

Dodo Birds and Horse Guts: An Exploration of *The Natural History Collection* of the Royal Society

Presenter: Wren Walston



Who is Nehemiah Grew?

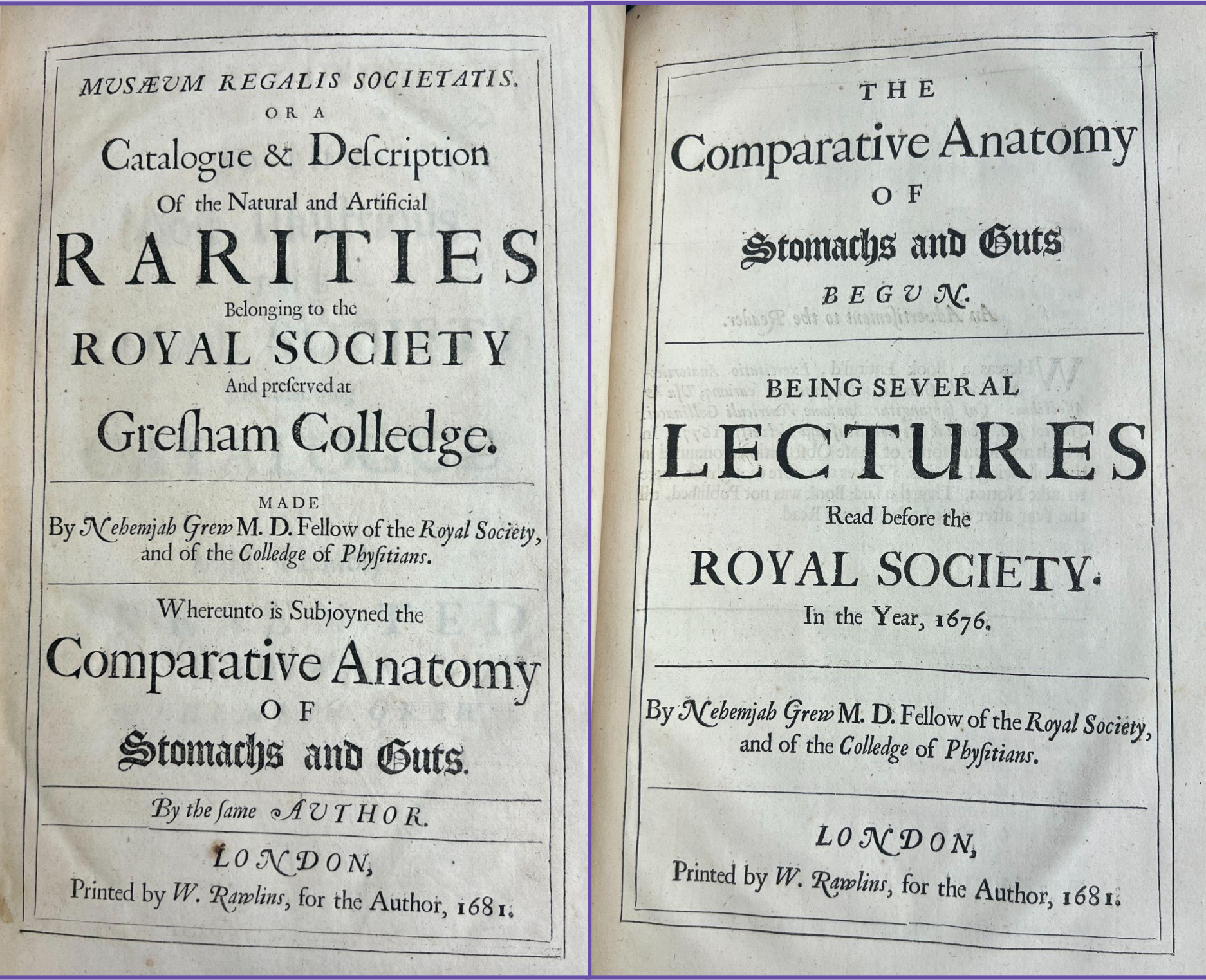
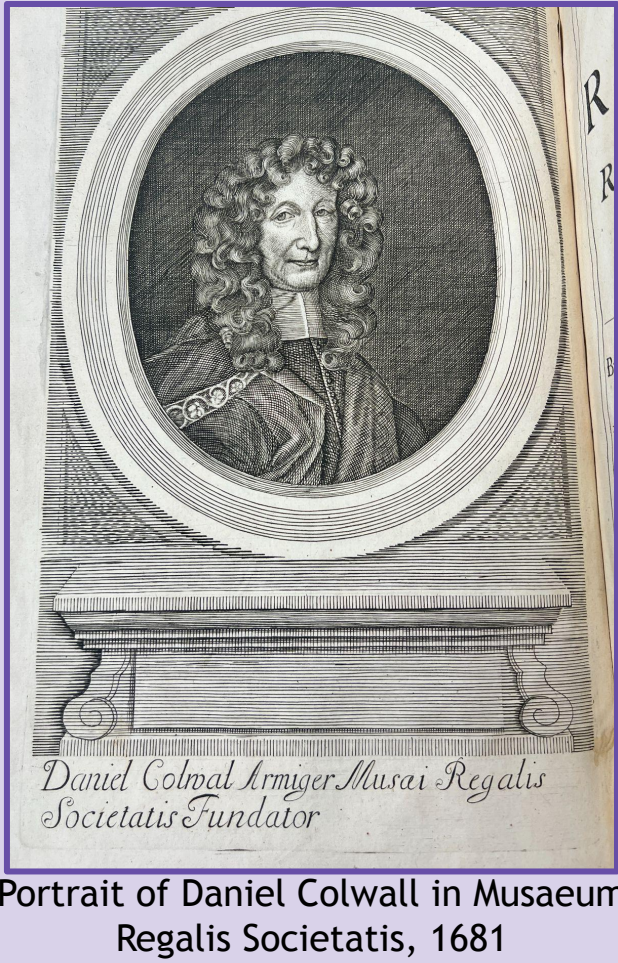
Nehemiah Grew became a fellow of England's esteemed group of scientists, the Royal Society, in 1671. Throughout his time, he published various works coving **physiology** and **botany**. This book was his 6th publication.

