

‘The divine Harvey’¹: The Afterlives of William Harvey

William Harvey (1578–1657) was renowned in his own time, and has been celebrated ever since. It is no exaggeration to say that he has been revered and heroised, known worldwide as the man who discovered the circulation of the blood. Scholars have engaged in debate about the precise degree of originality he exhibited, the exact timing of the discovery and the reasons for its minimal effects on medical practice in the short term. The many accounts of Harvey and his numerous afterlives raise broad questions about hagiography, biography, and portraiture, the roles of the histories of science and medicine in both ‘professional’ and lay cultures, and changing historiographical trends.² We also find significant shifts in the categories used to hymn him. One of the most striking is the insistence of physiologists from the nineteenth century on, that Harvey was one of them, indeed that he inaugurated ‘physiology’.³ In the 1960s and 70s, as new forms of the history of science and medicine were emerging, there were attempts to understand Harvey, not as a man ‘ahead of his time’ but as a more rounded person firmly rooted in his settings. The project to grasp his ‘natural philosophy’ signals a concern to avoid anachronistic categories and a desire to engage with his belief system.⁴ The goal was to contextualise Harvey as fully as possible. He was, for example, recognised as a committed royalist, a successful courtier, an Aristotelian, for some a ‘vitalist’.⁵ He is still been deemed to have been on the ‘right’ side of history in some quarters by

¹ J. F. Payne, *Notes to Accompany a Facsimile Reproduction of the Diploma of Doctor of Medicine Granted by the University of Padua to William Harvey* (London: Chiswick Press, 1908), p. 18. The phrase is part of the inscription used when Harvey’s diploma was transferred to the College of Physicians in 1764. This item is discussed below. [New College Library, Oxford, NCP1004]

Special and heartfelt thanks to William Poole and to Christopher Skelton-Foord for their kind support and encouragement during the preparation of this article. New College Library classmarks are given in square brackets. I am grateful to all the staff of New College Library as to those of the Royal College of Physicians, London, Palace Green Library, Durham University, the National Library of Scotland and the Heinz Library and Archive, National Portrait Gallery, London for their assistance. I have benefitted from the help of my Durham colleagues Richard Gameson and Philip Williamson.

² I have two kinds of profession in mind here. Doctors have been writing the history of medicine for centuries, with John Freind’s work *The History of Physick*, 2 vols. (London: J. Walthoe, 1725–6) thought to be the first such work in English. Historians of science and medicine have become increasingly professionalised since the Second World War. While some started off in the fields whose past they examine, more now come from the humanities and social sciences. Harvey is deemed of interest to general, ‘lay’ readers, as Thomas Wright’s book *Circulation: William Harvey’s Revolutionary Idea* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2012) suggests. The text on the dust jacket reveals much about the anticipated audiences. E.g. ‘Arguably the greatest Englishman in the history of science after Newton and Darwin, Harvey’s obsessive quest to understand the movement of the blood overturned beliefs held by anatomists and physicians since Roman times’. Charles I is mentioned as his ‘beloved patron’ and it is asserted that ‘Harvey’s idea was truly revolutionary’. The book is set ‘in the beating heart of late Renaissance London’.

³ E.g. Michael Foster, *Lectures on the History of Physiology during the Sixteenth, Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1901) and K. J. Franklin, *A Short History of Physiology* (London: John Bale, Sons & Danielsson, 1933). Franklin later published *William Harvey: Englishman, 1578–1657* (London: Macgibbon and Kee, 1961) and an edition of Harvey texts: *The Circulation of the Blood, and Other Writings* (London and Toronto: Dent, 1963).

⁴ Roger French, *William Harvey’s Natural Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). French shows the broad stakes involved in debates about Harvey and his discovery and seeks to do justice to contemporary religious and philosophical concerns. I use the term ‘belief system’ to acknowledge the influence of anthropology on the history of science, especially in the 1970s. Roger French was also the author of the 2004 *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* entry. In the *Dictionary of National Biography*, the memoir was written by Norman Moore, a medic and biographer. Mary Douglas, for example, was widely read, e.g. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966). ‘Natural philosophy’ is sometimes taken to refer more the physical sciences than physic. The challenge of naming areas of knowledge in the past is ever present, as the example of ‘physiology’ indicates. As a result, the choices regarding fields of knowledge that scholars make contain interpretative elements.

⁵ E.g. Walter Pagel, *New Light on William Harvey* (Basel: Karger, 1976), p. VII, and Roy Porter and Mikuláš Teich, (eds.), *The Scientific Revolution in National Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 184.

making a fundamental discovery using experiment, observation, reasoning and vivisection. His work on reproduction, however, has received much less attention.⁶

Celebrating discoveries detached from their contexts betrays a Whiggish approach, frowned upon by historians of science conscious of their emerging professional identity as historians *tout court*. As a result, there was a period when fully historical treatments of Harvey were undertaken, in implied contrast to those that arose from commitment to his heroism, to institutions with which he was associated, and to the progress of scientific medicine.⁷ But once delineated, discoveries and the people attached to them transmute into a type of cultural currency and take on a life of their own, making it difficult for the approaches and insights of scholarly history of science to gain wide traction. Thus William Harvey in all his complexities becomes ‘Harvey-discoverer-of-the-circulation-of-the-blood’, in a form of reification that serves as a handy tag. Aspects of Harvey’s work continue to be presented in a more transcendent manner—especially his commitment to dissection, direct observation and experiment. These methodological features have been enthusiastically celebrated, especially from the mid-nineteenth century onwards and are still noted, for example, in writings on the scientific revolution, although many authors prefer to emphasise figures such as Copernicus, Galileo, and Newton, that is to stress what we now call the physical sciences.⁸ In his own era, and for more than a century after his death, Harvey was principally lauded as a learned physician who discovered the circulation of the blood and was a generous benefactor to the College of Physicians in London. His intellectual heft was always appreciated, but increasingly it was as an exponent of ‘the scientific method’ that he has been deemed most praiseworthy.⁹ His heartfelt heroisation rested on these claims.¹⁰ Rather than simply

⁶ But see Nick Hopwood et al, (eds.), *Reproduction: Antiquity to the Present Day* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), chapter 15, and Exhibits 15 and 16 (not paginated).

⁷ More historicised accounts include Charles Webster, *The Great Instauration: Science, Medicine and Reform, 1626–1660* (London: Duckworth, 1975); Jerome Bylebyl, (ed.), *William Harvey and His Age: The Professional and Social Context of the Discovery of the Circulation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979); Robert Frank, *Harvey and the Oxford Physiologists: A Study of Scientific Ideas* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980) and Harold Cook, *The Decline of the Old Medical Regime in Stuart London* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986). On scientific medicine see W. F. Bynum, *Science and the Practice of Medicine in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); cf Rebecca Marcus, *William Harvey: Trailblazer of Scientific Medicine* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1965)—the design and illustrations suggest a book aimed at older children. It appeared in the series ‘Immortals of Science’. Marcus concludes, ‘Above all, he taught *others* the scientific method of studying the work of the bodies of living things. Harvey has rightly been called the first medical scientist and the founder of the science of physiology’, p. 117, emphasis in original. Special credit needs to be given to the surgeon, bibliophile and scholar Geoffrey Keynes (1887–1982), whose biography of Harvey, first published in 1966, places him in many contexts, including familial ones: *The Life of William Harvey* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978, reissued with minor corrections).

⁸ In his controversial revisionist work David Wootton does mention Harvey, e.g. p. 205, note xviii: ‘The first scientists nearly all contributed to several disciplines (the only major exceptions are a few doctors, such as William Harvey)’, but Harvey does not occupy a prominent position in the volume: *The Invention of Science: A New History of the Scientific Revolution* (London: Allen Lane, 2015). I find Wootton’s sentence ambiguous—are we to think of Harvey as a ‘scientist’ who only contributed to a single ‘discipline’? It could be said that he contributed to anatomy, physiology, zoology, and embryology, although it is unlikely Harvey thought in such ‘disciplinary’ terms, some of which emerged later in any case. Harvey is discussed in John Henry, *The Scientific Revolution and the Origins of Modern Science*, 2nd edn. (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 38–9, 50, 80–2, 103–4. Some works on the scientific revolution make no mention of Harvey, but emphasise natural philosophy in its narrower sense, e.g. P. M. Harman, *The Scientific Revolution* (London: Methuen, 1983).

⁹ The very notion of a scientific method, however widely deployed, is problematic, since ‘science’ encompasses so many fields that work in a range of ways. It is the repeated insistence on a singular mode of enquiry that is of historical interest. Harvey appears, for example, in F. W. Westaway, *Scientific Method Its Philosophical Basis and its Modes of Application* 3rd edn. (London: Blackie & Son, 1924), pp. 314–6, first published 1912.

