

## A World of Wonders in One Closet Shut: Empire and Encounter Reflected in Early Modern English Botany

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On the southern shore of the Thames, facing the Palace of Westminster, sits the now deconsecrated church of St. Mary at Lambeth, a rather dumpy and unassuming Victorian stone church. Within it, tucked in amongst London's most celebrated and famous sites of heritage, is housed perhaps its most overlooked: The Garden Museum. A short walk from Westminster Abbey, the Imperial War Museum, Lambeth Palace, Victoria Tower, and the Tate Britain, the Garden Museum seems a middling option lost between giants. Yet, as with most things at first unassuming, the Garden Museum holds a place as culturally rich and historically significant as its neighbours. Moreover, the English public museum as an entity could not have existed without it, for buried within the yard of the former church of St. Mary are the Johns Tradescant.<sup>1</sup> The two Tradescants were, on the one hand, highly influential gardeners and botanists of the early seventeenth century assigned with the development and maintenance of several important manors. Their contributions to the field of English gardening during the reign of the Stuarts alone is cause worthy of recognition. On the other hand, a closer and more careful investigation into the figure of the Tradescants in the context of the world in which they lived illustrates how their lives may be used as a conduit for understanding the changes occurring in England in their time. The Johns Tradescant, through the foundations they laid for the development of both the modern museum and the uniquenesses of the English garden, serve as synecdochial examples of the greater fundamental changes to London, and England as a whole, that would become so synonymous with both in centuries to come.

The dawn of the 17th century may be understood as the dawn of a modern England; within the lives of both of the Tradescants (c. 1580 - 1662), England would experience the succession of five monarchs

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<sup>1</sup> Title is taken from their epitaph. The Tradescants, when referenced together, are pluralized within this essay as attorneys-general, culs-de-sac, and mothers-in-law. Captain William Bligh (d. 1817) of the HMS *Bounty* (of *Mutiny on the ...* fame) is also buried here.

and two Lords Protector; the English crown would gain dominion over all of Britain and establish imperial roots upon three continents in two hemispheres; rising focus upon exploration, mercantilism, and the increasing globalization of trade would transform England from an insular and predominantly Eurocentric kingdom to one of global presence and participation, focused upon contact and encounter. Throughout such fundamental changes to the English state, the Johns Tradescant are present; while their activity cannot be seen as directly contributive to the aforementioned changes occurring within England at the time, the effect of such changes upon their lives demonstrates their historical significance. In such grand narratives, the Tradescants were largely marginal figures, but on the page nonetheless. Their lives may for this reason be understood as synecdochal examples of how their microcosmic activity and contributions to horticulture, botany and archeology may help to illustrate the macrocosmic changes to London and England at this time.

On the first of January, 1610, John Tradescant the Elder<sup>2</sup> was hired by Robert Cecil, the Earl of Salisbury, as a gardener on his estate in Herefordshire at the manor of Hatfield House.<sup>3</sup> By this time, James VI & I had ruled the isles for seven years and Robert Cecil, Secretary of State and invaluable member of the court under both Elizabeth and James, had begun to rebuild his manor. Cecil was given Hatfield by James VI & I in exchange for his palace at Theobalds, as Hatfield was at the time “out of date [and] ... unfashionable.”<sup>4</sup> Cecil hired Tradescant to work on the property as a gardener to find the prestige he had found at Theobalds. While only under service to Robert Cecil briefly until Cecil’s death in 1612, Tradescant proved himself capable and was kept on by Robert Cecil’s heir, William.<sup>5</sup> The career of a professional gardener, especially within the context of the seventeenth century, is necessarily bound to the portions of society that are able to maintain gardens. Thus, the coteries of the gentry and gardeners were necessarily tethered; such social proximity suggests ample opportunity

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<sup>2</sup> By 1610, John Tradescant the Younger was then only two years old, delegating John the Elder to John the Only for a further fifteen years.

<sup>3</sup> Jill Francis, *Gardens and Gardening in Early Modern England and Wales, 1560-1660*. Yale, 137; Prudence Leith-Ross, *The John Tradescants : Gardeners to the Rose and Lily Queen*. London, 1984, 28

<sup>4</sup> Leith-Ross, *Tradescants*, 28.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

Francis, *Gardening*, 317.

for dialogue. This is evident within the life of John Tradescant the Elder, as his own career would begin alongside several agents of change in the contemporary English state. This relationship is furthered when antecedent historical factors are introduced to the ties of the noble to his or her garden - and consequently, their gardener.