The Royal Society and its Fellows

Founded in the 1660s, the Royal Society is a group of the world's most influential scientists, including Isaac Newton, Benjamin Franklin, Charles Darwin and Albert Einstein. Today, the society has awarded fellowships to individuals who have been **influential** in STEM fields. They are responsible for publishing a big portion of scientific research since the late 1600s.

The Repository

The Royal Society's repository was started by Daniel Colwall in 1666 to house a growing **collection** of specimens either used in research or available to be researched. The objects in the repository were a **valued** part of the institution, therefore, being known as having donated to the reputable institution was an even greater honor.

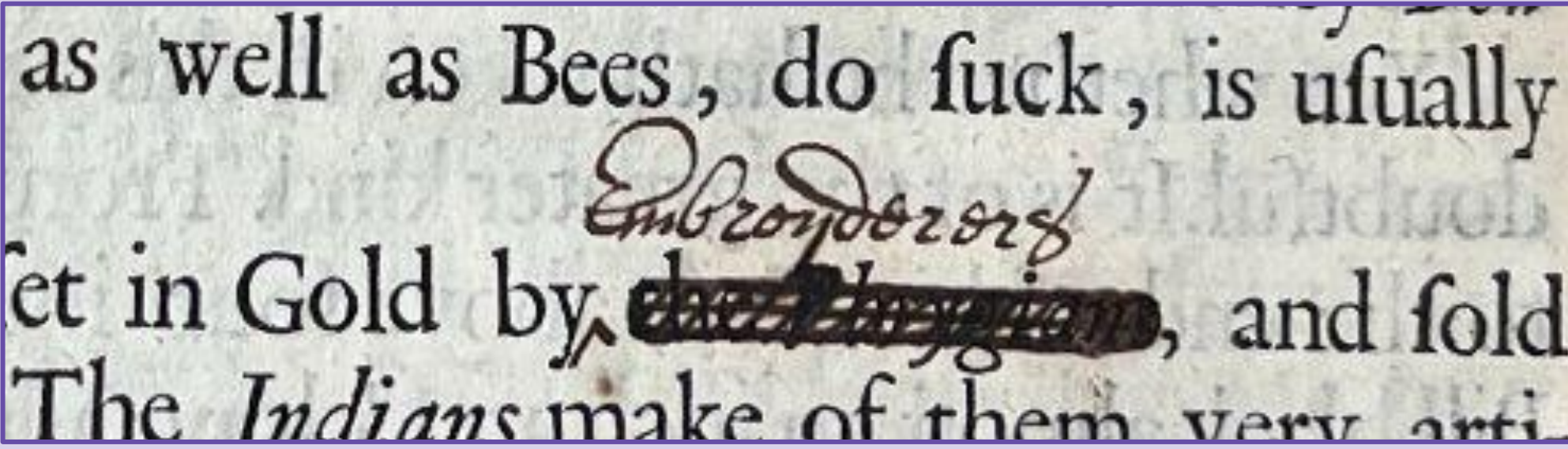


Title pages in Binghamton's copy of Musaeum Regalis Societatis, 1681.

