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Robert Herrick's Commonplace Book? 
Some Observations and Questions

By Norman K. Farmer, Jr.*

WHILE relatively large numbers of seventeenth-century commonplace books have survived moth, worm, and rust to become permanent items in such collections as those at the British Museum, the Bodleian Library, the Folger Library, and the Huntington Library, very few indeed can be proved to have belonged to persons of notable literary eminence. Two of the most significant such items that have yielded up the identity of their original owners are Milton's commonplace book and Thomas Traherne's.¹ Now a prime candidate has appeared for designation as Robert Herrick's commonplace book. And in the following remarks I propose to combine description of this manuscript with an enumeration of the questions that such a book inevitably raises. It should, however, be understood at the outset that my remarks are offered frankly as a report of work in progress rather than as the definitive answers to a number of terribly complex questions. For in addition to my concern with issues that emerge from the Herrick manuscript alone, I wish to suggest—on the basis of problems that I am encountering in my work on this manuscript and others—avenues of approach that might enable us to learn more about sixteenth- and seventeenth-century manuscript

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transmission and the nature of the cultures and subcultures in which it flourished.

The known provenance of this manuscript shows it to have been purchased in May, 1849, by Sir Thomas Phillipps at the sale of “The Library of the late Rev. Stephen Isaacson, F.S.A., and the Collection of a well-known antiquary, deceased.” It is described thus as part of lot 158 at Puttick and Simpson’s sale for that date:

**ABBOT** (George) **ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY**, his Common Place Book, containing copies of various letters and pieces in verse and prose, on the Abuses and Extravagancies of the Church; copies of Letters from King James and the Principal persons of his Time, &c. *original manuscript. 1615-1622.*

The ascription to the Archbishop, however, is probably quite incorrect, although as we shall presently see it is remotely possible that the manuscript was once in his possession. In any event, this identification appears to be based on nothing more substantial than the appearance of George Abbot’s name rather prominently displayed among numerous random doodlings on the first page of the book. There is no evidence that Phillipps suspected any connection between the manuscript and Robert Herrick. In fact, it is listed in the *Catalogus Librorum Manuscriptorum in Bibliotheca Phillippica* as follows:

- Vox Populi, *or* “Newes from Spayne,” 158
- Vox Spiritus, *or* Sir Walter Raleigh’s Ghost.
- Senatus consultum? Musarum Cantabrigiensium.
- Verses on the Murder of Chas. 1st, *Inciptit.*
  - “When Peers & Judges had by doome appointed.”
- Poem on Emigration to Virginia, *Inciptit.*
  - “Now Ireland is past all grace
    And neere to be reclaimed
    Virginia is the only place
    Whence gold is to be gained” &c.
- Epigrams.
- Various Political poems of the time of Elizabeth and James.
  - sm. 4to. ch s. xvii pp. 352.

The manuscript came up for sale only once again, this time at Sotheby’s
Robert Herrick's Commonplace Book

on 29 June 1965. At that time it was purchased by the University of Texas at Austin. But on this last occasion, by way of contrast with the previous occasion of sale, the manuscript was accompanied by a very full description indeed, investigation having revealed that a prominent hand in the book was probably that of Robert Herrick. The following excerpts are from that description:

This hitherto unrecorded volume contains the only known autograph poetry by Herrick, and the only manuscripts of any of his verse which can be directly associated with the poet himself. The first fifty pages appear to have been originally a separate manuscript and contain nothing in Herrick's hand. The verse begins on p. 63, and the first poem in Herrick's hand is on p. 73. Thereafter pages in his hand occur intermittently throughout the volume, the last being p. 343. Further, Herrick's is the only hand which occurs right through the volume making corrections on many pages, and—among an interesting variety of scribal hands—his is the one hand of outstanding individuality. The conclusion must be that the book belonged to Herrick, and was compiled under his supervision. It is the only manuscript poetical miscellany which can be shown to have belonged to a major poet of the period. The only other known examples of Herrick's hand are the fifteen letters—all but one in the Leicester County Archives—which he wrote from Cambridge to his uncle, Sir William Herrick, applying in an obsequious style for advances of money. As might be expected, the letters are written in a comparatively formal version of Herrick's hand, while his entries in the Commonplace Book tend to be much more cursorily written. . . . Herrick's hand however is a very distinctive one, and its identification is never in doubt. . . . The present manuscript is the work of several scribes and is naturally not entirely free from scribal errors, not all of which have been corrected by Herrick. Wherever possible, however, poems in this manuscript have been compared with printed texts and/or with other manuscript versions in The British Museum and the Bodleian, and in almost every case all other versions are more or less inferior. The manuscript therefore contains the only authoritative texts of many poems—either unpublished or published only in corrupt versions—some of which can now be attributed to Herrick. . . . The manuscript begins with two tracts written in 1620 attacking the proposed marriage of Prince Charles with the Infanta of Spain, viz: Vox Populi (pp. 3-30, lacking one lead between pp. 12 and 13) and
Vox Spiritus, or Sir Walter Rawleighes Ghoste (pp. 31-50). The first of these is by Thomas Scott, an English Minister, and was published in 1620 but suppressed by royal authority; the second work is apparently unpublished (it is a different work from Thomas Scott's Sir Walter Rawleigh's Ghost, which was published at Utrecht in 1626). These first fifty pages seem originally to have constituted a separate manuscript: they are unique in that they bear a contemporary pagination in ink, and in that they contain no corrections by Herrick (whose hand is rarely absent for more than a few pages elsewhere).

