <http://www.celm-ms.org.uk>, Peter Beal mentions earlier claims that Hobbes wrote in the copies of Jean Bodin's and Francis Bacon's works still held at Chatsworth, but finds no resemblance between the annotations and Hobbes's hand. The only other kind of evidence for establishing Hobbes's ownership of specific works is the small group of books that sellers in the nineteenth,

² On the date and hand of the Old Catalogue (Chatsworth House, MS E.1.A), see N. Malcolm, '[Review of] Richard A. Talaska, *The Hardwick Library and Hobbes's Early Intellectual Development*, Philosophy Documentation Center, 2013, 148 pp., ISBN: 978-1-889680-02-6, 30 \$ (currently available only as an ebook)', *Hobbes Studies*, 26 (2013), 200-3 (201-2).

³ John Aubrey, *Brief Lives*, ed. A. Clark, 2 vols (Oxford, 1898), I, p. 338. On the *Life of Mr Thomas Hobbes* and its relation to *Brief Lives*, see *Brief Lives*, ed. K. Bennett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. lxix, xc and cxli.

⁴ Malcolm, '[Review]', 201.

⁵ J. J. Hamilton, 'Hobbes's Study and the Hardwick Library', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 16 (1978), 445-53 (445).

twentieth and twenty-first centuries have linked to the famous philosopher because they are inscribed with the name Tho. Hobbes. Three of these books are mentioned in *CELM*; the fourth has apparently not been discussed by Hobbes scholars before.

These four books deserve close scrutiny because they are the only known material evidence of a personal library belonging to Hobbes, and affect our sense of the Hardwick library's significance for Hobbes's intellectual life, offering potential clues about how well the library represents the range of books that Hobbes read, how he accessed books in different ways, what genres of books he might have acquired independently, whether Hobbes was someone who wrote his name into books and how likely it is that Hobbes owned other books that do not survive. This note gathers and reviews the evidence for whether it is likely that any or all of these four books were indeed once in Hobbes's possession. Considering this quartet together allows us to look for patterns in how the inscriptions were written, where they are placed, and the kinds of book inscribed, and so establish whether or not the four books reinforce each other's connection with Hobbes. The first half of this note considers evidence from the three books that are noted in *CELM*, before offering a detailed description and analysis of the fourth book in the second section.

1 Aristophanes, Charleton, Earles

Reporting that '[o]ne or two other books possibly owned by Hobbes may have escaped from Chatsworth' in the *CELM* introduction, Beal names copies of Aristophanes's comedies (1547), Walter Charleton's *Immortality of the Soul* (1657) and John Earles's *Micro-cosmographie* (1630) that were once

advertised for sale as Hobbes's former copy. He is understandably tentative about the attributions because only the existence of the 'Hobbes copy' of Earles's *Micro-cosmographie* has been verified in recent decades: we are entirely dependent on sales catalogue entries in the other two cases.

We have least to work with for the Aristophanes edition. The continued attribution to Hobbes is based solely on a parenthetical reference in an early nineteenth-century catalogue of Greek and Latin texts sold by the London bookseller Samuel Hayes: 'Aristophanes, Græce, cum Scholiis Græcis, et Indice copiosissimo, folio, (*Tho. Hobbes's copy*), very neat, 18s. *Basil, Froben, 1547*'.⁶ This description corresponds to the edition of Aristophanes's comedies with a Greek commentary that was edited by the Bohemian humanist Sigismund Gelenius and printed by Johann Froben in 1547.⁷ '*Tho. Hobbes*' presumably quotes an inscription in the copy. The spelling is identical to that found (or said to be found) in the other three inscriptions; however, the abbreviation 'Tho.' for 'Thomas' was commonplace during Hobbes's lifetime and cannot be treated as the distinctive practice of a particular Thomas.⁸

It is plausible that Hobbes owned this edition, e.g. he quotes from Aristophanes's scholia several times in *Markes of the absurd geometry ... of John Wallis* (1657).⁹ This particular edition does not seem to have been part of

⁶ *A Catalogue of Greek and Latin Classics* (London, 1823), p. 22 (item 355).