Nehemiah Grew and the Royal Society's motivations behind *Musaeum Regalis Societatis* were self promotion and prestige rather than scientific advancement.

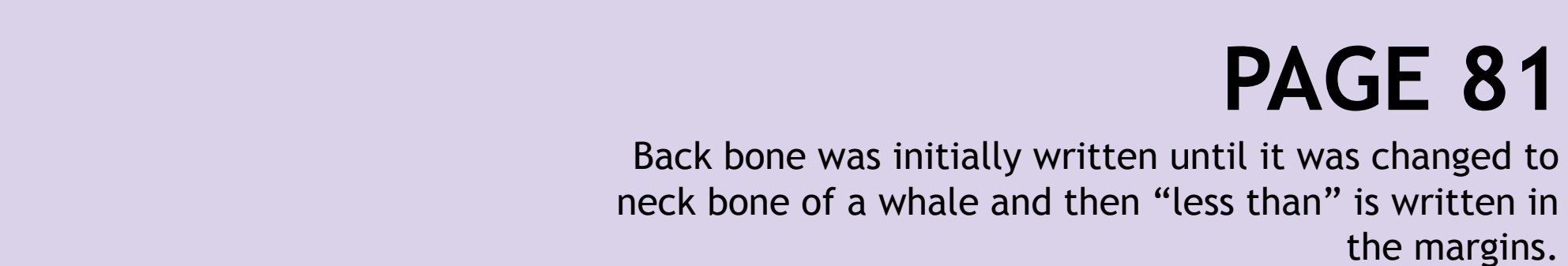
The Corrections

When observing Binghamton University's copy of *Musaeum Regalis Societatis*, brown ink on multiple pages caught my eye. Upon further exploration, I found these same calligraphic marks on every single copy of every edition. A booksellers note hypothesizes that this writing could be Grew's.



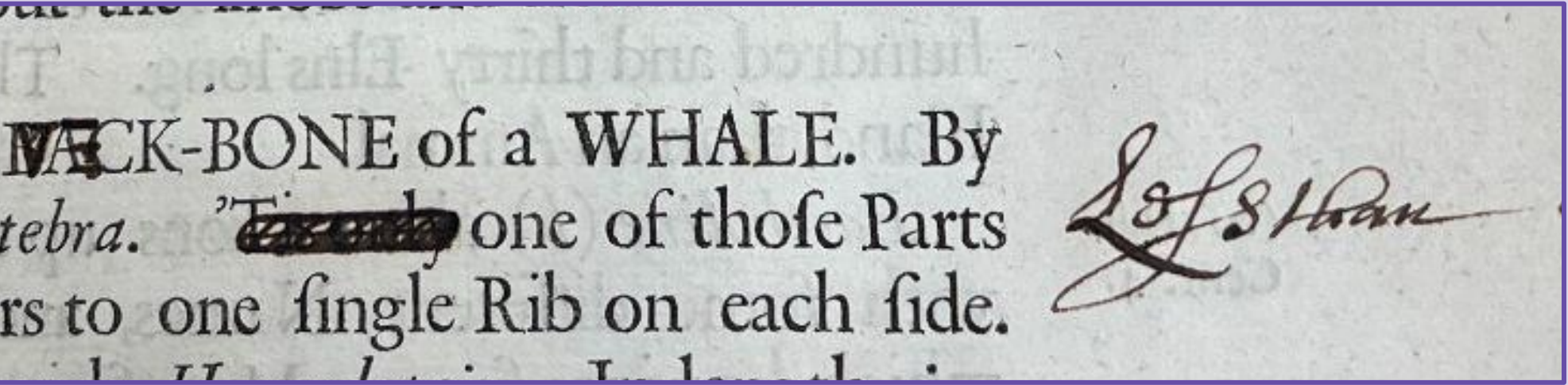
PAGE 62

When referring to the Leffer Hummingbird, "emroyderers" (embroiderers) is written above a crossed out word.