I have quoted thus extensively from the Sotheby catalogue of 20 June 1965, partly because such information is not always immediately available and partly because these and other claims about the manuscript are the initial points from which an examination of the book and an evaluation of its contents must now begin.

Of course, any judgment on this manuscript must begin with an assessment of the claim that the dominant hand in the book is that of Robert Herrick. In this connection it requires to be said that Sotheby is an old and reliable house; there can be no question but that thorough and systematic work led to the public identification of the Herrick hand, and that considerable prestige supports the identification. I have nonetheless found myself persistently uncomfortable with the identification as I have sought to corroborate the claim. And in the process, the following questions have confronted me. In the first place, the characteristics of any hand are subject to influences which are often as evanescent as the moments when they took shape on a page. The time and circumstances under which one is writing are two of the most obvious factors. On certain occasions, for example, one's hand may be less typical of his customary practice than on other occasions, and on such occasions it may look very much like the hand of someone else. In addition, it can make a great deal of difference what one is writing, why he is writing it, and whom he is writing it for—himself or another. It also makes a difference whether one is standing or sitting and whether one is in a cold or a warm room. But even more importantly, if one is copying it is inevitable that his hand will take on characteristics of the hand from which he is reading. Of this fact I have been firmly assured by experts in the investigation of criminal documents and...
forgeries who have shown me convincing examples of such assimilation. In addition, I have been as firmly assured that one's hand can be equally influenced by that of a particularly close friend or relation—and over a long period of time at that. And finally, a hand may be influenced by such factors as an injury, an illness, or the nature of the writing instrument itself. I have catalogued these diverse factors because each constitutes a set of variables. And with such variables in mind, one becomes less and less willing to be dogmatic about the identity of the hand identified as Herrick's in this particular commonplace book. While I most certainly do not deny that the hand is "distinctive," I am all too aware of having seen others that resemble it.

Since the proper identification of a hand requires a sample specimen that was written at about the same time and under reasonably similar circumstances, I have made the following efforts to corroborate the ascription of this hand to Robert Herrick. The Commonplace Book contains many items that were obviously entered in chronological order with the events to which they allude. Moreover, such datable items as letters follow a strict chronological pattern. Accordingly, I sought comparison between the dated Herrick letters in the Leicester County Archives and the datable portions of the Commonplace Book. While there were similarities between the hand in the letters and the hand in the manuscript, there were some disquieting dissimilarities as well. The satires on the death of Robert Cecil, which I shall discuss in another context presently, were presumably written contemporaneously with the Secretary's death in May 1612, or at least shortly thereafter, for such satire is so highly topical as to be quite perishable. The hand in which they are entered in the Commonplace Book should, therefore, be expected to bear reasonable similarity to the hand of Herrick's earliest known letter to his uncle written 1 October 1613. Despite some similarities, there are significant differences in the formation of such letters as e, r, w, and p. The capital H in both examplars is quite similar, but in an italic hand of this type such a letter does not possess unusual characteristics, particularly when it is made with three distinct strokes and is devoid of elaboration. One particularly noticeable feature of the 1613 letter, though, is Herrick's in-

decisiveness in the use of secretary e and italic (or Greek) e. He shifts back and forth from one to the other. And yet in the Commonplace Book there is no such indecisiveness in entries that may reasonably be assumed to be contemporaneous. There the hand flows easily and consistently into the Greek e.