The Dissolution of the Monasteries allocated great parcels of land to a new generation of gentry during the Protestant Reformation. The period from 1570 to 1620 saw more country houses built than any other fifty-year interval, and with them their country gardens.<sup>6</sup> Along with the former monasteries and abbeys came their gardens, an integral part of cloister life found across monastic communities in England, as well as in Europe more broadly. The monastic conception of the garden was largely predominated by an overarching Christian understanding of the world as being ordered into rigid and static natural hierarchy.<sup>8</sup> The medieval monastic garden reflected this static world-view through its conception of how space was to be utilized. As Terry Comito observes:

The form of the medieval garden, so far as we can reconstruct it, is remarkably fixed: an open area with a mass, generally organized around a centre ... Even Renaissance gardens keep the same design motifs, although disposing them differently in space, until they are superseded by the picturesque or English garden of the eighteenth century.<sup>7</sup>

This focus upon the reflection of a hierarchical and static worldview remained largely unchanged by the Elizabethan era, as the prevalence toward “good order and stability” in society remained akin to the garden.<sup>8</sup> How then was this entrenched conception of the garden eventually displaced by the ‘picturesque,’ and how did it become so uniquely English? One explanation revolves upon the aforementioned ‘tetheredness’ of the garden and gardening to the aristocracy. The horticultural legacy inherited from the medieval era helped to inspire the preservation of a garden culture and simultaneously allowed for the intercession of the characteristics of the nobility of the Elizabethan & Stuart reigns to be reflected in the gardens themselves - just as the characteristics of the gentry were beginning to change in their own

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>7</sup> Terry Comito, *The Idea of the Garden in the Renaissance*. Rutgers UP, New Jersey, 1978, 25.

<sup>8</sup> Francis, 55.

right. As the nobility was granted these new manors, they were also becoming increasingly focused upon expansive trade; as such their gardens too would come to be influenced by this increasingly global attention.

On 3 June 1618, John Tradescant the Elder sailed from London, accompanying Sir Dudley Digges, a founding member of the East India Company and the Northwest Passage Company, on a mission to Arkhangelsk at the behest of Tsar Michael Fedorovich.<sup>9</sup> While the political arm of the mission sought contact with the Russian crown to affirm trading rights through a presumed sea-route to the East (itself demonstrating the increasing expansiveness of English mercantile aims), Tradescant was tasked with the collection of botanical samples from the northern country.<sup>10</sup> Tradescant, in his own surviving account of his journey to Arkhangelsk, writes of reaching as far as the islands to the north-west of the Russian delta and port.<sup>11</sup> The route taken by the Digges party is remarkable in how it required the party to travel around the Scandinavian peninsula to reach the port, a considerable distance for the period. Tradescant would travel as far only to return to England after a month, having collected significant samples and artefacts, many of which would become foundational to his collection. One such example, found on page 48 of the Tradescant's publication of their collection, the *Museum Tradescantianum*, is that of "Shoes to walk on snow without sinking."<sup>12</sup>

Only two years after his return from northern Russia, Tradescant set out again to the newly opened corners of the European world. He accompanied the Royal Navy under Sir Robert Mansell in an endeavour to fight pirates off the coast of present-day Algiers.<sup>13</sup> Tradescant disembarked at the Moroccan port of Tetouan to obtain, among other botanical samples, a cutting of a pomegranate tree<sup>14</sup> that would later be planted at Hatfield.<sup>15</sup> Thus, we may see how the increasing attention toward voyage, as demonstrated by the Digges and Mansell

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<sup>9</sup> Leith-Ross, 52.

<sup>10</sup> Leith-Ross, 52.

<sup>11</sup> Tradescant qtd. Leith-Ross, 60.

<sup>12</sup> John Tradescant, *Musaeum Tradescantianum: or, A collection of rarities. Preserved at South-Lambeth near [sic] London by John Tradescant.* London, 1656, 48

<sup>13</sup> Leith-Ross, 69.

<sup>14</sup> The pomegranate tree is known as *Punica granatum* L. var. *flore pleno*, recorded as *malus punica* within the *Museum Tradescantianum*; Tradescant's evocation of the term 'punic' reveals its northern African heritage. This can be found in Tradescant, 89

<sup>15</sup> Leith-Ross, 71.

expeditions, are reflected in horticultural terms; as English contact is widened, so too are the kinds of flora to be found in English gardens, as Tradescant demonstrates. The mantle of exploration and encounter as raised by John the Elder would be similarly raised by his son, John Tradescant the Younger. Tradescant the Younger would engage in collecting expeditions to Virginia from c. 1630, returning just after his father's death in 1638, again engaging in the collection of flora and artefacts as his father had done. The great voyages of the Tradescants made to further the botanical field illustrates the desire for increasingly more diverse and extensive contact among increasingly more diverse peoples during this period. Tradescant, merely the humble gardener, was able to see far more than an individual of his stature would have been able to only fifty years prior.

While exceptional, the journeys of the Johns Tradescant must not be seen as without context; the period of the early seventeenth century is one dominated by increasingly global contact - as well as the consequences of such encounters. John Tradescant the Elder was equally engrossed by the desire to expand encounter, for better or for worse. The problematic legacy of this mandate for encounter is expressed through a quote from W. J. T. Mitchell's *Landscape and Power*, as he states:

Semiotic features of landscape, and the historical narratives they generate, are tailor-made for the discourse of imperialism, which conceives itself precisely (and simultaneously) as an expansion of landscape understood as an inevitable, progressive development in history, an expansion of 'culture' and 'civilisation' into a 'natural' space in a progress that is itself narrated as 'natural' <sup>16</sup>

Thus, the relationship of the wanton claiming of the other that seems so inherent to imperialism is reflected in the landscape building that Tradescant is involved in, directly in the context of the English garden. Perhaps it is this intercession of the political with the botanical that furthers the development of the English garden as its own mode, integrally connected to these mechanisms of colonization. This idea is furthered by Weltman-Aron, who writes:

At a time when a discourse confirming colonization abroad also wonders about the legitimacy of such ventures, another discourse on the so called new access to the visual beauty of domestic space occurs simultaneously.

A policy of national, internal colonization can be represented with modes which obviously alter, or seem to dominate, the environment.<sup>17</sup>

For Weltman-Aron, the very act of gardening is likened to the ‘domination’ over landscape as with institutional colonization, as an increasingly pervasive element of English identity generally at the time. By collecting foreign flora to introduce them into English gardens, Tradescant was furthering the way that the English garden may be seen as necessarily dependent upon the rare or exotic. This sentiment would not be out of range for a society that was increasingly predicating itself upon its own success as an imperial, mercantile, and maritime power.

A further consequence of this change in what may be considered especially ‘English’ within a garden is the increasing role the garden had in displays of opulence and social standing. Francis addresses the transition of the contents of a garden as being largely similar across class boundaries, to one more unique and identifiably ‘noble.’<sup>18</sup> Francis posits that during the Elizabethan age, the contents of one’s garden, regardless of social strata, would consist predominantly of vegetables and fruit.<sup>19</sup> However, by the eighteenth-century, the focus of the garden was shifted largely toward ornamentality.<sup>20</sup> Francis summarizes clearly, stating:

At the beginning of the reign of Elizabeth, gardens were essentially the same as they had been for centuries. They were enclosed spaces whose primary function was the utilitarian one of providing food, medicines, flavourings and scents for the household ... The new century and the new Jacobean regime brought rapid change. Adventurers returned from across the seas with untold exotic delights for the garden ... Gardens were viewed by some not just as a personal pleasure but as a new context in which to display wealth and status.<sup>21</sup>

Francis furthers this by liking the increasing importance bestowed upon the ‘exotic’ to social status, specifically in regard to the emergent ability of conspicuous material wealth not merely to indicate status, but as able to confer status as well.<sup>22</sup>

In the accounting records of the Duke of Buckingham for the

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<sup>17</sup> Weltman-Aron, Brigitte. *On Other Grounds* University of New York Press, 2001, 109.

<sup>18</sup> Francis, 50.

