



the fourth and final life-time edition of his collected verse, contains most of these, and several more songs with their composers named. Henry Purcell's 'When on my sick bed I languish' is a setting of Flatman's 'A Thought of Death'.<sup>8</sup>

Flatman's third trade was that of the miniature painter. It is for this he is primarily known now, and in it he excelled.<sup>9</sup> What is particularly remarkable is that we know nothing of his training at all, and yet he probably ranks as the most significant New College artist up to his time to whom we can put a name. A fine self-portrait survives—it is in the V&A, and illustrated in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography's* article on him—as well as miniatures of the well-to-do patent clerk Charles Beale and his wife Alice, the noted artist, and their friend and relative by his marriage Samuel Woodforde, also a poet.<sup>10</sup> Woodforde had originally attended Wadham College, and he and Flatman both had a hand in the *Naps upon Parnassus* venture; later, in London, Flatman and Woodforde shared a chamber in the Inner Temple. New College acquired a Flatman miniature in the time of Warden Smith, anecdotally from funds raised by selling port, but fine thought it is, we do not know the identity of the sitter.

Flatman's friendship with particularly Woodforde brings us to his unlikely claim to college fame. In 1664, Woodforde had been proposed as a fellow to the recently founded Royal Society of London by its initial mastermind, John Wilkins, not coincidentally the former warden of Wadham College. Wilkins appreciated that the New Science needed its literary apologists and defenders, and so among the early Fellows of the Royal Society we find such major poetic names as Abraham Cowley, John Denham, Edmund Waller, and John Dryden.<sup>11</sup> Woodforde's own anticipated contribution—fortunately or unfortunately, it never got written—was to be a creation epic, versifying the first week of Creation as recorded in Genesis, but illustrated by examples from the discoveries of the Royal Society: John Milton meets Robert Boyle, as it were.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Z. 144; Purcell's autograph is in British Library, Add. MS 30930.

<sup>9</sup> John Murdoch et al., *The English Miniature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), pp. 148–53, and the same author's article in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

<sup>10</sup>

It is probably in this context that we are to understand the election of Flatman himself to the Royal Society, in 1668, four years after Woodforde. He was proposed by the FRS and antiquary John Aubrey, renowned today as one of the creators of modern biography, but in his time better known as an experimental philosopher with a particular interest in mathematics and what we now call archaeology, especially the study of megaliths.<sup>13</sup> It is notable that Flatman was the only person proposed by the otherwise extremely gregarious Aubrey.

Flatman is the earliest New College FRS. In that role, however, he was totally and utterly inactive. Although elected, he was never formally admitted, and so cannot even be shown to have attended a single meeting; it has to be said that Aubrey's proposal was a flop. Woodforde, granted, did nothing either, but he at least had plans to turn his pen to the uses of the Society, which in its early decades needed all the literary defence it could get.

*Hereditus Ridens* of which he managed no fewer than eighty-two issues between February 1681 and August 1682.