The next relevant entry in the manuscript book by the hand identified as Herrick's is equally topical in nature. This poem is a satire on the marriage of Lady Frances Howard to the Earl of Somerset in December 1613. Here, free use is made of the ampersand—a practice that is habitual in all of the poems entered in this hand. But that character is never once used in all of the fourteen Herrick letters. Moreover, comparison of the word last as it appears in this poem with the same word—used twice—in the second (undated) letter from Herrick to his uncle, shows just enough difference to prolong a doubt already stimulated by other subtle differences in appearance. The doubt, though, is somewhat offset by a close resemblance in the respective formations of such words as the, that, and, but, had, and the like. And by tracing onto onionskin paper the letters and ligatures of such words as they appear in the correspondence and by then superimposing the traced words upon the identical words in the manuscript, I have been favorably impressed by the similarities.

Very probably, then, the hand in the Commonplace Book is that of Robert Herrick. But in my own mind there is sufficient doubt to warrant continued skepticism and to caution against wholesale and enthusiastic acceptance of the conclusion. This much, nonetheless, seems clear: the hand in the Commonplace Book is certainly not a forgery. But after all, it is we and not the writer of that hand who are now making particular claims for it.

This book is a small quarto with irregular foliation as follows: A^3, B-G^4, H^3, I^4, J^5, K^3, L-N^4, O^2, P-Q^3, R-W^4, X^3. In this connection I must add that I have not yet been able to have the book disbound for a close examination of its make-up. Ultimately, such disbinding will be mandatory. For according to a binder's slip pasted on the inside of the front cover, the manuscript was bound (or rebound?) in the mid-nineteenth century by George Bretherton, who evidently made substantial repairs upon it. These repairs appear to have been most extensive in sigs. O-Q and X, a number of pages there having been tipped
in. The pagination, however, is continuous and consecutive throughout from 1-350. However, the initial fifty pages—as we learn from the Sotheby description above—were marked by a contemporary, no doubt the scribe who copied them. Penciled pagination was added much later to these pages as well as to the remainder of the book. Nonetheless, there are some variations that should be mentioned here. The penciled pagination includes the first and last pages (1r and 352v), while the contemporary pagination in the early portion of the manuscript begins on p. 3. Furthermore, a letter from Bishop John Williams, copied in part by the hand identified as Herrick's (sig. V, pp. 307-13) contains page numbers in a contemporary hand as follows: p. 307—“A2”; p. 308—“2”; p. 309—“1”; p. 311—“3”; p. 312—“4”. The irregularity is, to say the least, puzzling. Nevertheless, one possible explanation may be offered. The “A2” on p. 307r occurs on the initial page of a signature. The “2” on p. 308r is consecutive with the notion that p. 307r is the first of a gathering. While the remaining numbers are confused, they may indicate that these pages in sig. V were once separate from the other parts of the present manuscript and were subsequently bound with those parts at a later date. The problem, however, cannot possibly be solved until the volume is properly disbound. But in conjunction with the already known assimilation of two separate and distinct manuscripts in this one binding, the present observation should encourage further healthy scepticism regarding the makeup of the book until such time as disbinding may be carried out.

The watermarks in folios 1-44 compare with, but are not identical to, numbers 13174 and 13173 in C. M. Briquet, *Les Filigranes Dictionnaire Historique des Marques du Papier* (Leipzig 1923), vol. 4. Those in folios 49-310 compare with, but again are not identical to, number 13205 in Briquet. Those in the remaining folios, including sigs. V-X, are not represented in Briquet. The book thus appears to contain three different papers—all contemporary—but this once again raises the crucial question whether three portions of manuscript were subsequently bound in one volume. To this, however, it should be added that the separate items in the book do not correspond evenly to the signatures and that there is considerable runover from one signature to the next. The verse, including that in the hand purported to be Herrick’s, begins with sig. E and continues uninterrupted into
The portions of the manuscript containing poetry where the hand identified as Herrick's appears are not in gatherings which might at one time have been independent of the rest of the bound volume. It would thus appear safe to assume that the volume as we presently have it represents with fidelity the way it evolved. But prior to disbinding this must remain an assumption and not a positive conclusion. The doubts raised by the considerable tipping-in remain to be laid to rest.