<sup>19</sup> Francis, 77-79.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 327.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-5.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

year 1624, there is recorded a payment of £124 14s “paid to John Tradescant ... for his journey into the Lowe Countries for his charges and Trees”.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, it follows that having returned from fighting pirates off the northern coast of Africa, Tradescant the Elder found his way into the service of the most favoured of all the Jacobean courtiers: George Villiers. Nominally, Tradescant was appointed head gardener of the Duke’s estate at Burley-on-the-Hill in Rutland, charged with the maintenance and upkeep of the grounds.<sup>24</sup> Tradescant’s appointment to Villiers supports his position as being uniquely situated near seminal members of the Jacobean court, as well as furthering the association of the role of gardening in Stuart society as increasingly predicated upon the upper classes. Furthermore, the relationship of Tradescant to Villiers represents more nuanced change occurring within the English state at the time; Buckingham represented an emergent *nouveau riche* in the time of James VI & I’s court, indicative of the rapid expansion of nobility consequent of James’ sale of peerages during this time.<sup>25</sup> <sup>27</sup> As a result of his prominence, the Duke had nearly limitless resources available to his estate and garden; he merely needed to decide what was fashionable. This suggests Tradescant’s reputation as one of the preeminent and most fashionable gardeners of the time. Yet, the personal relationship of Tradescant to the Duke of Buckingham extended beyond the simple gardener-noble relationship as previously mentioned. Returning from a state trip to France to collect the future Queen Henrietta Maria for marriage to the future Charles I, Buckingham “sent ... a gentleman to bring him his rich new clothes so that he may show himself in all his vanities;” this ‘gentleman’ was John Tradescant the Elder.<sup>26</sup> Why would Villiers have chosen Tradescant? Perhaps the social clout of a man as well traveled and educated as Tradescant relegated himself to an errand-runner for the second most influential man in the realm, or perhaps there was a personal quality to John the Elder that endeared him to many agents of change within early seventeenth-century England. For whatever reason that drew John Tradescant the Elder to these great figures like

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<sup>23</sup> Leith-Ross, 75.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Villiers, through political situating, would become himself one of the most influential men in England.

<sup>26</sup> Leith-Ross, 77.

a moth to a flame, his participation with such figures continued to develop. In 1627, the Duke of Buckingham was sent to relieve the Huguenot town of La Rochelle by way of martial support against the French Catholics. Those that fought alongside Buckingham included “John Tradescant the Dukes gardiner now an Ingeeneere and best of all this true and most deserving.”<sup>27</sup> Again, the choice of Tradescant to serve as a military engineer during the Siege of La Rochelle may reveal the kinds of social association the role Tradescant had; the modest gardener of Robert Cecil was now likened to a polymath entrusted to direct a military campaign. While a military disaster, the expedition was not totally fruitless, as Tradescant was able to collect a specimen of sea gillyflower (*Matthiola sinuata*, recorded in the *Museum Tradescantianum* as *Leucojum marinum*)<sup>28</sup> recorded in Parkinson’s *Theatrum* commenting “The first was brought out of the Isle of Ree[Rhe] by Rochel [La Rochelle] by Mr Iohn Tr. [Tradescant]”.<sup>29</sup>

Buckingham’s assassination in 1628 would cost Tradescant his job and allow him to settle at Lambeth, near the church of St Mary’s. The handsome wages made under Buckingham further allowed some of Tradescant’s time to become devoted to laying the foundation of the ‘Ark.’ Tradescant’s Ark was the collection of their curiosities and specimens over the course of his travels, later formalized as the *Museum Tradescantianum*, as of then still very much in its infancy. In August of 1630, by royal warrant, John Tradescant the Elder was appointed Keeper of the Gardens, Vines and Silkworms at Oatlands Palace in Surrey.<sup>30</sup> <sup>32</sup> Only ten years earlier had the architect Inigo Jones helped to establish the first instances of a unique English style of architecture at Oatlands, where he was commissioned by Queen Anne of Denmark to renovate the manor.<sup>31</sup> As with Tradescant, Robert Cecil recognized the genius of Jones, and had commissioned work by the architect at Hatfield House, designing a renovation for the portico while Tradescant was gardener there in 1610; however, it was never completed.<sup>32</sup> The similarities of Inigo Jones and John Tradescant the

<sup>27</sup> Leith-Ross, 82.

<sup>28</sup> Tradescant, 134

<sup>29</sup> John Parkinson, *Theatrum botanicum: the theater of plantes. Or, an universall and compleate herball.* / Composed by John Parkinson apothecarye of London and the kings herbalist. London, 1640, 624

<sup>30</sup> Leith-Ross, 93.

<sup>31</sup> Christy Anderson, *Inigo Jones and the Classical Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007, 44.

<sup>32</sup> Anderson, 4.