⁷ *Ἀριστοφάνους κωμῳδίαι ἔννεα μετὰ σχολίων πολλῶν παλαιῶν καὶ παντὶ ἀφελίμων, καὶ δυοῦ ἀνευ σχολίων / Aristophanes Comoediae Novem cum commentariis Antiquis* (Basel, 1547). Cited in H. M. Adams, *Catalogue of Books Printed on the Continent of Europe, 1501-1600 in Cambridge Libraries*, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), I, p. 59 (A-1715) and *Index Aureliensis: Prima Pars, Tomus II* (Aureliae Aquensis: [s.n.], 1966), p. 148.

⁸ See the many examples found in an advanced search for 'Tho.' among copy-specific notes in the *English Short Title Catalogue* (<<http://estc.bl.uk>>).

⁹ *Markes of the Absurd Geometry ... of John Wallis* (London, 1657), pp. 15, 24-26 (*EW* vii. pp. 390, 411 and 415); *Correspondence of Thomas Hobbes*, ed. N. Malcolm, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), I, pp. 440, 441n9 and 457n12.

the Chatsworth collection. The closest match in the catalogues is the reference in James Wheldon's catalogue of 1657 (HS/ADD/1, and the same entry is also included in the later catalogue HM 16*) to 'Aristophanes Græco, Lat. Cum scholasti. Vet. Fol. I 2 15', but the Froben edition does not have a parallel Latin text. This text is not mentioned among the various editions of Aristophanes in the printed catalogue of 1879.¹⁰ Nor is it known to have ended up elsewhere: the Universal Short Title Catalogue (USTC) and WorldCat list more than sixty copies of this edition in European and American libraries, but I have not found any reference to a Hobbes inscription among copy-specific notes in the relevant library catalogues. Without locating the copy referred, it is impossible to verify the catalogue's claim.

It would be hasty to assume that a book inscribed 'Tho. Hobbes' belonged to Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury. Indeed, a namesake emerges as a likelier candidate for ownership of the copy of Charleton's *Immortality of the Human Soul* said to have belonged to Hobbes. This book's whereabouts are also unknown; neither the holdings details nor external library catalogue entries for the thirty-six copies listed in the *English Short Title Catalogue* make mention of such an inscription (nor is the book mentioned in the Chatsworth catalogues). However, the copy's description in a catalogue for the Brick Row Book Shop in New York in 1940 contains a transcription:

THOMAS HOBBS' COPY

631. [CHARLETON (DR. W.)] (1619-1707). THE IMMORTALITY OF THE HUMAN SOUL, Demonstrated by the Light of Nature. In Two Dialogues. Fine engraved portrait of Charleton. Sm. 4to, full contemporary sheep

¹⁰ *Catalogue of the Library at Chatsworth*, 4 vols (London, 1879), I, pp. 76-78.

(hinges cracked). London, Printed by William Wilson for Henry
Herringman. . . 1657. \$85.00

First Edition, fine copy. Inscribed on the fly-leaf by the Author of
“Leviathan,” “E Libris. . . Tho: Hobbes—Coll. Magd:” Also in his hand
on the first line of page 85 is a correction and additional notations on the
final blank. In a full calf slip-case. Charleton and Hobbes were
undergraduates at Magdalen College, Oxford.¹¹

This attribution is based on a factual error: although Walter Charleton and
Thomas Hobbes did indeed study at the same Oxford college, they did so at
Magdalen Hall (modern-day Hertford College), not Magdalen College. We
would therefore expect to see the inscription in a form such as ‘Aula Magd.’
or ‘Aul. Magd.’, not ‘Coll. Magd.’, if the book belonged to the philosopher,
who by the 1650s was consistently styled as ‘Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury’
without specifying his alma mater, e.g. the title-pages of *Leviathan* (1651),
Philosophical Rudiments (1651, frontispiece) and *Elements* (1656).