And yet the problems arising from the physical makeup of the book are quite minor indeed in comparison to problems that emerge from careful consideration of its contents. To begin with, the book contains only two known Herrick poems out of the several hundred that appear in Hesperides and Noble Numbers. And this is still to say nothing of the numerous additional poems thought to have been written by Herrick. These two poems are “The Farewell to Sack” and “The Welcome Again.” Here it is important to recognize that these poems, in addition to “The Curse,” are of all Herrick’s pieces the most widely circulated. Martin, for example, has counted sixteen MS. versions of “The Welcome” and seven of “The Farewell,” and even at that he explicitly disclaims any truly exhaustive count. What is more, these two poems are entered in the present manuscript by a professional scribe whose hand appears nowhere else in the volume and who dutifully signs “The Farewell to Sack” with the name “R: Herrick.”

Now it is very curious to me that two of the most widely circulated of Herrick’s poems should thus appear in his own commonplace book in the hand of a professional scribe. And it is even more curious that the scribe should have omitted line 38 of “The Welcome Again,” that he should leave a blank, and that Herrick should subsequently enter the line—and in his own book at that. I am aware of only two

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other instances where this has also occurred in other early seventeenth-century poetic manuscripts. One is in Bodley MS. Eng. poet. e. 30, where the copyist of Bishop Henry King’s poems leaves blanks subsequently filled in by the poet. The other is in the Warwick MS. (now B. M. Add. 54570) where the scribe copying Fulke Greville’s Caelica XCIV omits two lines of the first stanza which are subsequently written in by the poet. In contrast to the Herrick book, though, both the King and Greville manuscripts are obviously final and clean copies which a scribe had been engaged to make. There is no evidence whatsoever that the present manuscript was ever thought of in such terms.

In addition to the known Herrick poems in this book, several other pieces, never before even remotely associated with that poet, appear either in part or in toto in the hand reputed to be his: (1) three satirical epitaphs on the death of Robert Cecil, pp. 73-74; (2) a satirical poem, previously mentioned, on the marriage of Lady Frances Howard to Robert Carr, Earl of Somerset, p. 82; (3) seven epigrams in Latin and English, pp. 102-03; (4) two exercises, actually sketches for a poem, based on the theme of “impossibilities” and unquestionably inspired by John Donne’s “Go and catch a falling star,” p. 253; (5) a satire on the relationship between King James I and Buckingham in which they are thinly disguised as Jove and Ganymede, pp. 319-21; (6) “A Prophecy found in the Abby of St. Benedict in Norfolke,” also a satiric piece, p. 323; (7) a satire on the journey of Buckingham and Prince Charles to Spain in 1623, pp. 328-29; and (8) another satire on the same journey, p. 343. I have been unable to trace any other versions of the latter two items.

Furthermore, the hand believed to be Herrick’s is to be found in corrections ranging from a single word to entire lines in several other pieces: (1) an epitaph upon Frank Morly, the bear-ward, p. 68; (2) a poem by Sir Henry Wotton, “How happie is he borne or taught,” pp. 78-79; (3) reports of the trials of those involved in the murder of Sir Thomas Overbury, pp. 137-204; (4) a satire on Bishop Corbet, “A reverend deane/ wth his band starcht cleane,” p. 291. These in-

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trusions by Herrick upon an already copied text, in addition to his
invited intrusion upon the text of “The Welcome againe,” would
suggest that he may not have actually been the owner of this particular
book. Was it indeed, then, the property of Robert Herrick? Or was
it the property of someone close to Herrick who invited his inspection
of its contents and, on occasion, invited him to insert something of his
own? I believe this question to be fundamental.

For while we have developed sophisticated techniques for textual
reconstruction, we do not really know enough about the particulars of
manuscript transmission during the early seventeenth century. We
do not know, for example, just how a commonplace book such as this
one might have been traded about, nor do we have a sound factual
grasp of particular circles through which such trading might now be
traced and reconstructed. Surely, the wide variety of hands to be found
in the present manuscript suggests that the book was handed about
among friends; and even though we know practically nothing about
Herrick’s early biography, it is probably a safe bet that he was in no
financial position to pay scribes to enter items for him. The letters
written to Sir William Herrick from Cambridge suggest that much.
(An additional curiosity about the book is that there are not more
items entered in the hand of the man to whom it is supposed to have
belonged.) In connection with my own work on Herrick’s “Oberon”
poems, I have found, for example, strong evidence to suggest that
“King Oberon’s Clothing” was attributed to Sir Simeon Steward as a
consequence of its having been transmitted through Steward’s com-
monplace book, where either he or Herrick entered it (the book has
never been identified if, indeed, it still exists). But in the process of
developing the evidence for Herrick’s authorship of that poem, it oc-
curred to me repeatedly that Herrick studies would benefit consider-
ably from some systematic knowledge about the hands in the most
significant of those manuscripts that carry Herrick’s work. A com-
parable effort to trace the identity of a scribal hand has recently been
made by W. Hilton Kelliher, who has shown that the scribe who
copies Greville’s Caelica in the Warwick MS. was also in the service
of the Lord Treasurer, Sir Lionel Cranfield; moreover, Kelliher has
been able, through this identification, to suggest the dates of entry of
these poems in the manuscript and to show that Greville was actively
engaged in work on the poems at a much later date than had hitherto been supposed.