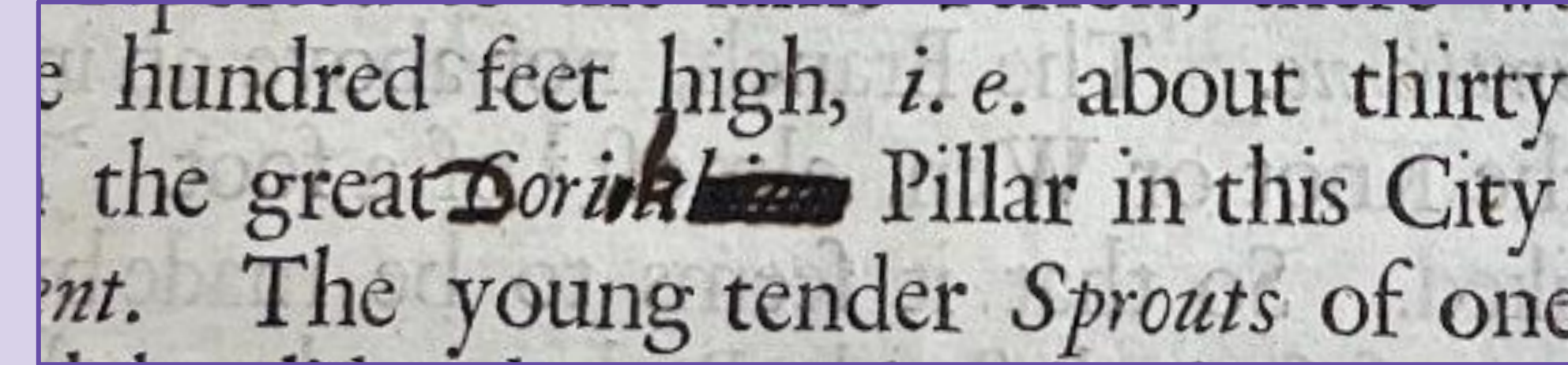
PAGE 81

Back bone was initially written until it was changed to neck bone of a whale and then "less than" is written in the margins.



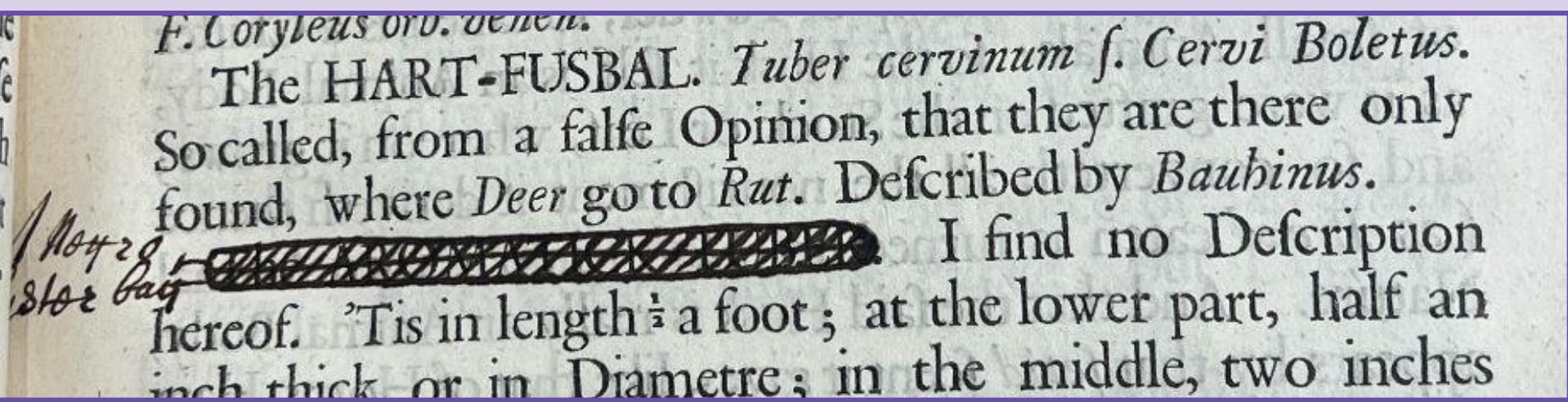
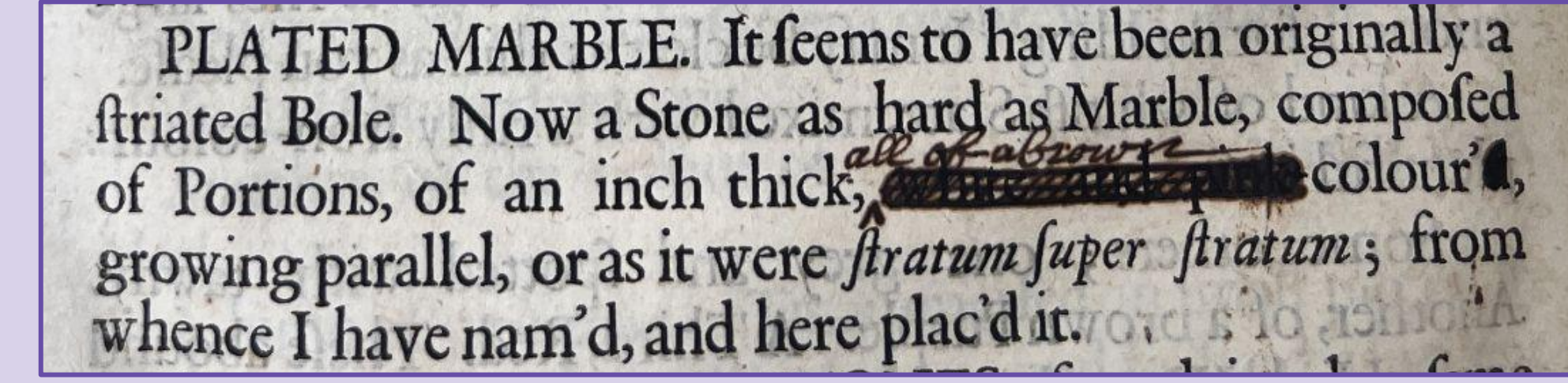
PAGE 181