¹⁰ For example, H. P. Bayon, ‘William Gilbert (1544–1603), Robert Fludd (1574–1637), and William Harvey (1578–1675), as Medical Exponents of Baconian Doctrines’, *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine, Section of the History of Medicine* 32 (1) (1938), 31–42, which explores the claim that Bacon gave ‘the experimental method of modern science’ its initial impulse by examining three medical men, but notes ‘. . . that Harvey gave a brilliant demonstration of experimental biology is also universally admitted . . .’, p. 31. Biology is an anachronistic term in this context. A similar

dismissing such idolatry, historians can track its diverse manifestations and benefit from the insights expressions of devotion afford. This article takes seriously the affection and admiration Harvey has occasioned, especially, but by no means exclusively, among medical practitioners. The overall approach is transferrable and can be applied to other people with elaborate afterlives. It treats Harvey as a hub enabling scholars to track the spokes that radiate from him, and it notes other nodes, such as the Royal College of Physicians, that brought people together in significant ways, which can be traced through publications and collections and the friendships, affinities and associations they express.¹¹

I

There are numerous connections between William Harvey and the University of Oxford. The romanticised statue in Oxford's Museum of Natural History (1864) presents Harvey holding a presumably still beating heart in one hand, perhaps counting the frequency of its pulsations.¹² His brief tenure as Warden of Merton College during the Civil War is well known. Harvey's Oxford years not only reveal his close connections with Charles I, but they suggest his affinities with men linked with the Royal Society, formally founded in 1660, three years after Harvey's death. When he was in Oxford, Harvey was in active discussion with lively, intellectually curious scholars whose discussions constitute one context for the formation of the Royal Society. William Osler (1849–1919), Regius Professor of Medicine in Oxford from 1905 until his death, and an adored clinician and teacher as well as a formidable scholar-collector, admired Harvey deeply. He gave the Harveian Oration in 1906.¹³ While numerous commentators have weighed in to honour and praise Harvey as a figure who is unique—no one else in British medicine has achieved such immense fame—Osler himself inspired exceptional levels of devotion.¹⁴ Osler's extraordinary book collection—laid out in *Bibliotheca Osleriana*—indicates his profound and longstanding interest in Harvey, and in his scientific status.¹⁵

Harvey's pre-eminence may be expressed in a single phrase—the discovery of the circulation of the blood. 'Discovery' can be imagined as a special moment, even though the 'eureka'

emphasis on method may be found in R. B. Harvey Wyatt, *William Harvey (1578–1657)* (London: Leonard Parsons, 1924), as Wyatt says in his author's note, unpaginated, 'I have laid great stress on his method of work and the value of the example he set in this direction.' The volume was part of 'The Roadmaker Series', which included volumes on Lord Lister, Michael Faraday, and James Watt.

¹¹ Basic biographical information on licentiates and fellows can be found on the college's website, in the Inspiring Physicians section: <<https://history.rcplondon.ac.uk/inspiring-physicians>> (Accessed: 5 June 2022). Most of the individuals discussed here are in the *Dictionary of National Biography* and/or the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Entries are not cited routinely in this article.

¹² The sculptor was Henry Weekes, the material is Caen stone. On the statues see <www.oum.ox.ac.uk/learning/pdfs/statues.pdf> (Accessed: 14 November 2021).

¹³ These are delivered annually at the Royal College of Physicians in London <www.rcplondon.ac.uk/projects/harveian-oration> (Accessed: 30 May 2022), and there are orations elsewhere, such as Edinburgh, presumably in imitation. Osler's oration is discussed below.

¹⁴ The surgeon D'Arcy Power compared Harvey with John Hunter (1728–93) in terms of the scientific significance of his work, but the latter is less widely known, despite his posthumous prominence at the Royal College of Surgeons in London: *William Harvey* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1897), pp. 184–7. This was part of a 'Masters of Medicine' series; among other biographees were John Hunter and Claude Bernard. See also D'Arcy Power (ed.), *British Masters of Medicine* (London: Medical Press & Circular, 1936), pp. 1–10 concern Harvey, with 'Experimental Physiology' as the subtitle; pp. 207–13, and Osler, with the subtitle 'Humanities and Medicine'. For the love that Osler engendered see Harvey Cushing, *The Life of Sir William Osler*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925) [JJ 30.1 OSL/CUS] and Michael Bliss, *William Osler: A Life in Medicine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

¹⁵ *Bibliotheca Osleriana: A Catalogue of Books Illustrating the History of Medicine and Science Collected, Arranged, and Annotated by Sir William Osler and bequeathed to McGill University* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987), first published 1969. Harvey features in 'Prima', 'which gives in chronological order a bio-bibliographical account of the evolution of science, including medicine', according to Osler, p. xxxi.

pattern is hardly borne out by most accounts of actual scientific practice, Harvey's included. The word 'scientific' is indeed appropriate here. Harvey may have been a learned physician with wide interests, but his enduring fame rests on attentive observation and meticulous reasoning of the kind that later practitioners and commentators linked with 'science'. It is in this somewhat anachronistic way that his achievements have been represented, with claims, frequently repeated, about his deployment of the scientific method.¹⁶ Harvey's medical practice, so far as this is known, seems to have been perfectly standard for the time, while it is commonly acknowledged that his discovery had little immediate impact on clinical activities. His curiosity about many natural phenomena, especially zoological ones, is greatly celebrated: his attentiveness to comparative anatomy, acquired during his time in Padua, contributed to his discovery. It is common to find his work praised in terms of its physiological significance, as Michael Foster did in 1901.¹⁷ By contrast, Harvey's work as a working physician is little discussed and when it is mentioned, it is often in less than flattering terms. Proponents of scientific exploration in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries found him a useful forbear and legitimator of physiological experiment, including vivisection.¹⁸

In this article I discuss William Harvey, with a focus on materials in the New College Library in order to offer a preliminary and partial map of his afterlives. These need to be placed in the context of huge secondary literatures on Harvey, the scientific revolution and the foundation of the Royal Society.¹⁹ In some respects commentaries on Harvey, despite their insistence on repeating a few key themes, are diverse. They vary, for example, in the degree to which they are based on original materials, and in their level of intellectual sophistication. The repetition of biographical highlights is an interesting historical phenomenon in its own right, playing a major role in generating and sustaining a profile, often through the use of anecdote. The New College Library contains some twentieth-century material that illustrates this point, indicating the ways in which writers forge connections with a revered man. Scholarly prowess is not necessarily their main source of interest, although two of the authors discussed undertook serious research. Rather it is on the one hand, the manner in which they select and emphasise certain elements of Harvey's biography, and on the other, the rhetorical use they make of a limited number of tropes, such as his deployment of the 'scientific method', that are of interest. In order to set such works in context, I consider earlier publications relating to Harvey, some of which achieved wide circulation.

II

When William Harvey died in 1657 he was already a prominent person. Those with royal connections could hardly escape public notice.²⁰ The book in which his discovery was announced, *Exercitatio Anatomica de Motu Cordis*, published in Frankfurt in 1628 was dedicated to King Charles I. An oft-repeated story has Harvey at the battle of Edgehill on 23rd October 1642 taking care of two of the Royal children.²¹ He was well-known for his close connections with the Stuarts and also

¹⁶ E.g. Westaway, *Scientific Method*, chapter 30, mostly extracts from Harvey's writings as part of Book III Famous Men of Science and their Methods, where he sits beside Darwin, Priestley, Newton, Faraday, and others.

¹⁷ Foster, *Lectures* suggests that Harvey's achievement was the demonstration rather than the discovery of the circulation, and this is all of a piece with his concern with method, see p. 42 where vivisection and ocular inspection are deemed crucial.

¹⁸ Richard D. French, *Antivivisection and Medical Science in Victorian Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), pp. 15–16, 36, 40, 269, 309.