Therefore, in spite of the problems involved in the precise and accurate identification of hands that I mentioned earlier, I am nonetheless persuaded that such a study of the hands in important manuscripts should be the next major step in the study of Renaissance English literature now that the canons and texts of important individual poets have been so well assimilated. What I am proposing, to be sure, goes beyond the usual definition of bibliographical studies. But it is not merely a matter of paleography either. It involves our learning the networks for the transmission of literature and ideas within relatively homogeneous groups. And in turn it involves our learning significant things about cultural as well as purely literary transmission.

But in addition to the larger questions of manuscript transmission and the necessity for some systematic identification of hands that appear in various manuscripts of the period, a particular question remains: is the hand of Robert Herrick in the poems entered in this book sufficient evidence for supposing him to be the author of those poems? Of course, the fact that a man should enter a poem (well-known or unknown) in his own hand is no guarantee of his authorship. But in cases where such a poem is unknown elsewhere, we are relatively safe in suspecting authorship. Once again, however, common sense suggests that such a poem must at least be compatible with the known style, vocabulary, and genres of such a poet. I have mentioned that practically all the poems in the present commonplace book are satires. As I shall presently point out, they are satires of a type not widely circulated in England during this period. Herrick is not known to have written any such poems, although it is evident from individual pieces in Hesperides that he was capable of an occasional satiric thrust or licentious leer.

Nevertheless, it has been claimed that the presence of Herrick’s hand in the three satires on Robert Cecil’s death is a strong argument for his authorship of those poems, a claim that is argued on the basis of the inferiority of other existing copies. But here it is important to point out that while some factors might seem to point to Herrick’s authorship, other factors argue against it. The first lines of these poems are as follows: (1) “Here lyes buried wormes meate,/ little
Robin yt was so great"; (2) "Here lies Hobinall our shepheard while-are/ yt once a yeare duelie our fleeces did sheare"; (3) "At Hatfield neere Hartford there lives in a coffin,/ a heartbreaking Harpie of shape like a dolphin." In the first place, the initial pair of satires have this much in common with the two known Herrick poems described above: they were very popular and appear to have been rather widely disseminated at a time when poems like these were dangerous to have around. Number 1, for example, is to be found in Folger Library MSS. V.a. 339, f. 258 and W.a. 135, f. 22; British Museum MSS. Harley 6947, f. 211 and Egerton 2230; Bodleian MSS. Ashmole 38, f. 182, Rawlinson poet 155, f. 70, and Tanner 299. It was also printed in Francis Osborne, Traditional Memoyres (1658). Number 2, also a satiric epitaph, is to be found in Osborne, and in John Shirley’s Life of Raleigh (1677) as well as in Folger V.a. 339, f. 258; V.a. 103, part I, f. 20; V.a. 262, f. 97; V.a. 345, f. 116; Rosenbach Library, Phillipps MS. 9549, f. 90; Bodleian MSS. Eng. poet. e 14, f. 79; Rawlinson poet 26, f. 78; Aubrey 6; Tanner 299; The British Museum, Egerton 2230, f. 34. There should be some significance to the fact that none of these manuscripts is a principal source for Herrick texts.®

The third satire seems to have been much more exclusive, for although the Sotheby catalogue vaguely declares that there are “several inferior manuscript versions,” I have been able to locate only three: MS. Firth, d. 7, f. 156; MS. Tanner 299; and MS. Egerton 2230, f. 34. The fact that it was not printed by Osborne confirms the judgment that it was not so well known as the previous two. But what seems particularly important in this connection is that all three of these poems occur in two significant manuscript collections of satires on Robert Cecil—the only two such collections I have been able to locate anywhere: MS. Tanner 299 and MS. Egerton 2230. In each instance, those versions appear to be superior, not inferior, to the recensions in the Herrick commonplace book.