Elder are striking, not only in their contemporaneousness, but how either man was able to employ his work to further its socio-cultural weight to adapt to changes of the English state. Jones, through his art, sought to “step into the arena of accessible social and political debate”.<sup>33</sup> It is therefore valid to assert that the increasingly global - if not imperial - changes that Tradescant had made to the English garden may not be seen as equally socially relevant? Could the increasing focus upon rarity in horticultural presentation reflect the changes in public self-understanding of England as a nexus of international contact? What social significance does the use of this botanical rarity have on the designation of social status among the elite in regard to social changes in Stuart England more broadly?

In 1607, the same year that Robert Cecil acquired Hatfield House, three years before John Tradescant the Elder was hired there, the Virginia Company founded the settlement of Jamestown.<sup>34</sup> Thirty years later, John Tradescant the Younger set out on his return to England from Jamestown, having collected two hundred previously unrecorded plants, as well as the now-obligatory few curiosities. One such curiosity was the sash of Powhatan, given to John Tradescant by his friend Virginia colonist John Smith.<sup>35</sup> Again the connection of the Tradescant's advancements in botany, in this regard the active encounter and reappropriation of flora, is reflected in socio-historical parallels; Mitchell's claim upon the imperial imposition upon the 'natural' here is demonstrated through the colonial acquisition of an indigenous artefact. Although John Tradescant the Elder may never have visited Virginia in person as his son did, he was active in the emergent transatlantic trade, holding several bills of adventure with the Virginia company.<sup>36</sup> By the early 1630s, John Tradescant the Elder was the royal Keeper of the Gardens, Vines and Silkworms of Oatlands Palace, meanwhile, John Tradescant the Younger was in America, engaged in the same botanical explorations his father had experienced in Russia and northern Africa fifteen years earlier. The Tradescants are therefore to be seen not merely as actors in the increasingly global scope of English trade and encounter in the early seventeenth century,

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<sup>33</sup> David Howarth, David Armine, and Millar, Oliver. *Art and Patronage in the Caroline Courts: Essays in Honour of Sir Oliver Millar*. Cambridge NY, Cambridge UP, 1993, 87.

<sup>34</sup> Itself named after the original owner of Hatfield, Tradescant's first charge - James VI & I

<sup>35</sup> Leith-Ross, 47. The same John Smith made famous by the Pocahontas legend and Disney.

<sup>36</sup> Francis, 137.

but as guided, willing participants, who through investment and action, directly contributed to the English Age of Discovery. Unlike Drake or Raleigh, however, the Tradescants were of common stock, further demonstrating not merely geographical mobility as a consequence of the opening scope of trade and encounter, but the social mobility as well.

John Tradescant the Elder served as royal gardener at Oatlands until his death in 1638, and was immediately succeeded by John the Younger.<sup>37</sup> He is recorded having maintained Oatlands closely, and would not leave the country again. Thus, the Tradescant's own age of exploration came to an end. Apart from his royal duties, there exists little record of Tradescant during this time, save a mention of his garden at Oatlands by Inigo Jones in 1638 and a contribution of 2s to a fund for Irish Protestant relief enacted by Charles I in 1642.<sup>38</sup> By this time, the Tradescants had served the court and crown for thirty-two years across three continents; this service ended suddenly as the onset of the English Civil War caused the Queen to flee from Oatlands, mooted the position as royal gardener there. Only one record of Tradescant having continued to work at Oatlands during the Interregnum exists, as Tradescant claimed payment for work done to the manor in 1648; he received only half.<sup>39</sup> Oatlands itself was dismantled during the Interregnum, with its bricks used to construct a near-by canal, and Tradescant's orange trees sold for £20.<sup>40</sup> Leith-Ross suggests that it is this absence of work that forced Tradescant to return to Lambeth and create a secondary source of income: the Ark.

As previously mentioned, John Tradescant the Elder had begun to catalogue and order his collection of flora and artefacts that he had collected during his travels upon the death of the Duke of Buckingham in 1628. Over time, both Tradescants would gradually and continually add to their collection, through both personal acquisition and gift. Both Tradescants would employ their proximity to the elite to acquire much of their collection, "often from duplicates or unwanted gifts or bribes initially intended for loftier hands: left-overs from the excesses of courtly conduct and consumption."<sup>41</sup> The disruption of the Civil War

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<sup>37</sup> Leith-Ross, 106.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

<sup>39</sup> Leith-Ross, 114.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Arnold, Ken. *Cabinets for the Curious: Looking Back at Early English Museums*. Ashgate Pub.