There was someone else called Thomas Hobbes who was studying at
Magdalen College in the late 1650s. This other Thomas Hobbs (referred to
with an alternate spelling here for disambiguation – it is hard to prove that
spellings were flexible, but *Alumni Oxoniensis* treats the two spellings as the
same name) was a demy (i.e. foundation scholar) at Magdalen College
between 1652 and 1660, was awarded a BA in 1658 and gained an MA and
fellowship in 1661.¹² Hobbs was ordained deacon in September 1663, and

¹¹ E. Byrne Hackett, *A Catalogue of the Renaissance: Part II, England* (Brick Row Book
Shop: New York, 1940), p. 138 (item 631). (Digital copy available via Hathi Trust:
<[https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.\\$b464995;view=2up;seq=144](https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.$b464995;view=2up;seq=144)>)

¹² ‘Hobbs, Thomas (Hobbes)’, in *Alumni Oxonienses 1500-1714*, ed. Joseph Foster (Oxford,
1891), *British History Online* (<<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/alumni-oxon/1500-1714>>).

became a priest the following March.¹³ The existence of this Magdalen College graduate is enough to discredit the claim that the missing Charleton book once belonged to the philosopher Hobbes. Given that we know that this Hobbs wrote his name in his books, he must be taken seriously as a potential owner of the Aristophanes edition and the other two books for which we can consult the inscriptions. This line of enquiry is hard to pursue since, unfortunately, a copy of Hobbs's signature does not survive at Magdalen: there are no matriculation registers from this period, and his name does not appear among surviving documents that were signed by fellows.¹⁴

This lack of a handwriting sample is especially regrettable because the dated inscription in John Earles's (or Earle's) *Micro-cosmographie*, which reads 'Tho. Hobbes 1653' (found on the top edge of B4r), might refer either to the Oxford student or the more famous philosopher, who was then in his mid-sixties. This book was once part of the private library of the American bookseller John F. Fleming.¹⁵ It was purchased by another American collector, Robert S. Pirie, through Bernard Quaritch (with an estimate of \$2,500-3,500) and was sold again in December 2015 for \$3000 (from an estimate of \$4000-\$6000).¹⁶ In this latest sale, the item's author was named as 'Earle, John — [Thomas Hobbes]' and the catalogue note read: 'Thomas Hobbes's copy, with his signature "Tho: Hobbes. 1653" above headline on B4, a small Latin inscription on B11v and a Greek note on L4.' Although the catalogue entry

¹³ *Clergy of the Church of England* Database, 'Hobbs, Thomas (1663-1664)', CCEd Person ID: 44933 (<<http://db.theclergydatabase.org.uk/jsp/search/index.jsp>>).

¹⁴ I am grateful to Ben Taylor, archives assistant at Magdalen College, Oxford, for supplying this information.

¹⁵ *Books and Manuscripts from the Estate of John F. Fleming* (Christie's, 1987), p. 90.

¹⁶ The book was Lot 339 in the sale 'Property from the Collection of Robert S. Pirie Volumes I & II: Books and Manuscripts' held on 2-4 December 2015 in New York. Catalogue entry accessed online via <<http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2015/property-collection-robert-s-pirie-books-manuscripts-n09391/lot.339.html>>.

does not specify which ‘Thomas Hobbes’ signed the book, the implication, confirmed by its relatively high estimate, is that it was assumed to have belonged to Hobbes of Malmesbury.

‘Tho. Hobbes 1653’ is written above the running header in careful, non-cursive script angled slightly towards the right (it is reproduced in the Fleming catalogue and on the Sotheby’s website). The inscription is not, given its placement on B4r, a straight-forward mark of ownership, nor is it a signature as such. There are few distinguishing characteristics of the hand: the majuscule *T* is written with two straight strokes, and a slight angular hook at the left edge of the cross-stroke; a loop on the ascender of the *h* touches the top of the same letter’s arch; the two *os*, like the lobes of the *bs*, are circular with a flat base; the ascender of the *bs* are straight without hooks or loops; the small lobe of the *e* forms a Latin *e*; and the final character is a long *s*, followed by a period and the year ‘1653’. The similarity to exempla of Hobbes’s hand is weak: in a fragmentary letter written to Charles Cavendish in 1649, for example, the *Th* graph has a downward curve at the left edge of the *T*, and the ascenders of the *bs* are hooked or looped.¹⁷ It looks even less like Hobbes’s cursive signature, which has a distinctive epsilon *e* that Hobbes does not regularly use otherwise, and more oval *os*.¹⁸ These details lessen the probability of a connection with Hobbes.