The collection in MS. Tanner 299 was compiled and entered entirely in the holograph of none other than Archbishop William Sandcroft. Though these satires comprise only a few pages in Sandcroft’s commonplace book (ff. 45-49), the rest of the volume—much like the

Robert Herrick’s Commonplace Book

so-called Herrick volume—is devoted to topical events, letters, and other occasional pieces. Here it should be recalled that I previously suggested the remote possibility that the Herrick Commonplace Book might once have indeed belonged to Archbishop George Abbot. Certainly, one cannot afford to ignore that possibility since the first known statement of its provenance indicates his ownership. Though it is admittedly a coincidence, the appearance of these satires in another commonplace book that may be presumed to have circulated among a number of Anglican Churchmen is certainly provocative. And from the letters copied into the University of Texas exemplar, it is apparent that Archbishop Abbot and Bishop Williams (for whom Robert Herrick is believed to have once worked) corresponded with some degree of regularity. There is thus insufficient evidence to allow anyone to assert with true conviction that Herrick wrote even the lesser known of these three pieces. If some of the poems that are to be found only in Tanner 299 and Egerton 2230 had also appeared in the Texas Commonplace Book, such appearances would indicate possibilities worth getting excited about. As it stands at present, though, I would simply judge that Robert Herrick came across these pieces and for some reason copied rather than composed them.

The foregoing observations lead, finally, to conclusions that point up what may well prove to be the most important features of the commonplace book now at the University of Texas. Its contents are almost entirely topical; its poetry is almost entirely satirical. But as I previously mentioned, the satire is not of the formal variety that we associate with the satires of Donne, Hall, Marston, Richard Braithwaite, or Sir John Davies of Hereford. It is personal, direct, bitter, and thoroughly subversive. An indication of the feelings it aroused may be found in the heading under which Sandcroft entered the poems on Robert Cecil into his own commonplace book: “Several Libellous & Satyricall Verses upon Rob. Earl of Salisbury.” While such poems are also to be found in other commonplace books, none that I have been able to examine seems so exclusively devoted to topical and potentially libellous satire as does the Texas exemplar. The entire commonplace

7 My study of Tanner 299 and Egerton 2230 is presently awaiting publication under the title “Twelve Unpublished Satires on Robert Cecil and Some Observations on Subgenres of Satire in the Early Seventeenth Century.”
book would thus appear to be something of a barometer indicating the pressures of popular resentment directed toward prominent persons and institutions. In this connection, there is no little importance to be attached to the fact that this book also contains a long summary both of the proceedings leading to the annulment of the marriage of Lady Frances Howard and the Earl of Essex and of the subsequent trials of those involved in that scandalous but related matter, the murder of Sir Thomas Overbury. Over a third of the book is devoted to accounts of these scandals, a fact which indicates to a degree the moral outrage felt by whoever did own the book and determined what was entered into it. What is more, several of the satires "interpret" those events rather pungently. One of these, "Lady chain'd to Venus' dove/ gently guide thy carre of love," is in the hand purported to be Herrick's. But comparison of this poem with versions in Rosenbach, Crawford MS. f. 139; Folger MSS. V. a. 103, part I, f. 68 and with the version in Huth's inedited miscellanies yields little reason why Herrick should be the author. Of another poem, "From Katherines dock was lanch'd a pinke/ Which soone did floate but did not sinke," there is some possibility that it may have been written by the person who entered it in the book. For there are two versions in the University of Texas commonplace Book written in the Herrick hand. Of the longest and obviously most complete version, the Sotheby catalogue declares that "no other text has been traced." However, Huntington Library MS. 198, ff. 19-21 preserves a reading which, to my mind at any rate, exhibits signs of being closer to the original than does the reading in the Texas manuscript.

At this point, then, it would appear that relatively few truly solid conclusions may be drawn at present about the Herrick commonplace Book. It is unlike the Milton commonplace Book in the sense that it does not relate directly or even indirectly to the poet's known work. And barring some disclosure of such a thematic or ideological relationship, the presence of a hand "very like" Herrick's is not entirely persuasive. In conclusion, it seems to me that this is a snake that requires a great deal of killing and that no degree of enthusiasm for a truly significant discovery should minimize the dangers of doing battle with it.