would allow for John Tradescant the Younger to focus his attention toward the collection. Tradescant's home in Lambeth that housed their collection had received visitors intending to witness the collection since they had settled there in the late 1620's.<sup>42</sup> <sup>44</sup> From the period following its establishment to the Interregnum, the Ark had become widely famous; a list of great European collections of 'curiosities,' composed in southern France by Pierre Borel, makes mentions of "Jean Tredesquin a la Maison de oiseux."<sup>43</sup> One such *oiseaux* were the remains of what was, at the time, the extant dodo, recorded in the *Museum Tradescantianum* as "Dodar, from the Island *Mauritius*; it is not able to flie being so big."<sup>44</sup> By the time of the Interregnum, the absence of royal appointment to provide a living, in tandem with the immense popularity of the Ark, suggests that Tradescant relied upon public admission to the Ark to support himself.<sup>45</sup> The increased attention toward the collection may have inspired Tradescant to begin to catalogue the Ark, for it was not until this time that an effort to record it appears. What would emerge is the *Museum Tradescantianum*, the formal catalogue of the collection written by Tradescant the Younger.

The collection garnered further fame throughout the life of John Tradescant as the most extensive in England at the time. Unlike contemporary private 'Cabinets of Curiosity,' the Ark was open to the public; for this reason, the Ark is fundamentally the earliest public museum as such, rather than a private collection of artefacts. This contribution to the realm of public museums, with specific regard to the English museum tradition, carries with it its own complications. In their review of the British museum as an entity, Longair and McAleer write:

Knowledge, its acquisition, presentation and dissemination - key impulses driving the establishment of museums - became intertwined with the promotion of commerce and, consequently, the development of empire ... From the acquisition of Powhatan's mantle, still part of the Tradescant collection at the Ashmolean Museum, British museums have consistently relied upon British maritime and imperial endeavours for the

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Aldershot, 2006, 19.

<sup>42</sup> Leith-Ross, 92.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> Trad., 4. The head and feet of this dodo are still housed at the Ashmolean.

<sup>45</sup> Leith-Ross, 114.

acquisition of objects relating to different cultures from around the world.<sup>46</sup>

This tying of the contribution the Tradescants made to the museums with the development of empire harken back to their similar developments in botany. Yet, in light of this critique, it was their actions that relegated the collections of artefacts intended for collection into the realm of public education, rather than collection for private entities. This would itself, in a way, delegate the museum as an institution focused on furthering one's education of world rather than conquering it. It is for this reason that the Tradescant may be allotted a degree of amnesty from the problematic history of the museum upon which Longair and McAleer write. After passing hands within the Tradescant family, the collection was eventually purchased by Elias Ashmole, a wealthy London collector, who upon his own death would leave the Tradescant collection to the University of Oxford.<sup>47</sup> The collection continues to be housed within the Ashmolean Museum, the first university museum in the world.<sup>48</sup>

The second edition of the *Museum Tradescantianum*, the formal catalogue of the Tradescant collection at Lambeth, was published by John Tradescant the Younger in 1660. The book is prefaced with a full page dedication to the restoration of Charles II. The dedication in the second edition is not surprising, as the Tradescants had served the Crown directly or to representatives of it, ie. Robert Cecil, Earl of Salisbury, George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, or lastly James VI & I and Charles I, for fifty two years - through three monarchs, across three continents, five kingdoms, Civil War, Interregnum, and finally the Restoration. The collection that John Tradescant had begun, when Robert Cecil sent him the 'Lowe Countries' to buy fruit trees in 1610, would serve as the world's first fully public museum a mere twenty years later, and the first university museum forty years after that. The work of both Johns Tradescant would prove the material foundation for the English contributions to the fields of archeology, botany, horticulture, and biology. Furthermore, the Johns Tradescant further committed to grant the public access to these wonders. It is this last point that truly encapsulates the lasting significance of the

<sup>46</sup> Longair, Sarah and John McAleer. *Curating Empire: Museums and the British imperial experience*. Manchester UP, Manchester, 2012, 2

<sup>47</sup> Leith-Ross, 143-145.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

Tradescants; the Johns Tradescant recognized that in the face of the pivotal changes in global encounter and exchange in the seventeenth century, it is the obligation of the agent in such changes to not merely further exploration and discovery, but to place ourselves within those grander narratives though the commitment to granting access to all those who may further it. Just as with St Mary's under Big Ben, the Tradescants find themselves as men of modest means and stature, who are able to achieve great influence and respect, and establish as lasting legacy as participants in a paramount period of early modern English history.

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