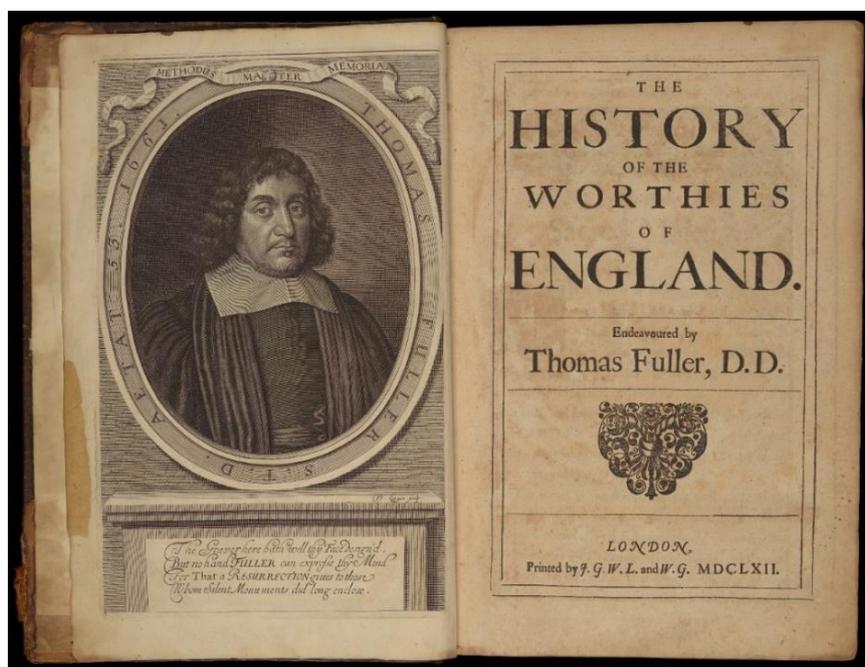
¹⁹ There are many more works than can be included here. Institutions with which Harvey was associated—Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, Merton College, Oxford, the (Royal) College of Physicians and St Bartholomew's Hospital, London—have spawned literatures in which he figures.

²⁰ Harvey was one of the physicians in ordinary to James I and Charles I and then first physician to Charles I 1642–9: Cook, *The Decline*, p. 282. See also Vivian Nutton (ed.), *Medicine at the Courts of Europe 1500–1837* (London: Routledge, 1990).

²¹ Keynes, *Life of William Harvey*, pp. 287–90.

with the College of Physicians in London, which had been founded in 1518 as a body attempting, with little success, to control medical practice in the city. He was an exceptionally generous benefactor to the college.²² Harvey's learning and wide-ranging curiosity were celebrated, as was the success of his family. These features—Royal and family connections and his prodigious scholarship—were far from unique.

It is no surprise that Harvey appears in what has been called 'the first English biographical dictionary', published in 1662.²³



New College Library, Oxford, BT3.195.4

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The author of *The History of the Worthies of England* had died the previous year, so the work was prepared for publication by Thomas Fuller's son John. Fuller *père* (1607/8–1661), a prolific writer, lost no opportunities in this his last publication for lamenting the civil wars, while the entire volume is suffused with piety and biblical references. Its organising principles are of considerable interest, combining an attention to localities—worthies are discussed under the counties of their birth, which appear in alphabetical order—with an intense concern for social hierarchies. Physicians come fairly low down his list. As he put it when explaining the status of lawyers:

First, That *Professions* are to take place according to the *Dignity* of the *Subject* they are employed about. Secondly, That the *Soul* is more worth than the *body*, which is the Sphear of the Physician. Thirdly, That *Canonists* meddle with many cases of *Soul concernment*, and therefore ought to have Precedency.²⁴

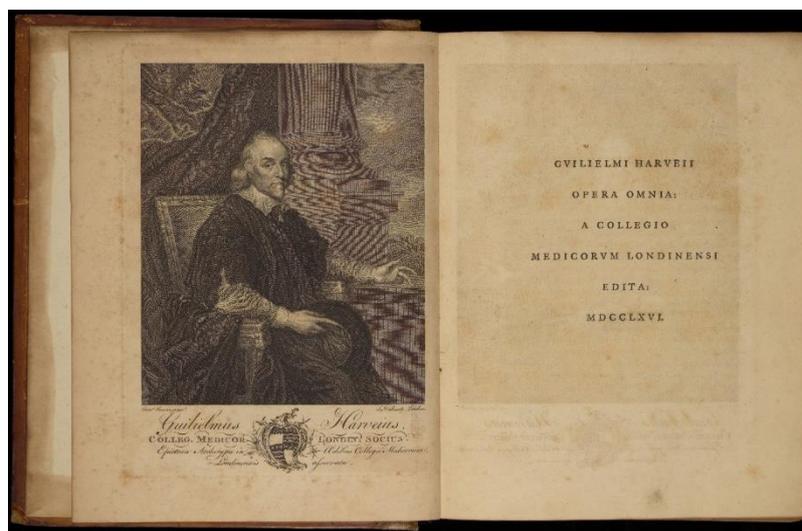
²² Cook, *Decline*, pp.117–9; George Clark, *A History of the Royal College of Physicians of London* (Oxford: Clarendon Press for the Royal College of Physicians, 1964), vol. 1, chapter 16.

²³ W. B. Patterson, 'Thomas Fuller' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), vol. 21, pp. 159–63, p. 163. Like Harvey, Fuller was in Oxford for a period during the Civil War.

²⁴ Fuller, *History*, vol. 1, p. 63. The New College copy is a single thick volume. There are three separate runs of pages, although no title pages indicating distinct volumes. For clarity, however, I refer to them as if they were separate volumes. The use of italics and capitals follows no readily discernible pattern. [BT3.195.4]

Harvey appears in volume II under Kent²⁵. Despite Fuller’s discussion of his sources at the beginning of the tome, his account of Harvey is not trustworthy, stating, for instance, that he was a bachelor, whereas in fact he married in 1604, as was well-known.²⁶ Fuller presents three of Harvey’s works as his ‘hopeful’ sons, with the one in which he announced the circulation of the blood: ‘his *Son* and *Heir*; the Doctor living to see it at full ages, and generally received.’²⁷ He continued, Harvey: ‘. . . hath since been a second *Linacre* and great Benefactor to the Colledge of Physicians in *London*, where his Statue stands . . .’²⁸ This statue was destroyed in the 1666 fire and never replaced.²⁹ Aubrey, who knew Harvey well, included the statue’s inscription in his *Brief Lives*, although he was hardly a trustworthy source either.³⁰ A portrait of Harvey was saved from the flames, however, becoming an iconic representation, much reproduced, including on mugs and other commodities sold by the College in recent times. Fuller’s account stresses the ‘truth’ of Harvey’s discovery, the value of his works, his suffering in the Civil War, his status as a benefactor and his position—a second Linacre—in a lineage of learned physicians. In this sense Fuller was perceptive; filiation was a powerful notion for physicians, whether applied to books or people.

A century later the College of Physicians made a new, rather different monument to Harvey, this time in the form of a single volume of his collected works rather than through a likeness in stone. The frontispiece to *Opera Omnia* (1766), shows the portrait saved from the fire in a print by John Hall.³¹



New College Library, Oxford, NB.186.12

²⁵ One feature of commentaries on Harvey is that inaccuracies are relatively common. Harvey did indeed come from Kent, but a scholar has him coming from London as recently as 2006: Katharine Park and Lorraine Daston (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Modern Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), vol. 3, p. 79

²⁶ Harvey appears in both the *Dictionary of National Biography* (DNB) and the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (ODNB): <www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-12531> (Accessed: 2 May 2022). Roger French, see note 4, and Norman Moore respectively wrote the articles. Moore was a physician and historian of medicine, who contributed 468 entries to the DNB. He succeeded J. F. Payne, discussed below, as Harveian Librarian: <<https://history.rcplondon.ac.uk/inspiring-physicians/sir-norman-moore>> (Accessed: 2 May 2022). Harvey married the daughter of a royal physician, Lancelot Browne. There were no children.

²⁷ Fuller, *History*, vol. 3, p. 79.

²⁸ On Linacre, see Francis Maddison et al (eds.), *Essays on the Life and World of Thomas Linacre c. 1460–1524* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), especially Margaret Pelling, ‘Published References to Thomas Linacre’, pp. 337–53.

²⁹ The bust given by Richard Mead was intended as a partial replacement, see below.

³⁰ See Kate Bennett’s definitive edition: *John Aubrey: Brief Lives with an Apparatus for the Lives of our English Mathematical Writers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), vol. 2, pp. 1036–47, the inscription is on p. 1040.

³¹ The New College copy is NB.186.12. I have also examined copies in the National Library of Scotland and the Royal College of Physicians in London. Bindings vary markedly.

The author of the original painting is unknown, although the British Museum attributes it to ‘Cornelius Johnson’.³² The binding of the New College copy is plain and seems to have been repaired. The condition of the volume suggests it has been used, possibly by the person whose signature it bears ‘DDE Wickham, Nov. Coll. Soc. 1830’, who was the father of the more famous Edward Charles Wickham, of whom the college owns a fine portrait. Edward, *père et fils*, were both at New College, and both clergymen. Edward senior was ordained deacon in 1824 and priest in 1825, becoming Dean of Divinity in 1826.³³ The College of Physicians attached great significance to *Opera Omnia*, still doing so more than a century later when a copy was placed in Harvey’s coffin on the occasion of his reburial.³⁴ Wickham’s ownership of this Latin edition is, so far, unexplained. Perhaps it does not require explanation, merely indicating the wide-ranging interests of well-educated men such as Wickham and the enduring fame of William Harvey.

That Harvey’s fame was well-established in the eighteenth century when his *Opera Omnia* were published is evident from publications that took up the theme of national worthies, such as the *Biographia Britannica: or, the Lives of the Most Eminent Persons Who Have Flourished in Great Britain and Ireland, From the Earliest Ages, Down to Present Times: Collected from the Best Authorities, Both Printed and Manuscript* [...].³⁵ One of the most notable features of this publication, where subjects appear in alphabetical order, is the concerted attention to documenting claims, resulting in layers of notes, in the margins, beneath the text with a further tier next to the notes themselves—notes to notes. Perhaps this fits with the claim on the sheet facing the title page, the *Royal Privilege and Licence*, that the work will ‘prove of the highest Service to the learned World’. Further, it ‘is particularly calculated to extend and support the Reputation of the British People’. Patriotic sentiments suffuse responses to William Harvey, whether they take the form of priority disputes over his discovery, the entire frame within which a publication operates, as was the case with Kenneth Franklin’s *William Harvey: Englishman* or in compendia with a national focus. It is reasonable to assume that Harvey comes under the category of people ‘eminent among us, for Wisdom, Learning, Valour, and other laudable accomplishments’. In terms of content the entry on Harvey covers familiar ground including his discovery, eminence as a physician, travel to Scotland with Charles I, the annual oration he founded and his burial at Hempstead in Essex. There are no images in *Biographia Britannica*, rather a super-abundance of text, with its substantial preface, length, and self-consciously scholarly apparatus. At one level this is not surprising since it has been common in biographical compilations from many periods to exclude images, but at another level it is striking that a roughly contemporaneous work masterminded by Thomas Birch (1705–1766) included magnificent engravings to complement the biographies that he composed, which were arranged in chronological order. Birch included far fewer people in his project, but placed particular emphasis both on visual materials and on those who owned depictions of eminent persons.

Birch’s work affirms that eighteenth-century scholars and medical men remained attached to Harvey. This ambitious venture shed light on networks of friendship, collecting, and

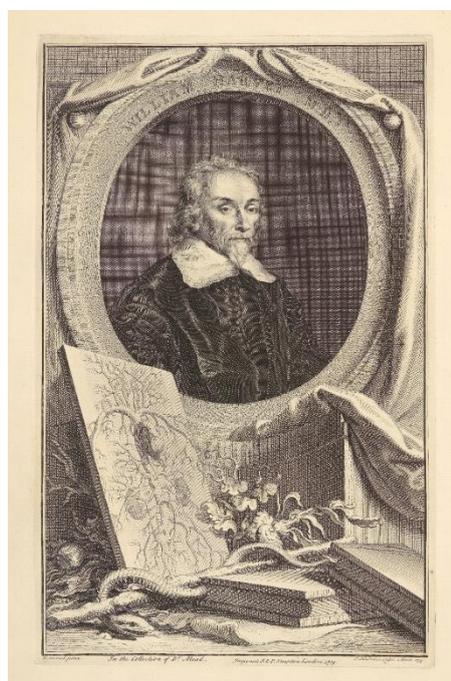
³² <www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_P-3-183> (Accessed: 5 April 2022). On Harvey’s portraits see Geoffrey Keynes, *The Portraiture of William Harvey* (London: Royal College of Surgeons, 1949); Ludmilla Jordanova, *Physicians and their Images* (London: Royal College of Physicians, 2018), esp. pp. 36–41. In 1952 when a list of portrait prints at the College of Physicians was compiled, it owned twenty printed portraits of him: A. H. Driver, *Catalogue of Engraved Portraits in the Royal College of Physicians of London* (London: Royal College of Physicians of London, 1952). A portrait of the younger Harvey is in the National Portrait Gallery, London, NPG 5115.

³³ Information on Wickham’s ordinations comes from the Clergy of the Church of England database: <<https://theclergydatabase.org.uk/>> (Accessed: 18 May 2022). My thanks to Will Shire for his help on Wickham’s role in the college.

³⁴ William Munk, *A Brief Account of the Circumstances Leading to and Attending the Reintombment of the Remains of Dr. William Harvey* [...] (London: privately printed, 1883). The book is rare; there are copies at the Royal College of Physicians in London, the Wellcome Library, and Cambridge University Library, for example.

³⁵ The title varies slightly even in a single volume (London: W. Innys et al, 1747–66), 7 vols. [NB.91.8–12]. Harvey is in vol. 4 (1757), pp. 2547–2555.

conviviality. Richard Mead (1673–1754), physician, Newtonian, collector, and a generous host, who esteemed Harvey, is a central figure here.³⁶ His pivotal role can be discerned through an examination of Birch’s *Heads of Illustrious Persons of Great Britain*, a fascinating publishing project that consisted of high-quality prints paired with accounts of lives arranged in historical sequence to give an overview of British history.³⁷ The majority of these eminent persons were members of the royal family and aristocracy whose national—specifically political, military and ecclesiastical—importance was readily apparent. Individuals such as Newton and Harvey occupy a distinctive position in these narratives since their significance was grounded in intellectual prowess cemented by institutional power. In the case of Newton his long presidency of the Royal Society and appointment in 1696 as Warden and Master of the Mint gave ballast to his reputation. Harvey’s public profile was sustained by the College of Physicians and further enhanced by his links with the Stuarts—when his Whitehall rooms were sacked in 1642 and many of his papers lost, this connection became explicit in a violent fashion. There are, however, further ways of understanding the presence of Newton and Harvey in Birch’s venture, since both were esteemed members of the networks around Thomas Birch and Richard Mead, indeed they were living presences, in Newton’s case quite literally, since he had died in 1728. At that time, Mead, who was in Newton’s circle, was in his forties and had been a Fellow of the Royal Society since 1703. Mead became a Fellow of the College of Physicians in 1716, where Harvey’s memory was assiduously cultivated by the annual Harveian orations—Mead himself was orator in 1723—and by the post of Harveian librarian. Birch, who became a clergyman in the early 1730s, was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1735, later serving as its secretary. He was a member of Richard Mead’s dining club and hence, we can confidently assume, was familiar with the portrait collection in Mead’s home, which included a likeness of William Harvey now in the Hunterian Art Gallery in Glasgow.³⁸ It was this picture that formed the basis for the print in Birch’s *Heads*. By inscribing ‘In the collection of Dr. Mead’ at the foot of the engraving, the owner, the artist, the printmaker and the ‘illustrious person’ were yoked together to form a micro-community comprising actual and imagined relationships. Indeed we might construe Birch’s whole project of combining lives with images in terms of the construction of imagined communities.³⁹



New College Library, Oxford, NB.126.20



New College Library, Oxford, NB.126.20 [detail]

³⁶ A. E. Gunther, *An Introduction to the Life of the Rev. Thomas Birch* [...] (Halesworth: Halesworth Press, 1984), see pp. 31–3 on Mead’s dining club; pp. 50–51 on *The Heads of Illustrious Persons*; p. 51 for Houbraken; pp. 18, 69 for Harvey.

³⁷ Thomas Birch, *The Heads of Illustrious Persons of Great Britain* [...] (London: John and Paul Knapton, 1747–66). [NB.126.20]

³⁸ For William Hunter and his collections, including portraits, see Mungo Campbell and Nathan Fliss (eds.), *William Hunter and the Anatomy of the Modern Museum* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), pp. 73–90 concerns Hunter and Mead; the portrait of Harvey is reproduced on p. 278 and discussed pp. 278–9.

³⁹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* rev. edn. (London: Verso, 1991); Geoffrey Cubitt (ed.), *Imagining Nations* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998).

The engravings themselves were elaborate and remain much sought after, frequently featuring in extra-illustrated volumes.⁴⁰ The one of Harvey was executed by Jacobus Houbraken (1698–1780), a noted Dutch engraver, using Mead’s portrait as his template. This same painting had been used by Peter Sheemakers (1691–1781) to fashion a bust of Harvey which Mead gave to the College of Physicians in 1739, enabling us to appreciate the webs of affinities between people—Harvey, Mead, Birch and their artists—institutions—the College of Physicians, the Royal Society—artefacts—books, prints, portraits, busts—and types of knowledge, whether historical, medical, scientific or connoisseurial.⁴¹ Birch pays Harvey two telling compliments in the biographical text. The first concerns *De Motu Cordis*: ‘And it is very remarkable, that as this discovery was entirely owing to Dr. Harvey, so he has explained it with all the clearness imaginable . . . his own book is the shortest, the plainest, and the most convincing of any . . .’⁴² Birch thereby reveals how closely associated discovery, lucid reasoning, and effective writing were, laying the groundwork for future claims about Harvey’s exceptional scientific attainments. Birch also insisted that Harvey ‘was a very universal scholar, and extremely conversant in the history and politics of the ancient and modern times . . .’⁴³ He articulated a claim to broad classical learning on behalf of Harvey that other physicians aspired to emulate well into the nineteenth century. Indeed it is arguable that William Osler and Geoffrey Keynes were still inspired, not just by Harvey’s example, but by the idea of, on the one hand, rigorous medical thinking, and on the other of ‘universal scholarship’.⁴⁴

Many of the themes mentioned so far emerge in an early nineteenth-century work that is exceptionally beguiling—a piece of medical history written in the voice of an object. The book, like the speaking artefact, is well-known in medical circles, continuing to elicit interest nearly two hundred years after its first, anonymous publication. *The Gold-Headed Cane* was penned by William Macmichael (1783–1839); the cane itself is on display in the Royal College of Physicians, of which he became a Fellow in 1818.⁴⁵ According to a descendent, ‘His background of classical learning, foreign travel and love of books enabled him not only to write well, but also to practice the art of medicine with that wisdom and kindly care that must be the part of the character of every good physician’.⁴⁶ By writing in the cane’s voice Macmichael was able to invent dialogue and to express feelings about those it knew without appearing indecorous. The cane went everywhere with its successive masters, furnishing it with a privileged vantage point. The narrative starts in the time of John Radcliffe, who was baptised in 1650, and ends with Matthew Baillie who died in 1823.⁴⁷ The

⁴⁰ For example, they are present in the extra-illustrated version of Benjamin Wheatley’s *London Past and Present* in the Heinz Archive, National Portrait Gallery, donated by Herbert Rachael MP and Trustee of the Gallery.

⁴¹ Ludmilla Jordanova, ‘Portraits, People and Things: Richard Mead and Medical Identity’, *History of Science* 41 (2003), 293–313.

⁴² Birch, *Heads*, p. 83.

⁴³ *ibid.*, p. 84.

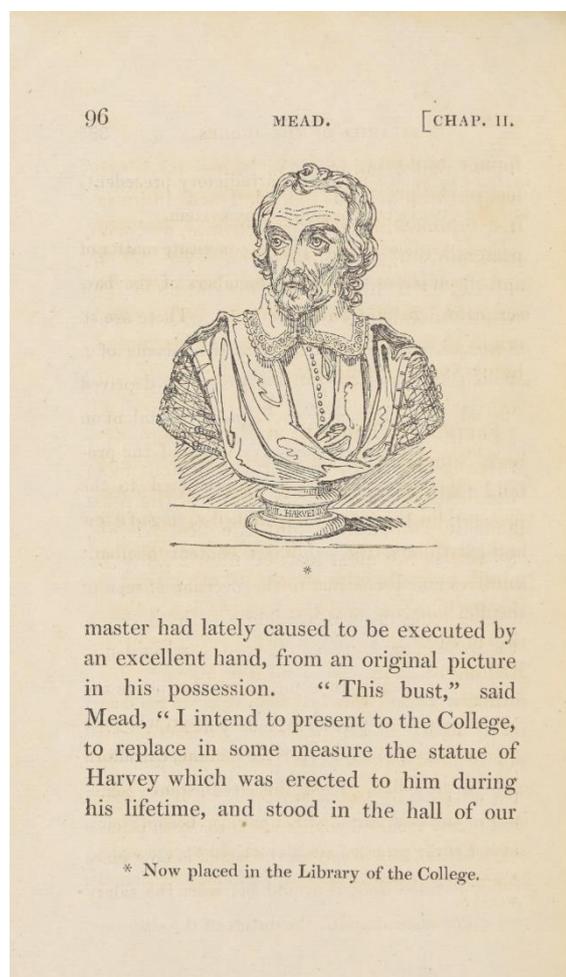
⁴⁴ Keynes was a surgeon by training. He delivered the Harveian Oration in 1958 and was made a fellow of the Royal College of Physicians in 1953. Osler is discussed below.

⁴⁵ [William Macmichael], *The Gold-Headed Cane* (London: John Murray, 1827). New College Library’s copy [RS5280] bears two bookplates indicating an interesting provenance. The first is the armorial bookplate of John Russell, sixth duke of Bedford (1766–1839) (and father of Prime Minister John Russell, first Earl Russell), and the second is of H. D. Norman, MD, an American psychoanalyst and bibliophile, who collected books on the history of science and medicine. Macmichael also published, again without his name on the title page, *Lives of British Physicians* (London: John Murray, 1830), including Harvey, pp. 31–59. On p. 31 he states, ‘. . . we are indebted to the profession of physic, for the introduction of classical literature, and the general revival of learning, amongst us’. Part of the ‘The Family Library’, ‘Price Five Shillings’, the book has engraved illustrations with a portrait of William Harvey himself serving as a frontispiece. There have been many editions of the *Gold-Headed Cane*, these are listed in the Facsimile ‘of the Author’s 1827 Copy Illustrated and Interleaved with his own Amendments and Additions’, published by the Royal College of Physicians (London, 1968), pp. 24–5.

⁴⁶ Thomas Hunt, ‘Introduction’ to the Facsimile edition, pp. 1–24, p. 24.

⁴⁷ For Radcliffe’s bequests to Oxford see [Macmichael], *Gold-Headed*, pp. 43–5.

cane's 'memoirs' cover 1689 to 1825, 'when I was deposited in a corner closet . . .'.⁴⁸ Macmichael charted the lives of five physicians; one was Richard Mead, whose devotion to William Harvey is well documented, including the bust he donated to the college, illustrated with a simple woodcut in the book.⁴⁹



New College Library, Oxford, RS5280, p. 96

Much of the chapter on Mead concerns the medical past, with John Freind (1675–1728), noted for his historical interests, one of the interlocutors. Such imagined conversations, together with the cane's descriptions of people and places, allowed Macmichael to praise earlier medical figures such as Linacre and to include famous contemporaries such as Pope. He gave Mead a little speech about presenting Harvey's bust to the college, since his statue had been lost in the Great Fire: 'I have long thought it a reproach that we should not at least possess a bust of *him* who, to use the strong and figurative language of the Latin inscription, gave motion to the blood, and origin to animals, and must ever be hailed by us *Stator Perpetuus*.'⁵⁰ This comment prompts Freind to recall Harvey's

⁴⁸ [Macmichael], *Gold-Headed*, pp. 5, 1.

⁴⁹ The other owners not yet mentioned were Anthony Askew (Bap. 1722–1774) and William Pitcairn (1712–1791). The bust is depicted on p. 96.

⁵⁰ The inscription to the statue was recorded by Aubrey. It was in Fuller, *History*, p. 80. I am indebted to Stephen Anderson for his advice on the phrase 'Stator Perpetuus', which he translates as 'perpetual support', with stator's connotations of helping someone or something to stand firm (Personal communication, 6 December 2021). Mead conveyed the sense of Harvey having constituted a kind of everlasting core for the college, as has indeed been the case.

presence in Oxford in 1651. *The Gold-Headed Cane* provides an excellent example of the occupationally-specific sense of the past that is a striking, and persistent feature of practitioners and their institutions.⁵¹

The authenticity of the artefact itself cannot be established.⁵² In one sense this does not matter since Macmichael's conceit has been so effective in drawing readers and viewers into a more informal, intimate and highly personalised sense of the medical past, assisted by simple illustrations of people, artefacts and buildings. The volume is also strikingly layered—with observations, memories, objects, writings and ideas from many generations woven into the text. In Macmichael's time it is possible that the connections between Harvey and those alive in the early nineteenth century still felt relatively direct. Only twenty-one years separated Harvey's death from Mead's birth and some physicians knew them both. Macmichael himself was forty when the last physician to own the cane died. The five physicians of Macmichael's book create a powerful sense of continuities through their memories, historical knowledge and shared institutional affiliation with the cane acting as a symbol of prestige certainly, but it also represented kinds of sociability in which learning, collecting, treating illustrious patients and benevolence mingled in a seamless fashion. *The Gold-Headed Cane* provides a pleasant fiction, of course, but one that certainly has some empirical basis, even if it is unclear to readers just how much has been made up. That Harvey occupies a central position in these narratives is abundantly clear, and as a result it is possible to appreciate more about the collective sentiments that have enshrouded him for centuries.

III

Stepping back and briefly considering printed genres provides a context for three twentieth-century items—small pamphlets—in New College's collections that are distinctly different from the works discussed so far. From what I have been able to discover this sub-genre—modern pamphlets connected with an event, be it an anniversary or a special occasion—has been little examined by historians, despite its ubiquity. Harvey had appeared in compendia, such as those by Fuller and Birch, which were rooted in the amassing of material on people, places and nations. The Latin editions of Harvey's works also conform to familiar patterns in being venerated and collected. Harvey's *De Motu* of 1628 was a small, slim and rare volume followed by the first English version in 1653 and a collected works in English by Robert Willis in 1847. There is a huge literature on versions of Harvey's writings and on his notes, which has genealogical aims, that is, to track Harvey's ideas as they developed and were circulated—such scholarship became vital to establishing his intellectual preeminence and explicating his reasoning and experiments. The weighty *Opera Omnia* has a more symbolic significance, all of a piece with the continuing commitment to classical learning among those physicians who considered themselves the profession's elite—based in London, affiliated with the college and in many cases with Royal connections. The accuracy of texts and translations is clearly important if precise intellectual filiation is the goal, while assertions of cultural pre-eminence were better served by a substantial volume with a fine frontispiece. Small pamphlet publications have a long history, so the format was far from new, but twentieth-century examples invite historical attention, not least because of their use as gifts.

William Osler gave the annual Harveian oration in 1906 on the theme *The growth of truth as illustrated in the discovery of the Circulation of Blood*. Although it was not essential, many orators chose to discuss Harvey in one form or another. Established in 1656, Harvey intended the lectures to

⁵¹ Cf Ludmilla Jordanova, *The Sense of a Past in Eighteenth-Century Medicine (The Stenton Lecture 1997)* (Reading: University of Reading, 1999). Osler had an exceptionally well-developed sense of the past, his library included five versions of *The Gold-Headed Cane*, including one published in 1915 to which he had contributed the Introduction: *Bibliotheca*, p. 576.

⁵² For example, it is not clear when the engraved coats of arms were added.

encourage the exploration of natural phenomena, explicitly mentioning the use of experiment. This long-established tradition is a major occasion for the college, followed by a grand dinner. Osler had been in his Oxford post since the previous year, but his international reputation was already long established—the affection and admiration he elicited was truly extraordinary but of a quite different type to the heroisation of Harvey. In Osler’s case it was renowned clinical skill, a successful textbook, leadership in the medical profession coupled with an attractive personality and wide learning that formed the basis of his fame. He had travelled a great deal in his career, partly in search of books to add to his immense library. It is not known how the pamphlet, ‘Price One Shilling’, found its way into New College Library. The Royal College of Physicians in London was already familiar to him—he was elected a fellow in 1883. The oration was wide-ranging in terms of its references—a bravura display of erudition. It is also full of rhetorical flourishes designed to elevate Harvey’s stature, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that Osler used such flourishes to gild the crown of someone already acknowledged as a ‘great man’.⁵³ The notion of truth is made to work extremely hard: it both grows like an organism and has to be fought for: ‘only with knowledge of the persistency with which they waged the battle for Truth, and the greatness of their victory, does the memory of the illustrious dead become truly precious to us’.⁵⁴ Over forty-three pages Osler wove together a historical and biographical account that set Harvey in the *longue durée* and noted responses to his discovery, offered advice to young colleagues, reflections on the ways in which knowledge advances and an assessment of Harvey’s achievement that focused on method. ‘Here for the first time a great physiological problem was approached from the experimental side by a man with a modern scientific mind’: Harvey was thus the founder of experimental medicine.⁵⁵

Note how Osler balances continuities, by likening truth to an organism, and emphasising the ‘organic life of the college’ with ‘the break of the modern spirit with the old traditions’, that is with radical change. These two themes pervade the oration, and they speak directly to historiographical issues that all historians grapple with given their obligation to chart shifts while recognising that much endures. In the history of science and medicine, the need to conceptualise these forces is acute precisely because we have to account in a convincing manner for intellectual innovation. Hence the debates occasioned not just by Kuhn’s *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962), but by more recent provocative works, such as Shapin’s *The Scientific Revolution*. The steps Shapin takes are revealing, starting from the premise that ‘no house is ever built of entirely virgin materials’; the nature of historical change in general provides step one. Step two is to observe the debt of Copernicus and Harvey to Aristotelian ideas about perfect circulation motion. In step three, dependence upon the ancients is stressed in order to show that ‘there was no way that sixteenth and seventeenth-century practitioners, however “revolutionary” minded, could set aside that legacy’.⁵⁶ He goes on ‘the rhetoric of wholesale rejection and replacement draws our attention to how practitioners tended to position themselves with respect to existing philosophical traditions and institutions’.⁵⁷ A central issue in writings about William Harvey, then, is the degree to which such rhetoric is adopted and adapted by commentators rather than treated precisely as rhetoric to be analysed critically and, as necessary, dismantled through historical argument. The issue is not confined to Harvey, but takes on particularly clear form when individuals who have been set apart for generations as exceptional innovators are involved. Much depends on the author, of course, with those most closely involved with the Royal College of Physicians most likely to perpetuate, even elaborate, existing rhetorical patterns. Historians of science who are sceptical about these ways of recounting the past tend to reach smaller audiences than those who deploy styles of

⁵³ Osler, *The Growth*, p. 5

⁵⁴ *ibid.*, p. 6

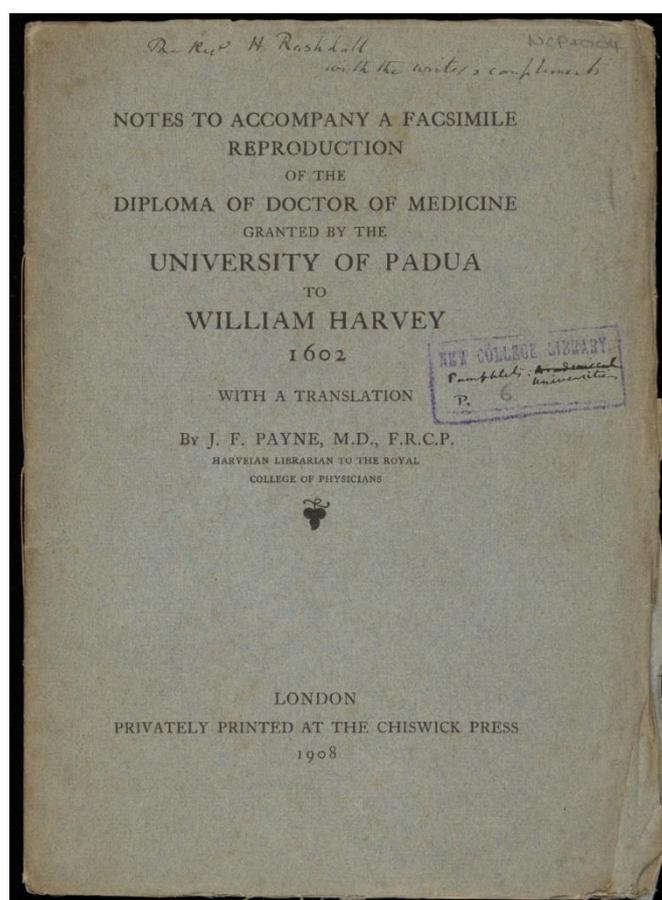
⁵⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 39, 40. ‘Experimental medicine’ is usually associated with Claude Bernard.

⁵⁶ Steven Shapin, *The Scientific Revolution* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1996), pp. 66–7.

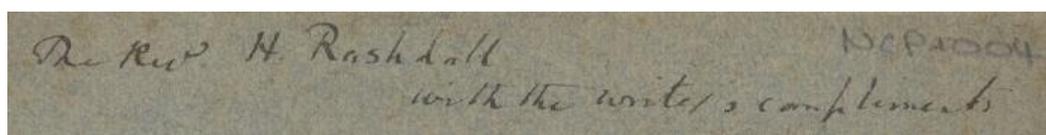
⁵⁷ *ibid.*, p. 68

thinking and writing that are familiar, of long standing, and used in a variety of domains with suitable adjustments. Thus critical analyses of heroism in general are helpful as are alternative ways of presenting the past that do not rely on tired tropes of innovation and breaks with the past. We may no longer think in terms of ‘saints of science’, as Osler did, but the assumptions that underpin such phrases endure.⁵⁸ Arguably fresh idioms are in short supply when it comes to reaching non-specialist readers.

One manifestation of the mode of thought within which figures such as Harvey are treated as revolutionary, pioneering and saintly is the concern to preserve every trace of them that can be found.⁵⁹ The passion for relics endures as the recent acquisition of Stephen Hawking’s office by the London Science Museum reveals. It manifested itself in Joseph Frank Payne’s pamphlet of 1908, presented by the author to the Revd Hastings Rashdall (1858–1924), a student, a fellow, and honorary fellow of New College.⁶⁰



New College Library, Oxford, NCP1004



New College Library, Oxford, NCP1004 [detail]

⁵⁸ Osler, *The Growth*, p. 20

⁵⁹ For example, J. H. Aveling, *Memorials of Harvey: Including A Letter and Autographs in Facsimile* (London: J. & A. Churchill, 1875). This twenty-seven-page pamphlet is bound with other short-form biographical material published in the same year in the National Library of Scotland [1875.27(14)] giving a ‘horizontal’ view of the representation of lives at a specific historical moment.

⁶⁰ On Rashdall see P. E. Matheson, *The Life of Hastings Rashdall* (London: Oxford University Press, 1928).

Payne's pamphlet concerns Harvey's studies in Italy: *Notes to Accompany a Facsimile Reproduction of the Diploma of Doctor of Medicine Granted by the University of Padua to William Harvey 1602 [...]*. Much is made of Harvey's formative experiences there in accounts of his life and of the influence of his teacher Fabricius of Aquapendente, who signed the document. Rashdall had published his *The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages* in 1895 and this, I infer, was a reason for the gift. Payne (1840–1910), who had been a fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford, retired from medical practice in 1900 and wrote extensively about medical history. He gave the Harveian Oration in 1896 on *Harvey and Galen* and served as Harveian Librarian at the Royal College of Physicians from 1899 to 1910. This pamphlet was privately printed. Having a single artefact as his focus, Payne could go into a forensic level of detail in order to place the diploma in context and provide a translation. The document in question was presented to the college in 1764 just as the work on *Opera Omnia* was beginning. It was Sir William Browne, who instigated the transfer: he 'venerates the name of Harvey almost as though he were divine'. It was to 'be preserved among the sacred treasures of the College, safe and sound for ever'.⁶¹ Payne explored the diploma as an artefact possessing 'features worth noting from an archaeological point of view'.⁶² Facsimiles of this document were given as gifts.⁶³ Beautiful and biographically significant as it may be, some of its allure surely rests on the importance of Padua as a centre of learning and anatomical knowledge and on Harvey's time there being crucial for the development of his ideas. There is a familiar pattern here of searching out key moments in an innovator's life that have the capacity to shed light on critical shifts in and influences upon their development.

While relics remain central to the public representation of science and medicine, any religious connotations that were perhaps still active in the early twentieth century, seem to have faded away more recently with international markets for items connected with forms of celebrity culture that are robustly secular. Scientific and medical figures are still heroised, so perhaps it is not surprising that the veneration of Harvey remains intense and undimmed, at least in some circles.⁶⁴ It could be argued that reason, observation and experiment, presented in a secular fashion, remain sufficiently potent ideas in relation to the production of 'truth' that they can express Harvey's achievements. 'Discovery' itself is a familiar idiom, seen as a discrete, momentary and uncomplicated phenomenon, despite much evidence to the contrary, including from William Harvey's own life. This approach is supported and reinforced by the widespread celebration of anniversaries of birth, death and publications. Kenneth Rose (1924–2014), 'journalist and royal biographer', had been a student at New College; he donated a copy of a pamphlet he wrote on William Harvey in 1978, to mark the four-hundredth anniversary of his birth, to the college.⁶⁵ Rose's historical works, his studies of Lord Curzon and King George V, for instance, are well known, and his diaries, full of gossip, have also been published.⁶⁶ The Harvey pamphlet is dedicated to his father and brother, both medical practitioners. It is precisely because Rose was not a medic or medical historian and that, so far as I can tell, he wrote the pamphlet entirely from secondary sources, his short work is of interest. It provides an excellent snapshot of received

⁶¹ Payne, *Notes*, p. 18.

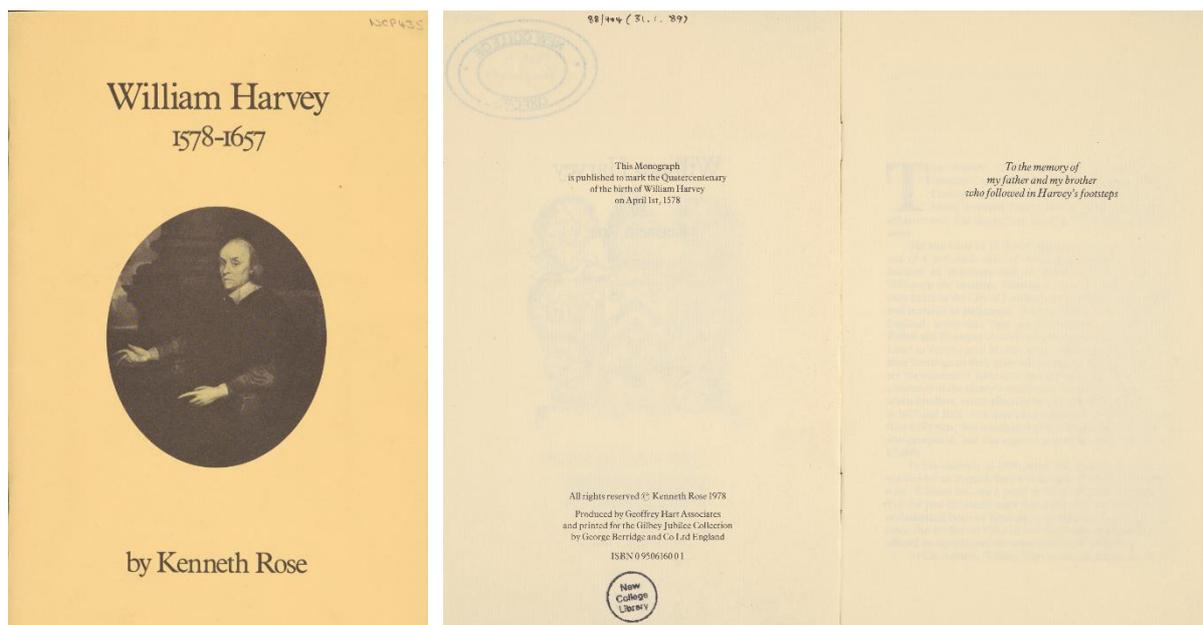
⁶² *ibid.*, p. 3.

⁶³ One is in the Royal Collection Trust: www.rct.uk/collection/search#/1/collection/1090299/facsimile-of-illuminated-diploma-of-surgeon-of-the-university-of-padua-granted-to (Accessed: 7 June 2022), and since it entered the collection around 1908, the year of Payne's pamphlet, it is reasonable to assume that a medical practitioner donated it.

⁶⁴ An intriguing example is Jean Hamburger, *The Diary of William Harvey: The Imaginary Journal of the Physician Who Revolutionized Medicine* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992), first published in French in 1983.

⁶⁵ Kenneth Rose, *William Harvey* (London: Gilbey Jubilee Collection, 1978) [NCP435]. See also Kenneth Rose, *Who's In, Who's Out: The Journals of Kenneth Rose, Volume One 1944–1979*, ed. Richard Thorpe (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2018). New College does not appear as an entry in the index. His pamphlet on Harvey is referred to as a 'monograph', p. xviii, following the verso of the title page.

⁶⁶ Kenneth Rose, *Superior Person: A Portrait of Cursor and His Circle in Late Victorian England* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1969); Kenneth Rose, *King George V* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1983).



New College Library, Oxford, NCP435

views in the second half of the twentieth century. Rose's account highlights a number of points that run through this article, and they bear not just on the case of William Harvey, but on the ways in which biography itself functions. Some key, interrelated features of the pamphlet stand out, such as the repetition of elements of a life, the use of anecdote and anachronistic language. To these we might add the liberal use of judgements about character and behaviour on what can seem slender evidence. The liberal use of John Aubrey's account possibly provides an explanation. It is as if Harvey's importance is such that his life can bear recounting an infinite number of times. It follows that such insistence needs a pretext—an 'ostensible reason'.⁶⁷ Rose's text suggests that this may have been 'Harvey's reverence for scientific truth' as the man who 'laid the foundations for all future physiological research'. He concludes:

Where Harvey did point the way . . . was in establishing the scientific method; in harnessing his inspiration to reason, to observation, to a scrupulous examination of evidence. Upon his premises, so daring in his own day, so familiar in our own, rest the twentieth-century marvels of sophisticated detection and treatment. In that sense, William Harvey must be recognised as the father of modern medicine.⁶⁸

There is nothing new or original here; there is no reason for there to be. These ideas have become familiar, commonplace, accepted as self-evident. The claim that there is a single scientific method is one of the most persistent myths of modern culture, and when it is presented as self-evident, it is possible to discern its reach and its uses.⁶⁹ What is to be noted, then, is the precise form that assertions about Harvey take, who is making them and when. Rose acquired an interest in medicine from his father and brother, certainly, and it was evident when he documented George V's ill health and death, for example.⁷⁰ So far I have found no direct evidence that the natural

⁶⁷ H. W. Fowler and F. G. Fowler (eds.), *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, 4th edn. with revised Addenda (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), p. 947.

⁶⁸ Rose, *William Harvey*, pp. 9, 31

⁶⁹ See John Schuster and Richard Yeo (eds.), *The Politics and Rhetoric of Scientific Method: Historical Studies* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1986) and Henry M. Cowles, *The Scientific Method: An Evolution of Thinking from Darwin to Dewey* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2020).

⁷⁰ Rose, *George V*, pp. 180–2, 355–62, and 399–403 for the King's medical treatment.

sciences were important to him or that he was invested in the status of scientific knowledge. Here then is evidence of a sort of ordinary and somehow timeless significance that Harvey acquired—ordinary in the sense that it can be reiterated endlessly and taken as read and timeless in treating the scientific method as universal. Rose, like so many others, provided a sketchy sense of the worlds in which Harvey himself lived and work. When coupled with assertions about the scientific method, the discoverer becomes a transcendent, heroic figure. In the eagerness of academic historians to re-contextualise and reinterpret the man himself by scholarly means, it is all too easy to forget the pervasive, more ‘popular’ accounts that keep a person from the past alive and perpetuate notions such as ‘the scientific method’.

IV

It is not easy to examine the ever-proliferating afterlives of someone as prominent as William Harvey, even in an age of digital technology. To treat work on Harvey, whether detailed or mere passing references, as ‘data’ misses the point, because in each case it is necessary to assess the relationships, real or imagined, that underpin them. An examination of places where he is neglected or marginalised would also be worthwhile. Tracking him in New College Library provides a manageable way of exploring the places he emerged in an institution that had no special association with him. What a database of mentions of Harvey, which must be in the thousands if not millions, misses, then, is a focus on the precise reasons for invoking him, and the underlying relationships that can thereby be discerned. Kenneth Rose’s pamphlet is a case in point, where he paid tribute to medical men in his family in writing about Harvey ‘to mark the Quatercentenary of the birth of William Harvey on April 1st 1578’.⁷¹ Such kin-inspired sentiments are far from trivial, especially given the many families where medical practitioners are to be found over a number of generations. In presenting his publications to New College, Rose was following a long-established pattern, one that is evident in an institution such as the Royal College of Physicians in London. Those fully inside such organisations may take for granted the affections they engender in their members. For historians, who are supposed to step back from any forms of insider status that they may possess, there are phenomena to be explained, and these phenomena are integral to a relatively new field, the history of collecting and collections.⁷² They may also be illuminated by an appreciation of the history of the family, of inter- and intra- professional politics, of patterns of patronage and of the ways in which associations with the monarchy operated. In all these cases, it is the quality of relationships that are significant, leading us towards the understanding of broader historical patterns. There is no doubt that there are significant historiographical challenges in pursuing a more integrative approach, where artefacts—books, portraits, silver, for example—are connected with lives, organisations, professional accomplishments, social status and national narratives. While Harvey’s tentacular reach is an interesting phenomenon in its own right, he also provides a useful case study of the ways in which the myriad representations of an individual contribute to bigger pictures of the past.

What I have offered here is no more than a preliminary sketch of some of the themes that arise when we pay attention to William Harvey’s afterlives. One such theme is the repetition of biographical nuggets over long periods of time and across diverse types of text. It indicates that writers derive value from what critics might consider mere regurgitation, and that publishers and readers are willing accomplices. In academic contexts we are so programmed to search for new sources, approaches and insights that writings devoid of originality lack intellectual interest. But the impulse of many generations of medical practitioners to engage with Harvey, sometimes quite

⁷¹ Rose, *Harvey*, verso of title page.

⁷² E.g. *Journal of the History of Collections*, first published 1989. See Tom Stammers, *The Purchase of the Past: Collecting Culture in Post-Revolutionary Paris c.1790–1890* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020) for the historiographical potential of a focus on collecting.

profoundly, as Geoffrey Keynes and William Osler did, at others quite compulsively, as is evident in the desire to own a portrait of him even if it requires criminal action, playing down evidence that the person depicted doesn't look like Harvey, or pursuing all traces of his handwriting as the famous American physician Silas Weir Mitchell (1829–1914) did.⁷³

It has long been customary to provide portraits alongside biographies as in publications by Thomas Birch, William Macmichael, Thomas Pettigrew, and others. Geoffrey Keynes made a special study of portraits alleged to depict Harvey.⁷⁴ He was not the first to do so.⁷⁵ Since putting portraits and biographies together was hardly rare, the phenomenon is, at first sight, not remarkable in Harvey's case. However, portraits work especially hard in this instance, for example, when they accompany dinners in Harvey's honour. The simple fact that one was exported illegally reminds us of the intense commitment 'the divine Harvey' elicited.⁷⁶ The more renowned the sitter the more passionate the drive for an 'authentic' likeness becomes, especially in a period when they were relatively rare and supporting documentation elusive. One of my conclusions, then, is that it is productive to consider afterlives in all media in so far as this is possible, and that attributions, however unfounded they may prove to be, constitute valuable evidence in their own right. The diversity of publications on Harvey is a further key point. These range from scholarly treatments to affirmations of his distinction within professional communities and popular accounts for non-specialist audiences. It is tempting to speak of his adulation not just in terms of hero-worship but of the collection and use of relics.⁷⁷

Questions of translation and of Harvey's working practices have received much scholarly attention, including from medical practitioners such as Robert Willis, who provided new English versions of Harvey's writings in the mid nineteenth century and from scholars such as Walter Pagel, Charles Webster, Jerome Bylebyl, Robert Frank, and Roger French in the second half of the twentieth century. To be sure the importance of Harvey's discovery would justify much of the attention he has received. But this is not a sufficient explanation for the continuing engagement with him by medical men, many of whom were active clinicians in contexts where Harvey's research had long been superseded.⁷⁸ Thus, we may observe, a deep and sustained historical sense had a kind of quasi-professional significance that invites careful attention. It is vital not to dismiss assertions of past heroism, which derive, at least in part, from vibrant traditions of learning within medicine, and physic especially, and which should not be reduced to concerns about status. William Osler is an excellent, late example whose global medical reputation rested on clinical acumen and commitment to teaching. He was a formidable scholar, and not just in the history of medicine, but recognised as a major figure by classicists, for example. Geoffrey Keynes, distinguished surgeon and award-winning biographer of Harvey, provides a yet more recent instance. His work in literary history and biography, including on William Blake, William Cowper and John Donne is noteworthy. Such prodigious industry helped to keep scholarly traditions alive, and we must assume, afforded men such as Osler and Keynes profound emotional satisfaction. The past was a living presence in their lives; each generation of medical practitioners can draw upon and be affirmed by their predecessors if they so choose. Harvey and his afterlives are just one

⁷³ S. Weir Mitchell, *Some Memoranda in Regard to William Harvey, M.D.* (New York: no publisher given, 1907). The pamphlet is beautifully produced, presumably by Weir Mitchell himself. A presentation copy may be found in Palace Green Library, Durham University [GreyPam 1441].

⁷⁴ Keynes, *Portraiture*.

⁷⁵ Mitchell, *Some Memoranda* includes a discussion of Harvey portraits by 'Mr. Roberts', pp. 27–45.

⁷⁶ This had happened to NPG 5115 before it entered a national collection in 1976, details are in the 'registered packet' in the Heinz Archive, National Portrait Gallery.

⁷⁷ See Geoffrey Davenport et al (eds.), *The Royal College of Physicians and its Collections: An Illustrated History* (London: James & James, 2001); Ludmilla Jordanova, 'Science, Memory and Relics in Britain' in Marco Beretta et al (eds.), *Savant Relics: Brains and Remains of Scientists* (Sagamore Beach, MA: Science History Publications, 2016), pp. 157–181, for Harvey see pp. 164–171.

⁷⁸ The story of Harveian Librarians at the Royal College of Physicians in London, who have to be fellows, reveals just such a lineage of historically-minded practitioners: Leon Fine (ed.), *Harvey's Keepers: Harveian Librarians Through the Ages* (London: Royal College of Physicians, 2007).

manifestation of a broader phenomenon—the desire to keep the past alive through individuals who invite reverence. This powerful impulse manifests itself in professional contexts, such as medicine, in institutions such as colleges, in writings intended for wide audiences, in ventures dedicated to cultivating national identity and in academic settings where sustained research and writing give their own kind of life to those long dead.

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