Corinthian column is changed to a "doric" (doric) column when referring to a monument in Barbados.



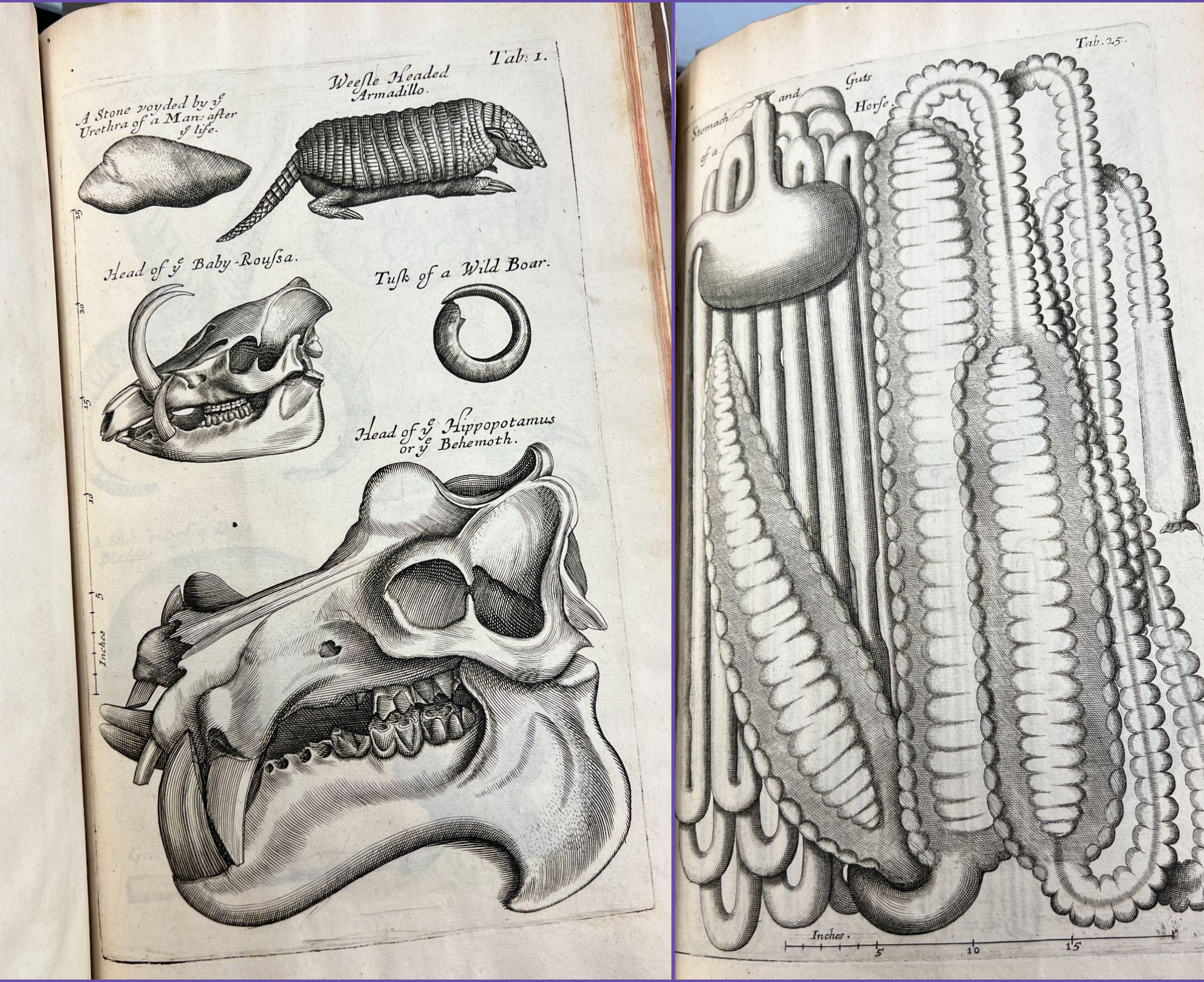
PAGE 239

"The aromatick tuber" (aromatic tube) crossed out and replaced with "clyster bag," also known as an enema bag.



PAGE 312

Changes a stones description as being white and pink to "all of a brown."



Pages in the Musaeum Regalis Societatis, specimen engravings and guts for comparative anatomy, respectively.

So What?

There are many factors that made me question the reasons for the creation of this catalog.

