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# John Evelyn and numismata: material history and autobiography

SEAN SILVER

It is a long-standing joke among curators that people go to museums in order to read captions; we are enough the creatures of objects in our everyday lives that no one is really interested in things themselves. As social beings, as people interested in people, we are naturally less interested in objects than in what they can be made to render up: the cultures they come from, the people who used them, the activities they make or made possible.<sup>1</sup> As in the museum, so too in the academy: as humanists, we do not pick up an essay on things expecting to learn about their mass, chemical composition, patina, or mode of manufacture.<sup>2</sup> We turn to the things of history to reinvigorate our sense of the cultures in which they were embedded, or the people who put them to use.<sup>3</sup> A certain paradox emerges. “The idea of material culture,” Daniel Hicks has recently observed, has repeatedly emerged “at precisely the same moment as a very significant hiatus in the anthropological . . . study of objects”; thus, Hicks continues, “the emergence of the idea of ‘material culture’ was from the outset intimately bound up with a radical shift away from the study of things.”<sup>4</sup> This has seemed to many to be a repeated pattern, true not only of the most recent forms of material history, but also of versions of this work in the past, as, for instance, in the establishment of archaeology in the mid- to late nineteenth century.<sup>5</sup> The “material turn” instantly gives way to remarks on culture or history; “material culture” and “material history” in this sense are different names for “cultural studies” or just “history.”<sup>6</sup>

Hicks’s observation raises a question: what might a truly symmetrical material history look like?<sup>7</sup> That is, how might an account offer a written, human history, even while remaining faithful to the demands and constraints of the things it treats? Hicks is by no means the first to remark the two-step accompanying the material turn. Roland Barthes, in an essay from the high period of structuralism, suggests that materiality is a mere convenience, at least when it comes to historiography. “Historical discourse takes for granted,” Barthes notes, “a double operation.” In the first place a historical referent — the fact of history — is “detached from the discourse,” becoming “external to it”; in the second, in an act which is sometimes immanent with the first, “the signified itself . . . becomes confused with the referent . . . and the discourse, solely charged with *expressing* the real, believes itself authorized to dispense with the fundamental term in imaginary structures, which is the signified.”<sup>8</sup> The author of a material history, by this

account, summons up a token particularly marked by its reality, upon which pivots a newly reinvigorated and authenticated return to discourse. This double movement is the essence, in Barthes’s terms, of the “*reality effect*,” and history is merely the discipline that most powerfully leans upon its resources, asserting into being the reality from which it depends.<sup>9</sup> Material history, we might say, merely concretizes a habit already latent in the doing of history; the material fact of history is magically worked up in order to anchor a return to the study of human relationships.

Barthes’s remarks have, however, something to offer in thinking about material history from the other side of the equation — from, that is, the materials that make it possible; in this sense, they look forward to a late turn in his work.<sup>10</sup> Facts, Barthes argues, have a tendency to summon up speaking subjects, just at those moments when such subjects seem to be necessary to “fill out” the historical reality of those facts. A first-person author steps in to provide an expert account, or possibly even an eyewitness supplement, thereby, in the gaps between idea and object, blossoming into being. The first-person voice, the collector of the material collection, leaks through, especially where the historiographic patching is heaviest. Looked at this way, material history has all along been an “imaginary elaboration,” but imaginary in a special sense. For it is not the history that is imagined, or even its materials; it is an imagination through which the “utterer of a discourse . . . ‘fills out’ the place of the *subject* of the utterance.”<sup>11</sup> Here, then, is a countervailing flow, the utterer, rather than the object, flashing into being as a function of narrative contact with the world. “In ‘The Reality Effect,’” argue Rachel Buurma and Laura Heffernan, “the subject’s constitution through language is an ideological misrecognition of subjectivity’s relation to the real.” They cite Barthes’s example of a barometer, mentioned as though by chance in Flaubert’s *A Simple Heart* as a sort of reality-making trick. But in Barthes’s later work, we move from “the reality-effect barometer attempting to install the illusion of the real . . . to the subject as barometer, a finely attuned measuring instrument, aware of subtle changes in the environment around it, constituted — but not determined — by them.”<sup>12</sup> This, they argue, was the general trajectory of Barthes’s work, from an early interest in the bootstrapping of reality towards a pervasive concern with the emergence of subjectivity.

In even the earliest moments of the modern form of the material turn, in the antiquarianism of the late early modern era, we find the precarious passage of the object from sign to real to sign already articulating a form of autobiographical elaboration. In the development of a material objectivity, in even the earliest attempts to professionalize the endeavor of material history, we may witness at the same time the development of a modern subject. This essay tracks an instance of this interbraiding, tracing a subject and an object as they co-produce each other's history. The exemplary subject of this essay (the one whose place is filled out in utterance) is John Evelyn (1620–1706), the Interregnum and Restoration belletrist responsible for some of the earliest English treatises on gardening and horticulture. Evelyn was personally involved in the founding of the Royal Society, helped implement plans for medical care for veterans of the wars with the Dutch, and generally helped launch, through translations and his own personal endeavors, the emerging English interest in prints, marble inscriptions, engravings, coins, and medals. It was as part of this last interest that he authored, near the end of his life, his *Numismata* (1697), the first British study of numismatics, which also provides the first history of England told entirely through coins and medals. But he is perhaps best remembered as the author of an extensive diary, multiply rewritten, which puts into narrative the bulk of his life. As such, we may provisionally say that Evelyn was at once a minor figure in histories of the liberal subject, and a pioneer in the early modern strain of material history.

The exemplary object — the “fact” — of Evelyn's material history is a certain medal, minted in the early phases of the English Civil War (figure 1). It is a crude silver disc, measuring just under an inch-and-a-half in diameter, and weighing, for its size, a surprisingly slight 184 grains — the weight of an American half-dollar or a British two-pound coin. Its obverse displays King Charles I, standing before his throne, and Queen Henrietta Maria, seated in hers, with their hands linked between them. The King is crested with the sun — a traditional icon of his authority that is also meant to associate him with Apollo; the Queen is crested by the moon, meaning at once to link her with Diana, Apollo's twin, and to allude to a traditional poetic formulation. As contemporary poet John Beaumont put it, “Our Charles and Mary” are “Like those two greater lights, / Which God in midst of heaven exalted to our sights.” The one “affords us healthful daies,” he concludes, “the other quiet nights.”<sup>13</sup> The King is treading Python underfoot, thereby alluding to the myth of the youthful Apollo, while the legend seeks to unite the visual pairing of Apollo and Diana with the mythic allusion: “CERTIUS PYTHONEM IUNCTI” “they will be certain of [defeating] the Python, being joined.” The coin's reverse rephrases and restages the mythic in secular time, recasting the obverse in a rudimentary historical discourse. It is, according to John Pinkerton, “difficult to make grammar of the inscription,” but the meaning seems nevertheless to him to be clear: “on the 13<sup>th</sup> of July, 1643, the King and Queen having fortunately met in the valley of Keinton [sic], dispersed the rebels to the west, and brought an omen of victory and peace to Oxford.”<sup>14</sup>



Figure 1. Thomas Rawlins, Kinton Valley Medal, 1643. Material: silver; size: 1.5 inches in diameter; weight: 184 grains. © Birmingham Museums Trust, AN 1885N1531.

One way to revisit an object like this is to reconstruct its career — the object-biographical approach made possible by Igor Kopytoff's influential essay.<sup>15</sup> Kopytoff suggests that we stop thinking of objects as commodities merely, and focus instead on objects as things that pass through commodity phases; the idea is to remember that objects lead rich lives between moments of their liquidation in exchange. It is hard to imagine something better for this approach than a medal. After all, medals are designed to circulate; they are hard, compact, and portable, intended to outwear the teeth of time. Like any coin, they are designed for exchange. What is more, a medal lives precariously in reference to its own substance; whether by accident or because it becomes worth more as metal than medal, it might at any moment be melted down into bullion — a fate this particular coin twice improbably avoided. Medals are, in this sense, commodities, instantly convertible to their commodity value. But they are also monuments, consciously designed to commemorate. They are built to display a message, to relay a way of seeing things, and therefore to create opportunities for conversation. They are, as Joseph Addison puts it, not so much a fund of money, as a fund of knowledge and discourse.<sup>16</sup> That is, in focusing on the provenance of such an object — where it comes from, who owned it, how much it is and has been worth — we tend to forget the cultural and historical work it does and has been made to do. And in focusing on its message, we tend to forget its circulation, the episodes of its life as it passed from hand to hand or paused between exchanges.

It was a common practice to award medals to important participants in signal victories or momentous wartime events — and this seems to have been the case here, for this medal has been punched through by a nail or spike in order to be worn on a ribbon. The Kinton Medal was minted to commemorate what seemed at the time to be a key event in the Royalist plot of a crushed rebellion. Roughly nine months after the opening skirmishes of the Civil War, in the long campaign of the second summer, the King's supporters were scattered, underequipped, and demoralized. But on July 13, without anyone planning it in quite this way, various discoordinated elements of the Royalist army converged on Roundway Down, trapping and defeating a major contingent of Parliamentary soldiers. Meanwhile, the King was at Oxford, where he had settled his court and government for the duration of the war. On precisely the same fateful day, Queen Henrietta Maria arrived with a long-awaited relief force from The Hague; King met Queen at Kinton, and a hasty triumph was immediately pitched to celebrate the "Royal Meeting."<sup>17</sup> It was either at Kinton itself, or back at Oxford, that Thomas Rawlins clipped a rough slug from a piece of plate and stamped it into a medal. It was the work of the moment, in the moment; the "rudeness" of the medal's workmanship, Benjamin Nightingale remarks, strongly suggests that it was "done on the spot . . . the hurried work of a few hours."<sup>18</sup> It captures, in other words, the ebullient optimism of the court; it moreover offers its own interpretation of

events, as though the meeting of the Queen and King in some uncertain way *caused* the "dispers[al] of the rebels to the west."

This optimism was buoyed by a series of striking coincidences, which seemed to many to suggest a secret pattern or providential plan emerging through the bloody chaos of the war. Through a seemingly augural crossing of luck and fate, the Kinton Valley had not only been the site of the Royal Meeting. It had also been the site of the 1642 Battle of Edgehill, the first major battle of the war, which was itself the first Royalist victory. Published many years later was a pair of poems discovered in manuscript, each by a poet who witnessed the Queen's arrival to the King. Written separately and evidently by different hands, each poem remarks on the portentousness of the event and of the spot; the omen of the end of the English war, it seemed, was being delivered at nearly the same place that the war was first discovered to have begun.

There our King his foes did meete;  
And there his best of friends did greet;  
Where such cheerfullnesse, such grace,  
Broke like daylight from her face,  
As if shee'd brought a stratagem from farr,  
To smile away the Memory of Warr:  
That Keinton field noe more shall carry  
A large name for the famous victory,  
But for Charles his meeting Mary.<sup>19</sup>

These verses, notes the editor, "are interesting more from the locality of their subject than for any poetical merit"; rough and of the moment, they join the Kinton medal as artifacts not only commemorating Kinton, but also authored there. Indeed, the frontispiece to the 1821 edition of the poems is an engraving of precisely this medal, displayed for its illustrative value. Poems and medal similarly reflect, in their various hasty and unpolished ways, the Royalist optimism at what seemed to them to be an auspicious omen signaling the near arrival of a favorable peace.

The Royal Meeting appeared instantly legible because it fitted neatly into a well-known plot. This was the plot of the martial epic, which provided for more than one member of the Royalist cause a ready template for interpreting history in its unfolding. Also among the King's train, moving with the army like an embedded journalist, was the Cavalier-poet Abraham Cowley. Cowley, perhaps the most accomplished of the court poets, was accompanying the King in order to compose what he imagined would be his great poem. It was to be the definitive epic of the war. This poem, *The Civil Warre*, arranged the scattered events and the scattered chances of battle into the predictable unfolding that marks any martial epic; the arrival of the Queen seemed to signal the beginning of a Royalist progress to victory, not unlike the return of flame-capped Achilles to the battlefield of Troy.<sup>20</sup> Noting (like everyone else) that the Royal Meeting took place on precisely the same day as the Royalist victory at Roundway Down, and additionally linking it to the well-known events from the year before, Cowley asks and answers:



Could this white day a Gift more grateful bring?  
 Oh yes! it brought bless'd *Mary* to the King!  
 In *Keynton* Field they met, at once they view  
 Their former Victory and enjoy a new.  
*Keynton* the Place that Fortune did approve,  
 To be the *noblest Scene* of War and *Love*.<sup>21</sup>

Cowley's work is particularly of the moment, moving in and out of a heroic present; his is a poetic voice, notes John Paul Hampstead, that registers present events as part of much larger narrative patterns. Under the sign of its epic course, Cowley's future rolled out before him, eminently bright and clear. The heroic mode "strip[s] away inconvenient context and nuance" in order to "affirm rather than complicate," no more so than when "specifics of geographical detail inspire elaboration."<sup>22</sup> For, like virtually everyone else of the King's company, Cowley was at great pains to find the providential patterns of events that suggested a Royalist victory. And, of course, it was in precisely this context that Thomas Rawlins engraved the die for the Kinton Medal; he, too, was infected with Cowley's epic optimism.<sup>23</sup> The obverse of the medal displays the Royal Meeting under the sign of the victory at Roundway Down, the linking of hands between King and Queen even while the King crushes Python underfoot. But it does not simply offer a mythically overdetermined image of the events, or even of the events as an omen, for, as any epic will demonstrate, omens can be ambiguous. It offers, at the same time, its own interpretation, a two-part reading on the reverse to match the two-part image of the obverse; it reads the events of July 13 as "VICT ET PAC OMEN," an omen of warlike victory united with the promise of a smiling peace.

This was the medal's birthright; it was imagined as part of a state apparatus, a circulating monument to a signal victory in a difficult war. It was just a few weeks later, however, that events veered off course, a series of drawn-out defeats putting the King's prospects very much in doubt. Finding, as Anthony Welch puts it, "history taking the wrong side in the conflict," Cowley abandoned his epic, perhaps as early as a mere six weeks after the momentous events of Kinton.<sup>24</sup> His poem, published posthumously in 1679, ends a bare seventy lines later, the remainder comprising mostly a long catalogue of the Parliament's abuses of power. Remarking that it was "*ridiculous*, to make *Lawrels* for the *Conquered*," Cowley advised his fellow Cavalier-poets that they "must lay down [their] *Pens* as well as *Arms*."<sup>25</sup> Nor was Cowley alone; he was only the most public person involved in the sudden and widespread abandonment of the martial epic tradition.<sup>26</sup> The long exile of King and Court, especially following the execution of King Charles in 1649, ushered in a different set of genres altogether. Thomas Killigrew's *The Wanderer* would be multiply staged in the Court of Charles II while the king was wearing out his welcome in Madrid; Aphra Behn's *The Rover, or, The Banish'd Cavaliers*, which borrows extensively from *The Wanderer*, extends the depiction of the uncertain fortunes of the King's Interregnum

retinue. Each participates in a generic tradition descending from Homer's *Odyssey*, Greek prose fiction, the chivalric *romans* of medieval Europe, and similar loose forms. Cowley himself subsequently reworked sections of *The Civil Warre* into his *Dauids* (1656), his "Sacred Poem of the Troubles of David," modeled at once on the wanderings of Aeneas, and on the vexed politics of the Interregnum.<sup>27</sup> These were poems of exile and disappointed ambition.

From the constrained account of the *Iliad*, of the war which will experience setbacks but ultimately be won, the Royalist cause had stumbled into an uncertain meandering, the loose episodic form of *The Odyssey* or *The Aeneid*.<sup>28</sup> Abandoning the ideological order of the comprehensive view, of Providential history and an orderly cosmos, the Royalist poets instead adopted "wandering and recursive narrative structures that insist on an anti-epic model of history."<sup>29</sup> It is worth mentioning, at this point, that this is the form most often associated with the rise of the historical novel, or the prose romances of the turn of the nineteenth century; forged here, in part, were the kinds of narratives that would turn up in Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, or, more to the point, Sir Walter Scott's *Waverley* series. Like any hero of romance or of a historical novel, the medal was stripped at a young age of what ought to have been its inheritance; it was suited to a world that vanished almost as soon as it was minted. In this sense, even more so than other medals from the same era, it was born to a life of wandering. I mean this as more than a mere rhetorical figure, more than mere personification, which would after all be to slip back into a historiographical method that chooses the human subject as its engine and object. Recent work by Michael Gamer suggests that the historical novel itself, pioneered in part by Scott, evolved from the eighteenth-century tradition of it-narratives, generically innovative texts told from the point of view of portable property. Like the strangely insipid hero of *Waverley*, who is in this respect like any pet, article of clothing, vehicle, writing implement, or, of course, medal or coin, the object of an it-narrative wraps history around itself precisely because it is "incapable of making [it]self 'a prime agent in the scene.'"<sup>30</sup> Such a hero, like wandering *Waverley*, is unstuck from epic historical forms, though forms associated with statecraft and motivated action; it passes through events without touching them. *Waverley*, by this account, evolved from an interest in the circulation of things, in object-biographies as material history. It therefore bears mentioning, as we shall see, that the same years when the Kinton Medal experienced the height of its fame were those years when the historical novel was the most widely read.

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So far, the medal appears only to have been wrong; it foretells a victory, when the King was about to taste defeat. But in another sense, taken in the longer view, the medal turns out to have been right — and it is for this reason that it would swim again into

view. When history's "functional units" predominate, Barthes proposes, when anecdotes, facts, or material fragments are allowed to indicate moments when history could have turned out otherwise, then history becomes closely allied to myth or epic. Omens and oracles, Barthes remarks, have all along been offered as just such critical turning-points, symbolically dense moments where history boils down to a decision: how to interpret the oracle, whether to follow it or not.<sup>31</sup> The facts of history become opportunities for imagining history against the backdrop of possibility. The Royal Meeting seemed to many to present just such a functional unit. The medal, minted at the site, like all the poems, penned in the aftermath, seemed to many to mirror a confidence in the meeting as a favorable omen; medal and poems offer interpretable condensations of a critical junction-point. And, as I have already sketched out, this vision of victory seemed to Cowley and the Cavalier Court to have had the contours of a cruel, misleading dream. But viewed with the advantage of hindsight, read according to the oblique logic of all oracles, the medal turns out not to have been wrong at all; the omen it records was only misread.<sup>32</sup> Though *this* King was executed, and his Queen driven into exile, *another* King, of the same name and strikingly similar in aspect, would in 1660 step into his place, another Queen joining him to tread Python underfoot.<sup>33</sup> The oracle was right, in a way that even the man who minted it could not have known; Cowley only abandoned his epic seventeen years too soon.

In the interim, in the years when it presented a false face to history, the Kinton medal went on the ramble. This was during the same dangerous years when the Kingdom was without a king. As such, this first major phase in the medal's object-biography shares a striking similarity with an episode in the 249th number of Joseph Addison's *Tatler*. This is a tale told from the point of view of an Elizabeth shilling, making it one of the very first object narratives.<sup>34</sup> Like the Kinton medal, Addison's shilling finessed its way through the Interregnum; a Cavalier, disgusted with the turn taken by the War, flings Addison's coin away, where it lies in a chink under a wall. We could almost imagine this Cavalier being Cowley — who divested himself of the trappings of Royalism at the same time that he abandoned his poem. It was under this wall that the coin, now parted from its cause, would safely remain (so the *Tatler* informs us), only turning up again after the Restoration. In this way, the coin claims, it avoided wearing "a monstrous pair of breeches," the "Rump's Breeches" or "breeches money" being the common name for shillings minted by the so-called "Rump Parliament."<sup>35</sup> Had it remained in circulation, we are to imagine, it would almost certainly have been re-coined as a Parliament or Cromwell shilling, made thereby to support the parliamentary cause. If this is true for Addison's shilling, which was only Royalist in a general way (merely displaying the image of the last monarch of the Tudors), it was more so for the Kinton medal, which was designed as part of a Royalist propaganda effort. It was a rare stroke of luck, in

other words, that the medal was lost, for as propaganda of the Royalist moment it would almost certainly have been melted into bullion under the Parliament ascendancy. This is surely one reason that so few Kinton medals have survived.<sup>36</sup> But it was also a rare stroke of luck to have been unearthed — lucky for the coin, and also for the man who unearthed it — lucky indeed to be found at the same time that England was making a transition back to the rule of a settled kingship. How it made its way between places is unclear, but sometime in the last half of the seventeenth century — possibly in the half-decade or so before 1664 — it turned up roughly a hundred miles to the south. It was, notes John Evelyn, "casually found in a Field of mine," having made the journey from Kinton to Sayes Court, Evelyn's address in Kent (now a part of London), and the place where he planted his celebrated garden.<sup>37</sup>

Evelyn was in a position to see the medal as part of a longer English history, in which the Regicide prompted a mere gap in an otherwise regular succession. It was in constructing just such a history that Evelyn first put the medal in print. This was his *Numismata*, a lengthy monograph on numismatics that also, incidentally, provides the first attempt at a history of England told entirely through coins and medals. The medal was, writes Evelyn, "one of the most Comprehensive Historical *Medals*, that was made during all the War"; the illustration Evelyn provides was the first of many engravings taken from this single coin.<sup>38</sup> But there is a twist. Evelyn seems to have known almost nothing of the medal's origin, or the dashed hopes of the person who carried it from Oxford. On the contrary, Evelyn's account introduces a number of idiosyncrasies, each of which intersects meaningfully with his autobiography. The largest of these is that Evelyn makes it "comprehensive" of a slightly different event from the ones that the medal itself witnessed; he causes the medal to commemorate a different event from the Royal Meeting, one that in the end buttresses an account of himself. The impression in Evelyn's treatise differs from the medal in one important respect; in every copy of the *Numismata* that I have been able to consult, Evelyn, as part of his corrections, scraped out the post of the final "P" in the coin's date, emending the medal's "DCXLIII" to read "DCXLII" (figure 2). The change, though slight, is nevertheless significant, and not only because it was repeated in at least two of the surprisingly large number of subsequent studies also interesting themselves in this same medal.<sup>39</sup> The alteration adds one year to the medal's age, displacing the coin from the end of the King's campaign of 1643 to near the beginning of a string of battles in the previous summer. Rather than commemorating the Royal Meeting at the Kinton Valley, which Evelyn possibly did not even know about, he causes it to remember the Battle of Edgehill, or a skirmish following that battle, that had an important place in Evelyn's personal history.

Prior to the development of gadgets like the daguerrotype, only the *camera obscura* stood as a figure for the possibility of machines producing images without the interposition of an



Figure 2. John Evelyn, *Numismata. A Discourse of Medals, Ancient and Modern* (London, 1697), 111. The third “I” was evidently present in the copperplate before being effaced. Photo: Author, used with kind permission of University of Michigan Special Collections.

artist’s hand and eye.<sup>40</sup> While the printing press might automatically generate multiple impressions of the same image, this impression was derived from a woodcut or copperplate taken from an original; an artist stepped in to facilitate its passage to print. We would be mistaken, however, if we concluded that contemporaries understood this additional step to introduce a necessary but unfortunate distance. On the contrary, impressions taken from engravings were not understood to be imperfect reproductions of an original object. This is one way in which Benjamin’s well-known discussion of mechanical reproducibility can put us on the wrong track — for it is not, in general, “originals” that engravings were understood to reproduce.<sup>41</sup> Engravings were not imagined to introduce layers of mediation between the viewer and some auratic original. Engravings were understood, instead, as a means of reproducing ideas, what are called their “designs.” This is the subject of Evelyn’s *Sculptura*, in which he makes the common case for engravings as mechanisms in the transmission of ideas.<sup>42</sup> Stripping away all that is inessential — color, light and dark, the crudeness of matter — engravings had the advantage of working directly in the regime of line and form, approaching closest to the patterns that might be imagined to organize things. As such, engraving is not a derivative art; it is a virtually

perfect art, for engravings bear the freight of design more perfectly than an original ever could.<sup>43</sup> Re-engraving the medal in copperplate did not seem to Evelyn, therefore, to carry him farther from an original; re-engraving the medal helped him clean up the idea he understood to be lurking there, bringing him closer to the mind of the man who beheld history and put it in a coin.

Evelyn’s silent correction, from 1643 to 1642, clarifies what he took the idea of the medal to be — relaying what he saw when he took it out of its case to gaze upon it. Though it is observably false to its original, the slight shimmer of difference reflects the process of Evelyn bringing himself into being, creating himself as a historian and a diarist. By repositioning the medal as a relic of the first battle in the war, Evelyn causes the medal to intersect with his own brief involvement with the King’s army. After the inconclusively bloody battle of Edgehill near Kington, both armies, in loose contact with one another, marched to the outskirts of London, meeting again at Brentford. This is Evelyn’s account:

November 12 [1642]: was the Battaile of Braineford surprisingly fought, & to the greate consternation of the City, had his Majestie (as ’twas beeliev’d he would) pursu’d his



advantage: I came in with my horse and Armes just at the retreat; but was not permitted to stay longer then the 15<sup>th</sup> by reason of the Armyes marching to Glocester, which had left both me and my Brothers expos'd to ruine, without any advantage to his Majestie.<sup>44</sup>

Evelyn was not present at Kineton, nor was he quite present at Brentford. But his absence at Brentford encompasses the entirety of his involvement in the war. While putting together the last version of his diary, *de Vita Propria*, Evelyn expanded the account: “nothing of my appearing in Armes, being known, I was advis'd, to obtaine of his Majestie, leave to Travell.”<sup>45</sup> Not having fired a shot in anger, Evelyn returned to his ancestral home — Wotton, in Surrey — “to passe my Malencholy houres shaded there with Trees, & silent Enough.”<sup>46</sup> Thereafter, he took passage to France and Italy. Evelyn missed the battle, and then, having missed the battle, missed the remainder of the war. It was in this phase of his life, when one version of history was being fought on the battlefields of England, that Evelyn was educating himself in how to view history of a different kind — for Evelyn took himself on the Grand Tour.<sup>47</sup> He joined a lost generation of displaced Royalists, who together toured the Continent, educating themselves on the matters of art and antiquity. He dropped out of history, we might say, during the same years as the Kineton Medal.

It is worth reflecting on the importance of Evelyn's account to his sense of himself, contextualizing it in the arc of his life as it was unfolding. What we call Evelyn's diary was never so-called by Evelyn. It was all along a hybrid document, an overlapping series of drafts assembled retrospectively from, on the one hand, notes scratched on almanacs, loose sheets of paper, and so forth, and, on the other, mnemonic aids not limited to public historical registers and fragments of material history themselves. Evelyn's entry for November 12–15, 1642 was almost certainly patched together in 1664, twenty-two years after the event. He worked from notes, first piecing together an autobiographical memoir that he called his *Kalendarium*; this was revised in subsequent versions over the course of a long and productive life. Each of these versions reads as though it was a diary — but each is a diary with a particular kind of historical awareness; each is, writes Laura Wilcox, “written with a disconcerting mixture of spontaneity and hindsight.”<sup>48</sup> His entry for the Battle of Brentford, caught between hindsight and the poignancy of the moment, transparently interprets a minor, isolated military action (chiefly notable today only for the capture of John Lilburne) as the critical moment in the early phases of the English Civil War. It documents the course that the war would have taken if only “his Majestie [had] pursu'd his advantage.”<sup>49</sup> It records the opinions of other experts either on the scene or elsewhere — that is, what everyone “beeliev'd [the King] would” do;<sup>50</sup> Evelyn even remarks upon the consternation the City would have expressed, if only the battle had been followed up effectively. In fact, through a sort of syntactical sleight of hand, the wished or imagined scenario precedes the reminder that the war took a radically

different course; in Evelyn's account, at least, the fantasy takes pride of place over outcome. As such, Evelyn provides a historically inflected interpretation of the place of a battle in history, rather than providing a record, however shaped by Evelyn's Royalism, of what Evelyn himself did and saw on those four days in November.

Evelyn seems to have been right about this much: it was at or around Brentford that the momentum gathered by the King's army was halted — probably by the indecision of the King himself. What this might have meant for the war is unclear. For Evelyn, of course, it is unequivocal: the battle blossoms into an important turning-point. But it is more complicated than this; for whatever the battle might or might not have meant to history, Evelyn clearly goes on to interpret the battle as a turning-point in his own life. It is fair to say that Evelyn was, before the English Civil War, involved directly in the events of history, if only as an attendant or functionary. He had accompanied the Earl of Arundel on his diplomatic mission to the Low Countries, and he seemed ripe for a career as a secretary or a minor statesman. After missing the Battle of Brentford, however, and receiving the King's warrant to travel, Evelyn's career took a swerve.<sup>51</sup> The Battle of Brentford thereby begins for Evelyn a pattern of witnessing the interregnum as an outsider, rather than one in the political thick of things. This is on display first in his account of the battle itself; he records the contours, and the various possible outcomes, of a battle that he, strictly speaking, did not witness. But this is merely the first major episode in the diary of this sort of history-telling; the recording of historical events as though he witnessed them himself expands, from this moment onward, into one of its major strategies, assembling a series of museological or art-historical responses to history.<sup>52</sup> The question, in a document like this, is not about the fantasy that has to be traversed to get to the real nuggets of history it obscures; the question concerns how Evelyn invented himself as an artifact of a particular kind of history. It is a question of how a history might be constructed from the point of view of its materials, which stand in as eyewitnesses in ways that Evelyn was denied.

Evelyn's diary for the succeeding years involves a series of episodes of displaced witnessing. While Evelyn was categorically missing the central events of the civil war, he personally witnessed — he “sees,” “saw,” “witnessed,” and so on — their peripheral, museal correlatives. Each object is a conduit to an event he has missed, or is missing. During his “melancholy” review following his dismissal from the army, for instance, Evelyn traveled from Hartford to London, where he “call[ed] in by the Way to see his Majesties House and Gardens at Theobalds (since demolish'd by the Rebels).”<sup>53</sup> Soon after, he records going “to Lond; where I saw the furious & zelous people demolish that stately Crosse in Cheapeside.”<sup>54</sup> This tour has been called Evelyn's “Royalist pilgrimage;”<sup>55</sup> Evelyn was passing from one icon of Royalist authority to another, noting them under the sign of their peril. The Cheapside



Cross, fragments of which were afterwards gathered up and remain now in the Museum of London, was a long-standing icon of royal authority, erected during the reign of Edward I, and its destruction was perhaps the most important act of iconoclasm of the early years of the war.<sup>56</sup> But other visits, to Theobalds and Hatfield House, for example, are hedged around by the violence that Evelyn was conspicuously missing. As Helen Wilcox puts it, “the war appears to rank among items worthy of inclusion in his tour of English antiquities” — not because Evelyn witnessed the war, but because his interest in antiquities developed at the same time as his forced absence from England and English politics. Evelyn “draft[s] a tour guide to the antiquities of Britain,” Wilcox concludes, in order “to establish a historical perspective on the events of his own time.”<sup>57</sup>

History for Evelyn is registered in part by always having been missed, by what turns up in the fragments of an absent whole perpetually lost to experience. Perhaps the most important event Evelyn missed was one he missed deliberately. Evelyn was in London on January 30, 1649, the day the “Rebells” proceeded “so far as to Trie, Condemne and Murder our excellent King.” Evelyn was “struck . . . with such horror” that he stayed home; he “kept the day of his *Martyrdom* a fast.”<sup>58</sup> What he records, however, what fills the gap of his absence, is a comparatively much longer gallery of experiences of art, stitched into a compensatory history. Having been absent for the execution of the King, Evelyn instead witnesses the broken-up remnants of the King’s collection at Whitehall. A bare two weeks later, Evelyn records going to see “Sir William *Ducy*,” who:

shewd me some excellent things in Miniature, & in Oyle of *Holbeins* Sir Tho: *Mores* head, & an whole figure of *Ed: the Sixt:* which were certainly his Majesties; also a Picture of *Q: Elizabeth*, the Lady *Isabella Thynn*, a rare painting of *Rotenhamer* being a *Susanna*, & a *Magdalena* of *Quintine* the black-smith. Also an *Hen: 8<sup>th</sup>* of *Holben*, & *Francis* the first rare indeede, but of whose hand I know not:<sup>59</sup>

They had “plunderd sold & dissipatd a world of rare Paintings of the Kings & his Loyall Subjects,”<sup>60</sup> Evelyn laments, dismembering the royal collection immediately after decapitating the King, and tumbling the icons of royal authority into the orderless jumble of objects in the marketplace. “Interregnum,” in Patricia Fumerton’s words, “is to be found in the detachment of Charles’s head; but it may also be found, with just as much lived momentousness” in “breakaway moments of history” like (for example) “the detachment of a jeweled locket from the portrait it contains,” or, more immediately, the breakup of the King’s gallery of art, its separation from Whitehall and the sites of royal authority.<sup>61</sup> Hence Evelyn’s outrage at the collection “plunderd sold & dissipatd,” which rhetorically balances the “Villanie of the Rebells” who did “Trie, Condemne, & Murder our excellent King”;<sup>62</sup> the breakup of the collection is the museal counterpart of the execution of the king. Evelyn, who

was rapidly developing as an authority in art and antiquities, makes the one stand in for the other, the careful catalogue of the collection signaling the unwatchable trauma of regicide.<sup>63</sup>

With Evelyn, and the class of professional collectors like him, there arose a particularly conservative and curatorial version of history: history as visual tableau, as a certain mode of arranging material fragments.<sup>64</sup> The work of the historian would become a project of imaginative reconstitution.<sup>65</sup> And so, when Evelyn returned to his interest in engraving, expanding his *Sculptura* into a book, he composed a study of medals, focusing on their historical significance. *Numismata*, Evelyn’s “Discourse on Medals,” was the last large work of his life, which he was penning at the same time he was revising his *Kalendarium* into *de Vita Propria*. It was also a direct extension of his *Sculptura* and therefore poses not a historiographic theory, or even a technique of writing history, but a series of ways of reading or organizing medals as though they captured a political history.<sup>66</sup> This would become a mode of history where, in Barthes’s words, “the utterer means to ‘absent himself’ from his discourse, and where there is in consequence a systematic deficiency of any form of sign referring to the sender of the historical message.”<sup>67</sup> Such a history, in Evelyn’s words, would “seem . . . to be telling itself all on its own”; it would be a “Historical Discourse with a chain of Remarkable Instances, and Matters of Fact, without Fiction or Vain Hyperboles.”<sup>68</sup> Evelyn’s idea is that medals provide the objective atoms of a universal history, which would be complete if only every medal ever stamped could be collected in one place. Medals are “so infinitely fruitful & full of Erudition,” Evelyn writes, “that had we a perfect & uninterrupted Series of them, we should need almost no other History.”<sup>69</sup>

This is not to say that Evelyn does not turn up in his own history. Instead, it is to notice that Evelyn’s version of history, as an arrangement of significant objects, positions him askew to the events he describes. Evelyn is undoubtedly a central figure and eyewitness to his work, but not in the same way that memoirists would be present in the histories that involve them. For Evelyn composes a tableau of historical events entirely out of medals of which he has first-hand knowledge. His account is liberally salted with reminders of his own first-person presence: “I have seen,” he writes, “I find,” or, when he is skeptical, “I remember not to have seen,” or “I am assured, but have not seen.”<sup>70</sup> But these first-person interjections continually refer to the objects, rather than the events, he witnesses. Occasionally Evelyn indicates the accuracy of an image, measuring it against first-hand experience: the shape of Laud’s ruff, for instance, is not quite right. But this is by the way of his central project — a digression or detour from the design of his historical work. For Evelyn remains consistent in constructing an anamorphic position for his readers, telling us how to see an objective history by way of the medals he has collected.

Discussing the first medal of King Charles I, for example, Evelyn informs us that “we see the king on Horseback, Crown’d, and in Complete Armor, pointing with his Commanding-staff to a Providential Eye in the Clouds.”<sup>71</sup> This sight is exactly what Evelyn might have seen, had he arrived earlier to Brentford. Instead, it is what he commands us to see, in gazing at a medal of the King during the conduct of the War. Evelyn in other words installs himself in a position of authority, curating a community of sight, through objects commemorating the event.

The most personal of these visual tableaux is the commemorative medal of the Royal Meeting that Evelyn reads as commemorating the battle he missed at the outbreak of war. This medal is the smallest of those Evelyn includes in his *Numismata*, and its illustrative value, among those stamped during the Civil War, might seem to have been negligible. Its “workmanship is very rude,” Edwin Hawkins was to write in 1865, “the relief low, and the metal appears to have been cut out of a piece of plate.”<sup>72</sup> Found years later, however, its historiographic value, especially for Evelyn, would become unmatched. The importance of this medal to Evelyn’s history is signaled in part by the extensive interpretation Evelyn provides — by far the longest in his history of England, and entirely out of proportion with the unprepossessing object it encases. This is only a part of Evelyn’s extensive reading of this “Rare” and “Comprehensive Historical Medal.”<sup>73</sup> He is speaking of the coin’s obverse (figure 3):

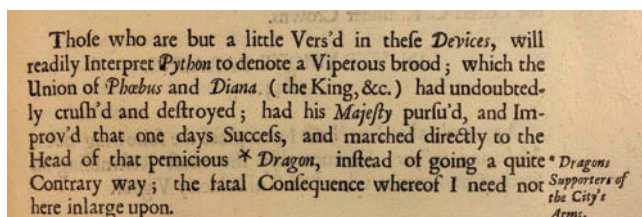


Figure 3. John Evelyn, *Numismata. A Discourse of Medals, Ancient and Modern* (London, 1697), 111. Photo: Author, used with kind permission of University of Michigan Special Collections.

This answers Evelyn’s remark in his diary — that the Battle of Brentford was fought “to the greate consternation of the Citty, had his Majestie (as ’twas beeliev’d he would) pursu’d his advantage.”<sup>74</sup> What appeared, in Evelyn’s *de Vita Propria*, to be an analysis of a battle by a slightly belated eyewitness turns out (by design or by accident) to have been Evelyn’s effort to reintroduce the objectivity of a medal into his account of himself. Similarly, Evelyn’s opinion on the conduct of the battle, and the outcome, had the pursuit been undertaken differently, is in fact an extended reading of a numismatic emblem. The “Treading of a *Serpent* under foot,” which could be read any number of ways, not least as an anticipation of King Charles as the later Martyr King, Evelyn reads as an oracle, a functional element of a history, in this case an omen

the King did not follow. Had “his *Majesty*,” Evelyn writes, only “marched directly to the Head of that pernicious *Dragon*” (“*Dragons*” being “*Supporters of The City’s Arms*,” Evelyn notes in a printed marginal note), then the battle, and the war, would have turned out “quite Contrary.” To be perfectly clear: this is no reading of the Royal Meeting. But it is also no reading of the events surrounding the Battle of Edgehill, at Kineton Valley. There, the King *did* follow up his advantage, marching directly to London. It was only at *Brentford* that the King faltered, “going a quite Contrary way,”<sup>75</sup> just after the very battle Evelyn missed. Evelyn’s reading of the medal in other words *establishes* it as what he claims it already to be — that is, “Comprehensive” — by performing a series of substitutions, not the least of which is to bring it into alignment with his own life. At one shot, Evelyn smuggles an autobiographical episode into his reading of a medal, while, at the same time, transposing a reading of a coin into his own autobiography. He has transparently translated an idiosyncratic, autobiographical interpretation of a medal into a diary entry for an event he could not have seen.

Life narrative here shapes numismata, just as numismata allows life narrative to spring into being. The coin is a conduit to a moment just before Evelyn, like the war, missed its fate. He reads the medal as capturing and foretelling a historical whole, as a critical fact in the epic form of history-telling. The medal comprehensively reflects the world of which it is the case — the King and Queen under the sun and moon, typologically figured by Apollo and Diana having slain Python. This is a vision of wholeness, except that, as Evelyn reads it, the medal gathers up the course of a war that did not happen, a decision which was not taken, or an omen not followed — the one in which the king and queen drove Parliament back to London and continued to reign with the rebels serving at their pleasure. The medal therefore kicks off, for Evelyn, a historiographic method, which is the counterpart to the entry for November 12–15 in the *de Vita Propria*. And while he guides us astray in his reading of the conduct of the war, he gets right his reading of the medal as a summary of the conduct of his life. If we might still wonder, then, how this medal got into Evelyn’s field, there is no question how it got into Evelyn’s treatise of medals: it establishes Evelyn as an eyewitness authority — not the authority of a general or soldier marshaling historical events themselves, or even an eyewitness who was there to have seen events as they unfolded, but a scholar or curator in the vanguard of the conservative, curatorial project of life- and history-writing. Indeed, it establishes Evelyn as possibly a *unique* authority, since he was just about the only person who had one of these medals. Evelyn was on the very site where such a crucial fragment was casually — a later commentator might have said “serendipitously”<sup>76</sup> — turned up; standing in his fields, years after the battle he missed, he stands on the cusp of history. This is Evelyn’s material history — which is at the same time absolutely subjective, for it is the very stuff of his autobiography.

“In general,” writes Stephen Bann:

it can be asserted with confidence that the visual image proves nothing — or whatever it does prove is too trivial to count as a component in the historical analysis. But to invoke a visual record or, even better, to incorporate it as an indexical trace is to reinforce the historian's claim to be an authentic witness and, consequently, a serious analyst.<sup>77</sup>

It may therefore be more proper to say that Evelyn missed history, missed it at first accidentally though perhaps not reluctantly, but later categorically and programmatically. We might suspect, moreover, that Evelyn missed history every step of the way in order to reconstitute an objective record later out of the fragments of a cultural whole that he could not directly have known. And we might therefore conclude that this material history was material to the extent that it was personal — which helps account for why that moment of greatest materiality, the medal “casually” turning up in his fields, is also a moment most strongly crossing with autobiography, in the end justifying Evelyn's particular authority as a historian of the material past. I am tempted to say that the imperfect “P” that Evelyn carved off the copperplate of the Kineton medal was the “P” that he carried into his diary, for, mutilated in this way, the medal was made to reflect back to him the constitutive hinge-point in his sense of his life as a scholar and antiquary. This is only one of the many ways that the medal has given being to its collectors, even while it, itself, is caused to blossom into significance.

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Evelyn died a few years after publishing his *Numismata* — but the coin of course lived on. A pattern emerges, the medal surviving a series of interested collectors: Benjamin Bartlett, Edward Hodsoll, Samuel Tyssen, and others. When Tyssen's estate was broken up at his death in 1802, the medal passed into the hands of William Staunton, who owned it until his death in 1848.<sup>78</sup> Staunton was a man very much of Evelyn's cast of mind, a noted antiquary, with a particular interest in material relating to Warwickshire. It was roughly while in his hands that the medal enjoyed the peak of its popularity, acquiring even a small measure of celebrity. It was in this half-century, partly through Staunton's own energies, and partly due to a community of likeminded antiquaries, that it multiply entered print. The medal featured in no fewer than four separate published monographs on coins and medals. It served as the headpiece to a pair of historical poems, a curious instance in a monograph on Warwickshire numismatics, an example in a revised illustrated history of English medals, and so on.<sup>79</sup> Moreover, images of the coin, like images of any celebrity, seem to have circulated among its devoted fans. Engravings taken from one or more copperplates were bound, pasted, tipped, or otherwise inserted into antiquarian texts; the medal was put variously to work, illustrating some fact of biography or detail of local history.<sup>80</sup> This was, not coincidentally, the century or so of the height of antiquarianism, stretching from perhaps 1750 to 1870; it was the same

period that witnessed the earliest historical novels and the rise of antiquarian fictions. Evelyn's medal was in many ways apt for local histories and antiquarian letters; it had been born to ramble, stitching its way in and out of accounts of time. And it was this phase in the writing of history that most delighted in strange confluences and local detail, the kinds of narratives Evelyn's nearly unique medal was suited to join.

When the medal that once formed the most “comprehensive” object in the *Numismata* next entered the historical record, this time in numismatist Edwin Hawkins's magisterial *Medallic Illustrations of the History of England and Ireland* (1885), it was accompanied by announcements that it had been lost to fire. Staunton's son, in an effort to preserve his father's collection entire, had sold the whole lot for a generously low price to the Birmingham Town Council; the choicest objects of Staunton's magnificent collection were shortly thereafter displayed at the newly built Reference Library of the Birmingham Midlands Institute. It was just a couple of years later that the Library building was reduced to ashes, with the loss of nearly the whole manuscript collection. Hawkins seems to have assumed that Staunton's collection of antiquities was lost as well. Having seen the medal (in 1865) with an antiquarian's eye, he seems simply to have imagined that it would be displayed, and therefore lost, with the rest of the jewels of the Birmingham Midlands Institute. Perhaps he never considered that the new projects of “big history” might consider a crude little relic of a mistaken optimism, or, for that matter, the entire collection of a renowned local antiquary, to be historiographically insignificant. For medals and medallic histories, in general, were on the way out. Nietzsche's *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*, published in 1874, signaled what had been in the air for a while;<sup>81</sup> antiquarianism was itself a thing of the past, consigned to the dustbin of historiographic method. The field of history was turning its attention to larger things — the cultural and constitutional histories of the late nineteenth century, or the historical materialism of the early twentieth — which is another way of saying that serious people stopped taking an interest in things altogether.

The coin, for its part, remained ignorant of this turn of affairs; it remained alike ignorant of the general immolation of the BMI, and the decline of antiquarian historiography. It was not destroyed; in fact, it was merely that, in recent years, the medal's fortunes had been on the ebb. Though it had been a magnificent specimen from an antiquarian point of view, from the point of view of modern history, or even in point of its own manifest qualities, it made a relatively shabby exhibit. In the selection of what was to remain on public display, the Kineton medal had been shifted into storage; it had been relocated to the archives of nearby Aston Hall.<sup>82</sup> Strictly speaking, it was never lost, at least not to people still interested in things like this; it was only that no one doing “big histories” troubled to look for it. For a few years, it turned up in numismatic notices, last mentioned by Philip Chatwin in the *Transactions of the Birmingham Archaeological Society*; here, it featured prominently in an article cataloguing the Staunton Collection. “Of all the things in the collection,” Chatwin



insisted, “there is nothing that can rival the almost unique Kineton medal.”<sup>83</sup> He found it significant enough, in part for its intersection with Evelyn’s original treatise on numismatics, to include an electrotype print. And this was the last time the medal showed its face for nearly another century. It was only in the summer of 2013, in the research for this essay, that the medal showed its face again — having been coined, lost, unearthed, forgotten, and unearthed once more.

#### NOTES

- 1 – Robert Layton, “Structuralism and Semiotics,” in *Handbook of Material Culture*, ed. Chris Tilley, Webb Keane, Susanne Kuechler, Mike Rowlands, and Patricia Spyer (London: Sage, 2006), 30–42; Chris Pinney, “Things Happen: Or, From Which Moment Does That Object Come?,” in *Materiality*, ed. Daniel Miller (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 256–72.
- 2 – See, for instance, Christopher Tilley, “Objectification,” in Tilley *et al.*, *Handbook of Material Culture*, 60–73; Carl Knappett, *Thinking Through Material Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013); Karen Harvey, “Introduction,” in *History and Material Culture*, ed. Karen Harvey (London: Routledge, 2009), 1–23.
- 3 – On this point, see Christina Lupton, “Theorizing Surfaces and Depths: Gaskell’s *Cranford*,” *Criticism* 50, no. 2 (2008): 235–54, esp. 235–37; Leah Price, *How to Do Things with Books in Victorian England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).
- 4 – Daniel Hicks, “The Material-Cultural Turn: Event and Effect,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Material Culture Studies*, ed. Daniel Hicks and Mary C. Beaudry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 25–99, at 29.
- 5 – On antiquarianism and material history, see Peter N. Miller, ed., *Momigliano and Antiquarianism: Foundations of the Modern Cultural Sciences* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007); the papers in this volume address Momigliano’s 1950 article, “Ancient History and the Antiquarian.” On the emergence of archaeology and other professionalized disciplines of material history, see Philippa Levine, *The Amateur and the Professional: Antiquarians, Historians and Archaeologists in Victorian England: 1838–1886* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Bruce Trigger, *A History of Archaeological Thought* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), esp. 80–120.
- 6 – Bjørnar Olsen, “Scenes from a Troubled Engagement: Post-Structuralism and Material Culture Studies,” in Tilley *et al.*, *Handbook of Material Culture Studies*, 85–103; Bjørnar Olsen, *In Defense of Things: Archaeology and the Ontology of Objects* (Lanham, MD: AltaMira, 2010); Tim Ingold, *Redrawing Anthropology: Materials, Movement, Lines* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2011).
- 7 – The problem of symmetry is raised repeatedly by Bruno Latour, first in *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), and most recently in *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013). On a symmetrical material culture, see Olsen, *In Defense of Things*; Ian Hodder, *Entangled* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012); and recent work at the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, including Lambros Malafouris, *How Things Shape the Mind: A Theory of Material Engagement* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013).
- 8 – Roland Barthes, “The Discourse of History,” trans. Stephen Bann, *Comparative Criticism* 3 (1981): 7–20, at 18.
- 9 – Barthes, “The Reality Effect,” in *The Rustle of Language*, trans. Richard Howard (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), 141–48.
- 10 – Rachel Buurma and Laura Heffernan, “Notation After the Reality Effect: Remaking Reference with Roland Barthes and Sheila Heti,” *Representations* 125, no. 1 (2014): 80–102.
- 11 – Barthes, “Discourse of History,” 146 (emphasis added).
- 12 – Buurma and Heffernan, “Notation After the Reality Effect,” 86.
- 13 – Ascribed to Sir John Beaumont, “An Epithalamium upon the Happy Marriage of our Sovereign Lord, King Charles, and our Gracious Lady,

- Queen Mary,” in *English Epithalamies*, ed. Robert H. Case (London: John Lane, 1896), 95–96.
- 14 – John Pinkerton, *Medallic History of England* (London: Edwards & Sons, 1790), 47–48, pl. XVI.9. 32; Edwin Hawkins, *Medallic Illustrations of the History of Great Britain and Ireland ...* (London, 1885), 1.306.
- 15 – Igor Kopytoff, “The Cultural Biography of Things,” in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 64–91; also Karin Dannehl, “Object Biographies: From Production to Consumption,” in Harvey, *History and Material Culture*, 123–38.
- 16 – Joseph Addison, *Dialogues Upon the Usefulness of Ancient Medals* (London: Jacob Tonson, 1726). See David Alvarez, “‘Poetical Cash’: Joseph Addison, Antiquarianism, and Aesthetic Value,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 38, no. 3 (2005): 509–31.
- 17 – W. J. Davis, “Old Warwickshire Coins, Tokens, and Medals,” *Transactions of the Birmingham and Warwickshire Archaeological Society* 22 (1896): 31–32.
- 18 – Benjamin Nightingale, “Thomas Rawlins and the Honorary Medals of the Commonwealth,” *Numismatic Chronicles* 13 (1850), 129–33, at 130. Nightingale goes so far as to suggest that it was coined “on the battlefield,” perhaps thinking of the Battle of Edgehill, fought at nearly the same site in 1642 (a point which, we shall see, has confused more than one commentator).
- 19 – Anon., “Upon their Majestyes happy Meeting at Edge-Hill,” in *Two Copies of Verses on the Meeting of King Charles I. and his Queen, in the Valley of Kineton, below Edge Hill*, ed. Edward Hamper (Birmingham, 1821), 4.
- 20 – Anthony Welch, *The Renaissance Epic and the Oral Past* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2012), 107–39; Raymond A. Anselment, *Loyalist Resolve: Patient Fortitude in the English Civil War* (London: Associated University Presses, 1988), esp. 66–68; Philip West, “Early Modern War Writing and the British Civil Wars,” in *The Cambridge Companion to War Writing*, ed. Catherine Mary McLoughlin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 98–110.
- 21 – Abraham Cowley, *The Civil War*, ed. Allan Pritchard (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974).
- 22 – John Paul Hampstead, “‘Tedious Havoc’: Abraham Cowley’s *The Civil War* and the Heroic Present,” unpublished essay, 6, 4.
- 23 – The queen was addressed with a series of celebratory verses and addresses upon her arrival at Oxford. Henrietta Haynes, *Queen Henrietta Maria* (London: Library of Alexandria, 1912), 205–06.
- 24 – Anthony Welch, “Epic Romance, Royalist Retreat, and the English Civil War,” *Modern Philology* 105, no. 3 (2008): 570–602, at 570.
- 25 – Abraham Cowley, “Preface to the Poems” (1656), in *Abraham Cowley: The Essays and Other Prose Writings*, ed. Alfred B. Gough (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1915), 5–19, at 8 (emphasis in original unless otherwise stated).
- 26 – Gerald M. MacLean, *Time’s Witness: Historical Representation in English Poetry, 1603–1660* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), 177–211; Robert Wilcher, *The Writing of Royalism, 1628–1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 182–92.
- 27 – David Quint, *Epic and Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).
- 28 – These problem genres incorporated multiple plot lines, numerous digressive episodes, and unclear dramatic forms — neither properly comic nor tragic. See Colin Burrow, *Epic Romance: Homer to Milton* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).
- 29 – Welch, “Epic Romance,” 577. See also Welch, *The Renaissance Epic and the Oral Past*, 107–39.
- 30 – Michael Gamer, “The Object of (Literary) History,” *Modern Language Quarterly* 70, no. 4 (2009): 514–24, at 508.
- 31 – Barthes, “Discourse of History,” 7–20.
- 32 – Thanks to William H. Galperin for this insight.
- 33 – On this point, see Kevin Sharpe, *Rebranding Rule: The Restoration and Revolution Monarchy, 1660–1714* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013), 9–222.
- 34 – Joseph Addison, *Tatler* 249 (November 9, 1710). On it-narratives, see Mark Blackwell, *The Secret Life of Things* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University

- Press, 2007); Jonathan Lamb, *The Things Things Say* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010); Christina Lupton, *Knowing Books: The Consciousness of Mediation in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011); Liz Bellamy, *Commerce, Morality, and the Eighteenth-Century Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
- 35 – The name is derived from a fancied resemblance of the emblem on the obverse to the seat of a pair of breeches. See John Peacock, “The Visual Image of Charles I,” in *The Royal Image: Representations of Charles I*, ed. Thomas Corns (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 176–239.
- 36 – Only two such medals are known to have survived the Interregnum. The medal which is the subject of this essay was joined years later by one other example, now at the British Museum (BNK,EngM.64)
- 37 – John Evelyn, *Numismata: A Discourse of Medals, Ancient and Modern* (London, 1697), 110. It is possible that the medal was unearthed at Wotton House, Evelyn’s estate in Surrey, but Evelyn’s famous garden was at Sayes Court, where he was engaged in planting from at least 1653.
- 38 – Ibid.
- 39 – Davis, “Old Warwickshire Coins,” 31–32. Edwin Hawkins, “Warwickshire Numismatics,” *Archaeological Journal* 22 (1865): 47–50; Pinkerton, *Medallic History of England*, 47–48, pl. XVI.9.32. Engravings displaying the third “P” include Pinkerton, *Medallic History*; and Hamper, in the frontispiece of *Two Copies of Verses*.
- 40 – See, for instance, Friedrich Kittler, *Optical Media*, trans. Anthony Enns (Cambridge: Polity, 2009).
- 41 – Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 217–52.
- 42 – John Evelyn, *Sculptura: or, the History and Art of Chalcography and Engraving on Copper* (London: G. Beedle, 1662), 96.
- 43 – I discuss this point at more length in *The Mind Is a Collection: Case Studies in Eighteenth-Century Thought* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), esp. 67–73.
- 44 – John Evelyn, *The Diary of John Evelyn*, ed. E.S. de Beer, 6 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), 2.79.
- 45 – Ibid., 1.53. “I came with my Horse & Armes, & with some mony presented to his Majestie by my Bro: was assigned to ride Volunteere, amongst the Gent: in Pr: *Ruperts* Troop, who was general of the horse: but the King marching to *Glocester*, by which the Gentlemen whose Estates were in Surry & Sussex lay in the immediate power of the Rebels, & would certainly have ben seized as delinquents; nothing of my appearing in Armes, being known, I was advis’d to obtain of his Majestie, leave to Travell . . .”
- 46 – Ibid., 2.81.
- 47 – On history and the Grand Tour, see, for instance, Stephen Bann’s *Under the Sign: John Barygrave as Collector, Traveler, and Witness* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994).
- 48 – Helen Wilcox, “Civil War Letters and Diaries and the Rhetoric of Experience,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Literature and the English Revolution*, ed. Laura Lunger Knoppers (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2012), 246–47.
- 49 – Evelyn, *Diary*, 2.79.
- 50 – Ibid.
- 51 – Michael Hunter, “John Evelyn in the 1650’s: A Virtuoso in Quest of a Role,” in *John Evelyn’s “Elysium Britannicum” and European Gardening*, ed. Therese O’Malley and Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1998), 79–106, at 83–84. Hunter remarks on Evelyn’s vexed relationship to his own reputation as a virtuoso: “there was a sense in which the intellectual and cultural activities to which Evelyn now turned were something of a substitute for what he saw as his proper goal in life.”
- 52 – Evelyn, *de Vita Propria*, in Evelyn, *Diary*, 1.55. Evelyn laments that the “Cheapeside . . . Crosse” was “of Gotique Invention, with Statues, Carving, and Gilding surpassing any that I had ever scene, or was I belive in Europe.”
- 53 – Evelyn, *Diary*, 2.81.
- 54 – Ibid.
- 55 – Gillian Darley, *John Evelyn: Living for Ingenuity* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006), 35.
- 56 – David Cressy, “The Downfall of Cheapside Cross: Vandalism, Ridicule, and Iconoclasm,” in David Cressy, *Travesties and Transgressions in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2000), 234–50.
- 57 – Helen Wilcox, “Civil War Letters and Diaries and the Rhetoric of Experience,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Literature and the English Revolution*, ed. Laura Lunger Knoppers (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2012), 238–52, at 246–47.
- 58 – Evelyn, *Diary*, 2.547.
- 59 – Ibid., 2.549.
- 60 – Ibid.
- 61 – Patricia Fumerton, *Cultural Aesthetics: Renaissance Literature and the Practice of Ornament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 12.
- 62 – Evelyn, *Diary*, 2.549.
- 63 – On May 30 “was Un-king-ship proclaim’d, & his Majesties Statues throwne down at St. *Pauls* Portico, & the Exchange”; *ibid.*, 2.555.
- 64 – Barrett Kalter, *Modern Antiques: The Material Past in England 1660–1780* (Plymouth: Bucknell University Press, 2012), esp. 29–68; Woolf, *Circulation of the Past*, 183–220.
- 65 – Ronald Paulson, *Breaking and Remaking: Aesthetic Practice in England, 1700–1820* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1993). See also Stephen Bann, “Shrines, Curiosities, and the Rhetoric of Display,” in *Visual Display: Culture Beyond Appearances*, ed. Lynne Cooke and Peter Wollen (Seattle: Bay Press, 1995), 14–29; Bann argues that collecting in the Restoration was part of a general scopie regime of breaking and remaking.
- 66 – On the history of *Numismata*, and its status relative to the professionalization of historiography, see Joseph M. Levine, *The Battle of the Books: History and Literature in the Augustan Age* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1991), 338–42.
- 67 – Barthes, “Discourse of History,” 12.
- 68 – Evelyn, *Numismata*, 157.
- 69 – Ibid., 48. Medals are not valuable for their avoirdupois weight or for their purchasing power. Evelyn is interested instead in “something . . . besides its intrinsic value,” not in “coines,” but in those “stamps” which afford some insight into “our storie here in England”; *ibid.*
- 70 – Ibid., 86–93.
- 71 – Ibid., 109.
- 72 – Hawkins, “Warwickshire Numismatics,” 50.
- 73 – Evelyn, *Numismata*, 110.
- 74 – Evelyn, *Diary*, 2.79.
- 75 – Ibid.
- 76 – Horace Walpole, *Correspondence*, ed. Wilmarth Sheldon Lewis, 48 vols (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1937–1983), 20: 407.
- 77 – Bann, *Under the Sign*, 122–23.
- 78 – *A Catalogue of the . . . Collection of Samuel Tyssen* (London: Leigh, Sotheby & Son, 1802), 31.
- 79 – Hawkins, “Warwickshire Numismatics”; Pinkerton, *Medallic History of England*, 47–48, pl. XVI.9. 32; Hawkins, *Medallic Illustrations*, 1.306; Nightingale, “Thomas Rawlins and the Honorary Medals,” 129–33, at 130; *Two Copies of Verses on the Meeting of King Charles I. and his Queen, in the Valley of Kineton, below Edge Hill*, ed. William Hamper (Birmingham, 1821).
- 80 – See, for instance, mention of such a gift in a letter from William Staunton to Robert Bell Wheler, June 14, 1821 (Shakespeare Birthplace 1160 Trust Records Office, DR 111/9).
- 81 – Friedrich Nietzsche, *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen: Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben* (Leipzig, 1874).
- 82 – Philip B. Chatwin, “The Staunton Collection,” *Transactions of the Birmingham Archaeological Society* 48 (1922): 171–76, pl. XXXI. I am grateful to David Symons, curator of medals at the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, for his contributions to this provenance.
- 83 – Ibid., 175.