The dating 1653, meanwhile, is a better fit with the biography of Hobbs than Hobbes. It is not difficult to imagine a young Oxford undergraduate writing his name into this book during his first or second year at Magdalen.

¹⁷ British Library MS Harl. 6083, fol. 85v; see Malcolm (ed.), *Correspondence*, II, p. 776.

¹⁸ British Library MS Add. 11044, fols. 180-81; see Malcolm (ed.), *Correspondence*, I, pp. 114-15; on Hobbes’s signature, see N. Malcolm, *Aspects of Hobbes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), p. 82.

Hobbes, however, had known John Earles since the mid-1640s: Hobbes and Earles, who was royal chaplain, were both tutors to Prince Charles in 1646.¹⁹ The publisher Andrew Crooke also links the two authors, as he was involved with both the 1638 edition of *Micro-cosmographie* and *Leviathan*.²⁰ This biographical information makes it harder to believe that Hobbes should have come to Earles's most celebrated work as late as 1653 and have thought to record the fact. We might have expected him to use Crooke's 1638 text or another later edition rather than an early 1630 edition (*Micro-cosmographie* is not mentioned in the Chatsworth catalogues). The dating of the inscription suggests that the more plausible scenario is that Hobbes the student possessed a second-hand copy into which he wrote his name. There are grounds, then, for treating this copy of Earles's *Micro-cosmographie* like Charleton's *Immortality* and arguing that it is more likely to have belonged to an Oxford undergraduate than Hobbes of Malmesbury. In any case, there is nothing to show positively that 'Tho. Hobbes' is the philosopher Thomas Hobbes. These two books therefore add to our doubts about a Hobbes connection with the Aristophanes edition.

2 Sylvester's *Devine Weekes*

The weak claims of these three books to have belonged to Hobbes means that the fourth book's potential link to the philosopher should be approached with scepticism. The book in question is a copy of Josuah Sylvester's *Devine Weekes and Workes* (1611 edition), a translation of Guillaume de Saluste Du Bartas' *Semaines* and other French poems that was one of the most widely-

¹⁹ *Leviathan*, ed. N. Malcolm, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2012), I, p. 5 (also pp. 38, 53 and 94).

²⁰ *Ibid.*, I, p. 92.

read works of vernacular poetry in seventeenth-century England.²¹ The bookseller Commin's, based in Bournemouth and owned since 1936 by Alan G. Thomas, offered Hobbes's copy of this book for sale in its second catalogue of 1947:

HOBBS' COPY.---- Du Bartas. His Deuine Weekes and Workes
Translated, *engraved title of architectural design (mounted), full calf,*
clean crisp copy, two signatures of Thomas Hobbes, upside down at the
end, 1611 £15 *One signature has been misbound but complete.*²²

The volume appeared again, four years later, in a catalogue of 1951. Although the catalogue description was the same, the item was now listed under 'Books reduced to clear' and the price had dropped to £10 10s.²³

The book was purchased by the Rare Book and Manuscript Library of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign: its class mark, IUA04209, is written in pencil at the top of B1r, and the gutter of the same page has the pencil marking '4D51 Commin' to record that the copy entered the library's collection on 4 December 1951, having been bought from Commin. The library has no further information on file about the book. It is not mentioned in its *Special Collections Acquisitions File, 1905-96* (record series 35/1/19).²⁴

²¹ On Du Bartas' reception, see P. Auger, *The Semaines' Dissemination in England and Scotland until 1641*, *Renaissance Studies*, 26 (2012), 625-40.

²² Horace G. Commin (Alan G. Thomas), *A Catalogue of Books*, 130 (1947), p. 28 (item 339). This was the second catalogue of 1947; the copy of the first (Catalogue 129) in the British Library has the date 19 iii [March] 1947 written in pencil. On Alan Thomas's life, see the obituary in 'News and Comment', *The Book Collector*, 41 (1992), 509-10.

²³ Horace G. Commin (Alan G. Thomas), *A Catalogue of Books*, 137 (1951), p. 49 (item 856). This was the first catalogue of 1951. The British Library copy has a stamp dated 3 April 1951.

²⁴ I am very grateful to Jameatris Rimkus and the staff at the University Archives in Urbana-Champaign for looking for any references to this book in this restricted access file. Boxes consulted were: Box 1 - "Special Collections File Index"; Box 1 - "Special Collections (Gifts or Purchases) - General (1), 1951-52"; Box 1 - "Special Collections (Descriptions) 1962-74"; Box 4 - "Milton Collections, 1930-72"; Box 5 - "Rosenbach Collections, 1950-67 (Browning Letters)"; Box 5 - "Sherman Collections, 1944-1957"; Box 5 - "H.B. Ward Library, 1929-70"; Box 5 - "Weston Library, 1936-83"; Box 6 - "Baldwin T.W., 1966-83"; Box 8 - "Price Library, 1949-50"; Box 8 - "Ray Gordon, 1951-55".

Nor is it referred to in the Annual Reports from 1951 and 1952.²⁵ An added reason for confidence that the library did purchase it for the Hobbes inscription (aside from the catalogue description) is that another copy of this particular edition (class mark IUA04205) had already entered the collection on 25 April 1936 ('25Ap36' is inscribed on A1r).

T. W. Baldwin (1890-1984) and Harris F. Fletcher (1892-1979) were principally responsible for building up the Library's core collection in seventeenth-century English literature. Baldwin was a Shakespeare scholar who is best remembered today for his examination of the playwright's classical education in *William Shakespeare's Small Latine and Lesse Greeke* (1944). He donated his collection of 5800 books to the University in 1967, but the typewritten catalogue only includes a folio edition of Sylvester's translations from 1641.²⁶ Harris Fletcher is much more likely to have encouraged the library to buy the 1611 edition. He specialized in John Milton's works, helping the library to build one of North America's pre-eminent collections of Milton editions and related literary and historical texts. According to the Illinois website, the collection that Fletcher developed 'forms the core of the Library's outstanding holdings in seventeenth-century printed books and maps'.²⁷

Fletcher's papers at the University of Illinois do not refer to the purchase either.²⁸ However, we do know that he had a specific interest in

²⁵ University Library Annual Reports (Record Series 35/8/801), 1951 and 1952. Accessed online via <<http://archives.library.illinois.edu/e-records/index.php?dir=University%20Archives/3501801>>

²⁶ 'Du Bartas (no t.p.) 1641', in *Catalogue of the Library Purchased from T.W. Baldwin and Regina Elisabeth Baldwin on August __, 1967* (n.p., [1967?]), p. 138 (register in top-right corner; Illinois's Rare Book collection contains two copies of this work, call numbers IUQ02939 and XQ. 842 D84LS981641).

²⁷ <http://www.library.illinois.edu/rbx/collections_book_collections.html>.

²⁸ Harris F. Fletcher Papers, 1926-70, University of Illinois Archives, 15/7/25.

autographed copies of early modern books around the time that the Sylvester volume was bought because in 1948 he published an article on ‘Milton’s Copy of Gesner’s *Heraclides*, 1544’ in *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* (printed by University of Illinois Press), which mentions that the book was offered for sale by Maggs Brothers in January 1947.²⁹ The catalogue for an exhibition of Milton books at Illinois in 1953 describes this autograph copy as one of the library’s ‘proudest possessions’:

This signature was described by Sotheby in 1863, then disappeared until it suddenly appeared in 1946 in the catalog of a London bookseller, who evidently was not certain about it and, therefore, described it poorly, and probably for that reason Illinois was able to secure it. It is the only holograph signature of the poet that we possess; but very few such signatures are known outside of official documents. This is one of our proudest possessions.³⁰

The ‘Hobbes’ Copy’ of Sylvester’s translations and poems was undoubtedly bought for its inscription too. The inside front board contains the following pencil inscription, possibly written when acquired by the Library: ‘W/-- Signature of Thos. Hobbes, (twice) at end’. Fletcher was probably not the author of the brief handwritten introduction to Du Bartas found opposite the title-page, which is based on the relevant entry in Robert Watt’s *Bibliographia Britannica* (1824), not a source he is likely to have used. That introduction does note that this edition was ‘[a] work to which Milton was much indebted’, but lacks the detail of the allusions to Du Bartas in Fletcher’s two-volume

²⁹ Harris Fletcher, ‘Milton’s Copy of Gesner’s *Heraclides*, 1544’, *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 47 (1948), 182-87 (187).

³⁰ Harris F. Fletcher, *Collection of First Editions of Milton’s Works: University of Illinois Library, an Exhibition* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1953), p. 22.

study *The Intellectual Development of John Milton* (1956-61), which contends that the French poet's works were so popular that it 'would be safer to assume' that Alexander Gill, Milton's master at St Paul's, 'merely failed to mention any of Du Bartas['] works than to assume that Milton never read any of them before 1625 or soon thereafter'.³¹ The same logic could justify the assumption that Hobbes knew the work as well (indeed, Du Bartas' English popularity was such that he is very likely to have at least known of it).

The inscription 'Tho Hobbes' appears twice upside down on the final leaf (see Figure 1). Once the book has been turned to read the inscription, only the top exemplum is fully legible; the other, which is to the right of the first, has lost its final letter from trimming. The beginning of a third inscription, which also reads 'Ho[b]', is visible, though the formation of the majuscule *H*, especially the flourish arcing back from the top of the first ascender, is different enough from the other two as to suggest a different hand. The loops on the *bs* and rounded hooks at the top of the miniscule *h* in the first two signatures resemble those of an italic hand, and could date from the mid-seventeenth century. The presence of an epsilon *e* in the top exemplum is especially striking (the *e* of the trimmed lower exemplum is hard to read but appears to form a Latin *e*). It is particularly the formation of the double *bs* in the top two signatures that strongly suggest that these were written in the same hand (or one in imitation of the other) despite small differences such as that the ink in the second signature is heavier, and the characters have larger spaces between them to accommodate the expressive flourishes of the *T* and *h*. A nib-shaped blot appears just above the second signature where a quill or pen must

³¹ Harris F. Fletcher, *The Intellectual Development of John Milton*, 2 vols (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1956-61) I, p. 404 (also p. 50).

have been left to rest, and there is a second ink mark at the top-right edge. Although the formation of the *Th* is dissimilar to Hobbes's signature, the epsilon *e* and looped *bs* do bear a general resemblance to his hand, though there is little basis for making a positive case that the scripts are identical. Similarly, the script differs from the inscription in Earles's *Micro-cosmographie* but it could have been written by the same person using a different script. It is impossible to be sure with such small samples.

The placement of the two inscriptions in the Sylvester edition means that they cannot be assumed to be marks of ownership; indeed, they may not have anything to do with the content of the particular book in which they are found. The same copy contains an array of other inscriptions in several hands, including other names. Inscriptions in another hand or hands appear on the title-page, which has been mounted onto a fresh sheet of paper. Written horizontally along the left edge is 'Wiok' (the *o* graph may be a *c*) and, after a lost patch of the manuscript, 'ell ye 21 1779' (Figure 2). 'Vid' is written on the top-left corner of the same page, and 'Super Super Super' is written along the opposite horizontal edge (Figure 3). On the next opening is a near-certain mark of previous ownership that reads 'Thomas Pulman' and has been struck out (Figure 4). The beginning of another inscription appears on the right-edge of the same page, possibly reading 'Tho' or 'Ro'. These marks appear on B1r (which contains the table of contents) for the A and B sheets have been bound out of sequence – this presumably happened when the book was re-bound, but we cannot know whether the inscription was written before or after this happened.

Further annotations are written alongside the poems in inks that look contemporary with these other markings, though, again, the small sample size makes it difficult to establish whether they are more likely to originate in the mid-seventeenth or late-eighteenth centuries: ‘Atoms’ glosses ‘Motes’ on C1v; ‘Scorpio’ is written beside the same word printed on 2C1r; and ‘perfectio’ (2S8v) appears beneath the printed annotation ‘The perfection of Court-ship’. The same page has other inscriptions in the top-left corner, including ‘Cooper’ written twice and ‘Edward’. ‘Edward Bowyer esqr’ is written at the end of ‘A Dialogue upon the Troubles past’ on 3E1r (Figure 5). On 3I7v ‘Martha’ is written along the left edge (the family name seems to have been written in too, but is illegible) and an elaborate majuscule *M*. And a list of names is written across the top of the colophon on 3R4r, on the reverse of the page with the ‘Hobbes’ inscriptions (Figure 6), that includes ‘W^m Lewis’, ‘Lecky’, ‘W Tucker’, ‘Susan’ and, lastly, ‘Hob’. The minuscule *ds* and epsilon *es* are written in a hand reminiscent of Edward Bowyer’s, and the final ‘Hob’ (if the last character is indeed a *b*) resembles the forms used on the other side of the leaf. The two sets of inscriptions may well be related, and, if so, this would add weight to the argument that the inscriptions do not simply denote ownership.

This copy’s numerous users between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries clearly did not treat it with special reverence as a former possession of Thomas Hobbes; in fact, the person who trimmed the colophon apparently placed little value on the Hobbes inscription, if that person even paused over the inscriptions. I have found nothing to link these annotations to the Chatsworth or Hardwick estates and their environs, nor to Hobbes’s life. There

is no record of this particular edition of Sylvester's work ever having been part of the Chatsworth collection: the annotated 1879 catalogue at Chatsworth does have an entry added for 'Saluste Du Bartas', but this refers to a copy of the 1621 edition with the eighth Duke of Devonshire's book-plates (which does not necessarily mean that he acquired it, though it would explain why this entry was added to the catalogue, which was compiled by the seventh Duke).³²

One piece of additional evidence about provenance is a small, circular bookseller's label pasted onto the top-left corner of the inside board, reading: 'Sold by J. Binning Bookseller of Bridgewater'. The British Book Trade Index entry records that Binning was based on Fore Street in Bridgewater, Somerset, and was the owner of a circulating library operating between 1813 and 1823.³³ Placing the book in Bridgewater in the early eighteenth-century leads to the speculation that the title-page inscription 'Wiok' refers to one of several settlements called Wick in the vicinity of Bridgewater: there are hamlets to the north-west and east of Bridgewater (near Shurton and Langport respectively), a village further north (Wick St Lawrence) and another east of Bristol.

The hypothesis follows that the book had been in the South West for decades. There were Thomas Pulmans in this part of the country: wills survive for men of that name from Sampford Brett (Somerset) in 1833, and also Ottery St Mary (Devon) in 1831 and Cullompton (Devon) in 1654.³⁴ There were Edward Bowyers further away in the South of England: in Warfield (d. 1805)

³² I am grateful to James Towe, archivist and librarian at Chatsworth, for this information.

³³ <<http://bbti.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/details/?traderid=6452>>. A different Binning bookplate is found in the collection of the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge: <<http://data.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/id/object/184782>>.

³⁴ Will of Thomas Pulman of Sampford Brett, Somerset, The National Archives (TNA) PROB 11/1820/289 (21 August 1833); Will of Thomas Pulman, Gentleman of Ottery Saint Mary, Devon, TNA PROB 11/1780/341 (1 January 1831); Will of Thomas Pulman, Gentleman of Cullompton, Devon, TNA PROB 11/237/616 (1 December 1654).

and Wokingham (d. 1775) in Berkshire, Saint Nicholas Worcester (d. 1760) and Kidderminster (d. 1651).³⁵ There were various other Thomas Hobbeses in this part of the country, e.g. from Mark, Somerset (d. 1609) and Flamsted, Hertfordshire (d. 1655).³⁶ The list of candidates expands if we include those whose wills use the form ‘Hobbs’: just in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Somerset, these include men from Brewhon (d. 1696), Stogursey (d. 1657), Yeovil (d. 1798), Henstridge (d. 1641), Bath (d. 1812) and Spaxton (d. 1793).³⁷ There are also Thomas Hobbses who died in other counties in England’s South such as Devon and Gloucestershire.³⁸ Either Hobbes the philosopher or his father could also conceivably have written in the book when at Malmesbury, also in the same area of the country. Listing all these different men named Thomas Hobbes or Hobbs serves to illustrate that it was a common name in the area around Bridgwater, not that we should assume that the book had been in the region over previous decades – it could easily have travelled further. There are too many Thomas Hobbeses/Hobbses to be able to identify the inscription with a particular man confidently, and even if the other names entered into the copy did allow us to make a positive identification we

³⁵ Will of Edward Bowyer, Husbandman of Warfield, Berkshire, TNA PROB 11/1428/243 (27 July 1805); Will of Edward Bowyer, Husbandman of Wokingham, Berkshire, TNA PROB 11/1008/228 (7 June 1775); Will of Edward Bowyer, Gentleman of Saint Nicholas Worcester, Worcestershire TNA PROB 11/857/223 (1 July 1760); Will of Edward Bowyer, Gentleman of Kidderminster, Worcestershire, TNA PROB 11/216/737 (29 May 1651).

³⁶ Will of Thomas Hobbes, Husbandman of Mark, Somerset, TNA PROB 11/113/521 (17 June 1609); Will of Thomas Hobbes, Husbandman of Flamsted, Hertfordshire TNA PROB 11/249/584 (11 May 1655).

³⁷ Will of Thomas Hobbs, Clothier of Brewhon, Somerset, TNA PROB 11/432/430 (24 July 1696); Will of Thomas Hobbs, Gentleman of Stogursey, Somerset, TNA PROB 11/271/200 (3 December 1657); Will of Thomas Hobbs, Gentleman of Yeovil, Somerset, TNA PROB 11/1305/222 (26 April 1798); Will of Thomas Hobbs, Husbandman of Henstridge, Somerset, TNA PROB 11/185/534 (23 April 1641); Will of Thomas Hobbs, Widower of Bath, Somerset, TNA PROB 11/1530/175 (13 February 1812); Will of Thomas Hobbs, Gentleman of Spaxton, Somerset, TNA PROB 11/1237/231 (21 October 1793).

³⁸ Will of Thomas Hobbs of Exmouth, Devon, TNA PROB 11/1530/13 (1 February 1812); Will of Thomas Hobbs, Merchant of Bristol, Gloucestershire, TNA PROB 11/1519/363 (21 February 1811).

could still not know for sure that the inscription was meant to indicate ownership.

3 Conclusion

None of the four books inscribed ‘Tho. Hobbes’ can be securely identified with Hobbes the philosopher. It is likely that an Oxford undergraduate of the same name wrote his name into a copy of Walter Charleton’s *Immortality*, and the other inscriptions may well refer to namesakes too. None of the books has a link to Chatsworth or Hardwick, and none has a solid connection with the eponymous Hobbes of this journal. Viewing all four books together demonstrates how weak the claims of each individual book are to be associated with Hobbes. But for the name ‘Tho. Hobbes’ these copies would not have received such special treatment by booksellers – and probably not in a research note either. These books inform us about the interests of previous generations of booksellers and bibliophiles, and illustrate how books take on greater intellectual and financial value when associated with famous people, even if based on little more than attractive coincidences that appeal to our desire to learn more about their lives. At the very least, these books provoke curiosity and, especially in the case of the Illinois book, retain a glimmer of possibility that Hobbes owned them.

This note, then, directs attention back to the Hardwick library as our major source for discovering what books Hobbes might have read. Noel Malcolm’s forthcoming edition of the catalogues of the Hardwick library will no doubt offer a comprehensive assessment of its value for learning about

Hobbes's reading and books.³⁹ The attempt to track down individual copies that Hobbes read relies entirely on the hope that instances of reading were recorded in writing – in catalogues, in annotations, in inscriptions. Hobbes could, of course, have owned lots of books but preferred not to inscribe his name in them or let them be destroyed. The four books discussed in this note remind us how little we know, or could ever know, about what Hobbes did with the physical books that he read.

³⁹ See Malcolm, '[Review]', 200.