of an anatomist as that of a poet. Pope's introduction and apparatus allow us to both grasp the poem's intricate allegory and, just as importantly, appreciate it as poetry.

Pope's edition also includes a brief biography of Fetcher, a bibliography of scholarship on the poem, and a history of the text, including reproductions of the original 1633 edition. These reproductions illustrate that *The Purple Island* already contained copious marginal annotations, written by Fletcher himself, both to reference other works and to assist readers in making some of the poem's allegorical connections. In Pope's edition, these annotations are reprinted at the bottom of the page, interspersed with the editor's own notes (with Fletcher's notes indicated by "P.F."). This page layout is not ideal, making it difficult to differentiate the author's own notes from later editorial interventions. Presumably, Fletcher's notes are where they are for a reason, and repositioning them takes us even further away from the way the author wished us to encounter the poem. Pope has made relatively few alterations to the poem's punctuation and orthography. In short, Pope's is an edition of *The Purple Island* that I hope will introduce a generation of new readers, especially graduate students in nondramatic Renaissance literature, to this important yet understudied poem.

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The Mirror of Information in Early Modern England: John Wilkins and the Universal Character. James Dougal Fleming.
London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017. xiv + 292 pp. $109.

James Dougal Fleming is right, it is best to have a copy of John Wilkins's *An Essay towards a Real Character, and a Philosophical Language* (1668) alongside any discussion of that text. It need not be the versions available online, as Fleming suggests: bound print facsimiles (over 400 pages) are available for no more than $60. No matter its intent, Wilkins's essay offers us a contemporaneous explanatory dictionary of thousands of ordinary early modern English words and phrases along with a look at the state of knowledge and information of the time from the perspective of the co-founder of the Royal Society. Fleming's book opens up a welcome discussion of Wilkins's real character, which has not been fully studied or described in the almost 350 years of the book's existence. What is a real character? Quite simply it is a writing system that would by its design directly reveal the extralinguistic reality of any thing or notion without linguistic mediation.

Fleming studies the current and past state of information technology within the broader question, "What is information?"; an early history of shorthand writing, which he claims leads directly to Wilkins's character; binary codes; universal and philosophical languages; communication studies; phenomenology; and a detailed analysis

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of the history and production of John Wilkins's real character. The discussions that involve seventeenth-century ideas are somewhat hampered by a lack of nuance, and by an incomplete understanding of book production, especially related to Wilkins's role as the main force behind the society's relation to publishers and printers (for example, the society did not publish the *Essay* as Fleming claims).

Chapter 5 offers the most significant contribution to the scholarship on Wilkins's *Essay* in its carefully presented and argued explication of the real character. Here Fleming completes his hypothesis that the real character bears analogy to what he calls the mathematical theory of communication information; in other words, phenomenon, knowledge, and information become through the mathematical-like encoding of the real character "a mirror of the universe." It is a "cognitive sign system," "counter-oral," and "anti-dialogic" (221). Fleming makes an interesting claim that the real character of Wilkins is "synoptic," a complex of radicals (primary irreducible concepts) and particles (grammatical and semantic functions or operators) that must be "taken, as they are, together" (219). Fleming correctly points out the limitations of previous scholarship on the universal character of Wilkins; for him the character is "a transformative communications product grounded in the seventeenth-century real character movement" (6). It is odd then that Fleming neglects the linguistic-historical scholarship, a shortcoming in his work that weakens its reliability for those who are new to Wilkins scholarship.

The ontology, as Fleming calls the philosophical dictionary, is the outcome of the philological analyses that Wilkins and his circle performed in the making of the system. Fleming does insist, and rightfully so, that a study of Wilkins's scholarship puts before us the shortcomings of our own intellectual prejudices: Is a database a crypto-ontology? Do databases mirror a metaphysic that brings with them the problems associated with language, thought, and culture?

A nontrivial shortcoming in Fleming's work follows from his putting aside the important linguistic scholarship of the past forty or more years and from neglecting the comprehensive assistance of Wilkins's friend and collaborator, William Lloyd, one of the most highly regarded philologers of the day. Wilkins may have started working on a real character and philosophical language, but when he and Lloyd began work on their *Philosophical Tables* and *Alphabetical Dictionary*, they became immersed in sorting lexical items (words and phrases) according to semantic and topical relations among them. The tables are more anti-ontology or thesaurus-like in their insistent English-centric and linguistically informed way. Rather than an ontology, for the most part they constructed an onomasiological lexicon that included a rather truncated and nonscientific natural history. Just as Wilkins and Lloyd needed to fulfill the society's commission, a useful dictionary project needs to culminate in a printed text.

The value of the book resides in Fleming's focus on the real character, information technology, and characters as signs and devices. The infoskeptic in Fleming compels

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him to ask if the "pragmatic and pitiless forces" of information and big data will meet the fate of its seventeenth-century avatar (272), Wilkins's *Essay*, that is, as a failed market technology that would keep us circling the static track of all the data that's fit to utter.

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The Antiquary: John Aubrey's Historical Scholarship. Kelsey Jackson Williams. Oxford English Monographs. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016. xiv + 192 pp. $100.

John Aubrey saw only one slim volume through press in his lifetime, although as Williams notes in *The Antiquary*, Aubrey's "intellectual stocktaking" (68) late in life also saw frantic, if ultimately fruitless, attempts to publish the two folio volumes of *Monumenta Britannica*, Aubrey's study of Romano-British remains. Also included within *Monumenta* was Aubrey's earlier work, *Templa Druidum*, with its "seminal" (21) claim that Stonehenge and other British megaliths had been designed as Druidic temples. Discussion of the various parts of *Monumenta* occupies the first two chapters of *The Antiquary*—a welcome reassessment of Aubrey's antiquarian writings. *The Antiquary* positions itself alongside recent work on Aubrey's antiquarianism by Graham Parry, William Poole, and Kate Bennett, offering a broadly chronological survey of Aubrey's encounters with Britain's physical and textual past. It makes the particular claim that Aubrey's unique contribution to seventeenth-century studies of physical culture lay in his "comparative antiquitie" (155), a process whereby Aubrey arrived at an understanding of the unknown or unfamiliar "by relating them back to more familiar monuments and using those perceived relationships as a way of reconstructing the cultures which had produced them" (48).

This comparatism, Williams argues, was responsible for many of Aubrey's most ingenious discoveries. We learn, for example, that Aubrey arrived at his understanding of Stonehenge through comparison with recent scholarship on Scandinavian megaliths by Ole Worm. In chapter 3, Williams develops Aubrey's analogic method through a focus on one work, the *Chronologica Architectonica*, which used comparisons between different medieval architectural styles to draw conclusions about the relative date of a building's construction. Williams's discussion of this "handbook for the dating of buildings" (86) is, like his chapters on *Monumenta Britannica*, both highly readable and refreshingly judicious. While Williams is keen to reassess Aubrey's antiquarian writings, and the methods he employed to arrive at his conclusions, what emerges from these pages is as much a study of Aubrey's intellectual ingenuity as his intellectual limitations. These limitations include Aubrey's humanist preference for the classical over

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