1. The Audience

Who was the book created for and for what purpose?

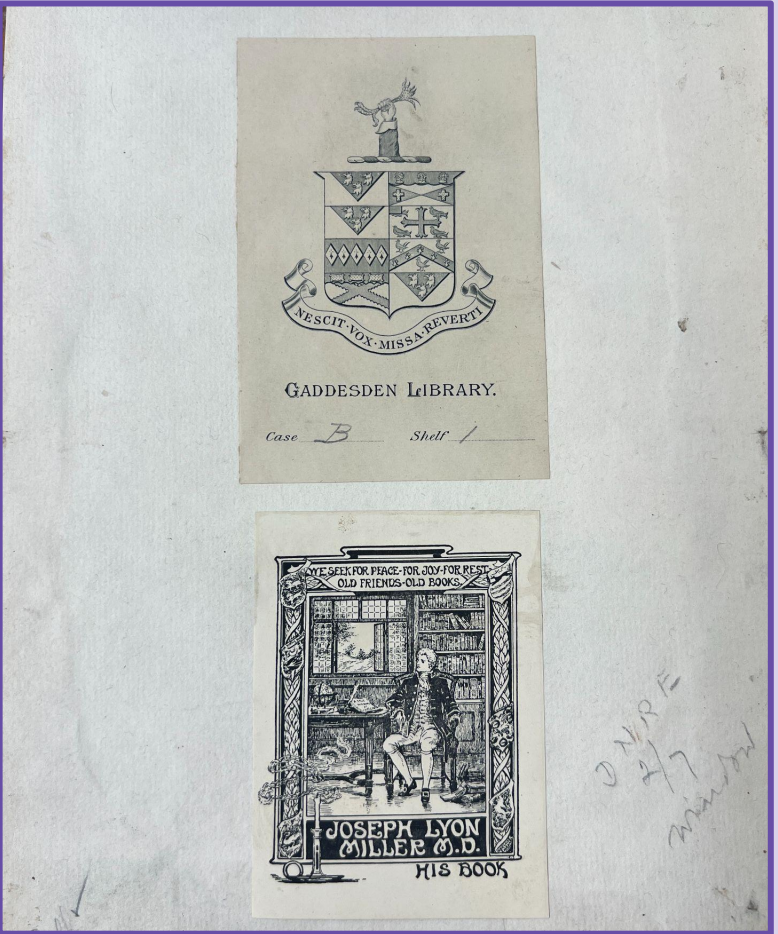
2. Advertisement

Was it a way for the Royal Society to publicize their collection?

3. The Inaccuracies

If popularization was the goal, why would the corrections not be fixed?

I argue that this book was not valued for scientific purposes, but for showmanship.



The two bookplates in the front cover of Binghamton's copy of the *Musaeum Regalis Societatis*.

Read the full paper here:

