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Corpus before Erasmus, or the English Humanist Tradition and Greek before the Trojans¹

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‘Corpus before Erasmus’ might sound like an under-promise, the proposal of a topic severely in circumscribed scope — if it exists at all. The identity of Oxford’s Corpus Christi College is perceived to be so intricately related to a style of Renaissance learning that we might wonder what Corpus would be without Erasmus. His words of praise for the ‘magnificent’ college are taken to be akin to a second foundation charter, written within two years of its establishment in 1517.² That celebration of England’s gaining a ‘trilingual’ institution, with a library to match, has been thought to capture the intentions of Richard Fox and its first president, John Claymond.³ If Erasmus has indelibly moulded how we view Corpus, the college has, over the centuries, repaid the compliment, most memorably in the monumental *Erasmi Epistolae*, the lifework of P. S. Allen, Corpuscule and eventual successor to Claymond, being the college’s president from 1924 until his death in 1933.⁴ It is such a definitive edition, which still shapes our understanding of the humanist, that we might even ask: what would Erasmus be without Corpus scholarship?⁵

The answer to that question is that the association between the college and Allen’s edition is only by a stroke of fortune as substantial as it now appears. Allen, after some years teaching in Lahore, spent much of his career next door to Corpus, in Merton College, and that is where his work on Erasmus began in earnest, the first volume appearing in 1906. His return to his undergraduate *alma mater* in the year the fifth volume of the *Epistolae* was published was not uncontroversial.⁶ When Allen died nine years later, the *Epistolae* were far from being finished: the final three volumes were edited by his widow, Helen Mary Allen (who had been acknowledged as his co-worker since the third instalment) and his Mertonian friend, H. W. Garrod. Just as the ‘Allen’ edition was by no means the work of P. S. Allen alone, so Corpus’s identity was likewise constructed through multiple influences. Many of those were of long convention: the concept of a college was too established a part of Oxford’s fabric for

¹ My first debt of gratitude is to the library and archive staff of Corpus Christi College, Oxford — Julie Blyth, Harriet Patrick, Julian Reid and Joanna Snelling — for their invaluable and patient assistance to a demanding reader. I would also like to thank Jonathan Woolfson, who read a first draft of this paper, as did John Watts, to whom I owe yet more thanks, for having invited me to speak at the conference from which this article developed, and for encouraging me to turn it into what you are about to read.

² Desiderius Erasmus, *Opus Epistolarum Des. Erasmi Roterodami*, ed. P. S. Allen and H. M. Allen, 12 vols (Oxford, 1906-58) [hereafter *Erasmi epistolae*], iii, ep. 990.

³ To cite just one example of this common view, R. J. Schoeck, ‘The Humanist Books of Bishop Richard Fox Given to Corpus Christi College in 1528’ in J. F. Alcina et al. ed., *Acta Conventus Neo-Latini Bariensis* (Tempe AZ, 1998), pp.532-39.

⁴ For Allen’s biography, see H. W. Garrod, ‘Percy Stafford Allen’, *Proceedings of the British Academy*, xix (1933), pp. 381-407.

⁵ The association between Allen and Corpus was reinforced by the college holding a conference ‘to mark the centenary of the publication of the first volume of *Erasmi Epistolae*’, subsequently published as S. Ryle ed., *Erasmus and the Renaissance Republic of Letters* (Turnhout, 2014).

⁶ T. Charles-Edwards and J. Reid, *Corpus Christi College. A History* (Oxford, 2017), pp. 365-69.

one to be created *ex nihilo*, without respect for its predecessors. The element that, it is claimed, made Corpus different — ‘quietly revolutionary’, in a recent formulation — was its ‘institutionalization of a humanist programme’ in an English setting.⁷ We shall look, in this article, at some of the founding texts of that ‘institutionalization’, but, let us at the outset remember that the first promoters of the *studia humanitatis* at the start of the Quattrocento had positioned themselves as counter-cultural, as outsiders throwing barbs at the barbicans of academe. Humanism, that is to say, did not require institutional recognition to thrive, and, in England as elsewhere, it carved out space for itself in the fifteenth-century cultural landscape, within and beyond institutions — we shall, in the second half of this article, consider these dynamics through the example of Greek interest in fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century England. Yet, humanists proved a quarrelsome tribe: where the early Quattrocento trailblazers laid their path, others sometimes refused to follow. Over the century, the identity of humanism developed, ramified and splintered, drawing strength from its conflicts, not only with those it characterised as its implacable opponents, but also among its own proponents. Corpus could draw on these plural identities, and the implication is that the affiliation to Erasmus and his own formulation of humanism — what he called *bonae litterae* — was only one possible inspiration among several. We should, I suggest, question how far the intention was to build an institution wedded in loyalty to one humanism, forsaking all others. We should entertain the possibility that Corpus was not as much born Erasmian as made Erasmian.⁸

The Erasmus / Corpus nexus

The Erasmus / Corpus nexus seems to us so natural that we are liable to assume any manifestation of it is a relic of the college’s first days. An example of this is provided by one of the treasures of the library, the two-volume manuscript set of the New Testament.⁹ It is a parallel edition, Vulgate (in black) on one line, the Erasmian translation (in red) on the next. Moreover, though it is unsigned, it is patently in the script of Pieter Meghen, sometimes called Erasmus’s favourite scribe, with whom he worked in the late 1510s.¹⁰ On the basis of the script, these manuscripts must date from soon after the publication in 1522 of the third edition of the *Novum testamentum*, which is the text used here.¹¹ The manuscripts come, then, with a suggestive pedigree and there is a natural desire to relate them, in the costliness of

⁷ R. Thomson, *The Fox and the Bees. The Early Library of Corpus Christi College Oxford* (Cambridge, 2018), p. 3.

⁸ Much of what follows should be familiar from the best scholarship. I think, in particular, of the articles by Jonathan Woolfson cited below and of the chapters by the two editors of consecutive volumes of the History of the University of Oxford [hereafter HUU]: J. I. Catto, ‘Scholars and Studies in Renaissance Oxford’ in J. I. Catto and T. A. R. Evans ed., *Late Medieval Oxford* [HUU, ii] (Oxford, 1992), pp. 769-783, and J. McConica, ‘The Rise of the Undergraduate College’ in id. ed., *The Collegiate University* [HUU, iii] (Oxford, 1986), pp. 1-68 (I completed this article in the days following the death of Jeremy Catto: he gave us much in his life; would that it had been longer). As will be clear, there are some new details to add, and what follows differs somewhat in nuance of perspective.

⁹ Oxford: Corpus Christi College [hereafter CCCO], MSS 13 and 14.

¹⁰ On Meghen, the most recent work is D. Rundle, *The Renaissance Reform of the Book and Britain* (Cambridge, 2019), ch. IV (with bibliography, including the articles of J. B. Trapp which remain essential).

¹¹ This dating is suggested by A. J. Brown, ‘The Date of Erasmus’ Latin Translation of the New Testament’, *TCBS*, viii (1984), pp. 351-380; I can corroborate it from my own textual collation and palaeographical study.

their understated elegance, to Fox himself.¹² In truth, they include inscriptions showing that they reached the college by another route and one which was must less distinguished, in as much as the identity of the donor, ‘doctor hille’, has defied reconstruction up to now.

It has not been noticed before that the wording and palaeography of the donation notes can help provide an approximate date for the books’ arrival: their script places them later than those recording the gifts to the college in the 1530s and 1540s, though, like them, they opened with ‘orate pro anima’, an invocation still used in Corpus in 1559 but which prudently fell out of use in the 1560s.¹³ Moreover, while the inscriptions in the books given in 1558 and 1559 are written in a variable humanist-influenced script, rather than the secretary style in these manuscripts, they appear all to be by one hand.¹⁴ It is true enough that there is, from the relevant period, no record of a doctor of either English university with the donor’s surname.¹⁵ However, in London at the very end of 1559, a Welshman named Alban Hyll died. It is said that he had spent some time at Oxford, before going to Italy where he received a doctorate in medicine; he shared this *peregrinatio academica* with Edward Wotton, Corpus’s first reader in Greek, who was to be Hyll’s colleague in the College of Physicians, a new institution itself with some influence from Corpus.¹⁶ Hyll was particularly known for his study of Galen but had a reputation, more broadly, for being ‘in omni literarum genere maxime versatus’.¹⁷ In his will, he appointed as its overseer his ‘loveynge frende’ Robert Savage, who may be the person of that name admitted to Corpus in 1525.¹⁸ Hyll probably did not have any prior

¹² Thus, J. B. Trapp, ‘Erasmus and his English Friends’, *Erasmus of Rotterdam Yearbook*, xii (1991), pp. 18-44 at p. 28 (where he goes on to propose the attractive but unprovable identification of the volumes’ commissioner as Cardinal Wolsey).

¹³ One italic script appears recording the donations of the Founder, the first President and of other donors, like John Taylor (c. 1535), who gave what is now I.37. Their scribe is identified as Gregory Stremer by Thomson, *Fox and Bees*, p. 42. The phrase ‘orate pro anima’ was later erased in MSS 13 and 14, with the grammar subtly altered accordingly.

¹⁴ The invocation ‘orate pro anima’ appear in the books bequeathed by Robert Morwent (d. 1558) — now I.266 and LD.16.d.19 — and Richard Marshall (d. 1559) — for a list, see Thomson, *Fox and Bees*, pp. 66-67 — but is absent from the next known donation note, which appears in MS. 22, given in 1566. We know MSS 13 and 14 were in the college by 1589 because they appear in the library catalogue of that year: Thomson, *The University and College Libraries of Oxford* [Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues, xvi], 2 vols (London, 2015) [hereafter *Oxford*], UO33.199.

¹⁵ In A. B. Emden, *A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford A.D. 1501 to 1540* (Oxford, 1974) [hereafter *BRUO 1501-1540*], the only ‘Hyll’ recorded at the college is James, who entered and left in 1535, and so was not a doctor, while the only doctor, Robert of Merton, died in 1524, a little too early to have come by these volumes second-hand. There is also no Doctor Hill recorded in J. Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses, 1500-1714*, 4 vols (Oxford, 1891-1892) [hereafter *AO*] or J. and J. A. Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses from the earliest times to 1751*, 4 vols (Cambridge, 1922-1954) [now most readily available online: <http://venn.lib.cam.ac.uk/acad/2016/search-2016.html> (last accessed 22 August 2018)], suggesting that the person took his doctorate from a university on the European mainland.

¹⁶ Alban Hyll does not appear in Emden, *BRUO 1501-1540*, but A. Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses*, ed. P. Bliss, 2 vols (London, 1813), i, col. 308 records him as an Oxford man, who went on to study abroad. R. Munk, *The Roll of the Royal College of Physicians*, 3 vols (London, 1878), i, p. 51 records him as receiving his doctorate at Bologna (though he does not appear in the online database of that university’s graduates: <http://asfe.unibo.it/en>). One piece of evidence for his connexion with Edward Wotton is recorded in T. F. Mayer ed., *The Correspondence of Reginald Pole*, 4 vols (Abingdon, 2002-2016), iii, p. 40; on Wotton in Italy, see J. Woolfson, *Padua and the Tudors* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 82, 287. On the connexion between the statutes for the College of Physicians and those of Corpus, see C. Webster, ‘Thomas Linacre and the Foundation of the College of Physicians’ in F. Maddison, M. Pelling and C. Webster ed., *Essays on the Life and Works of Thomas Linacre c. 1460-1524* (Oxford, 1977) [hereafter *Linacre Studies*], pp. 198-222 at pp. 218-219.

¹⁷ Bassiano Landi, *Anatomia corporis humani...* (Frankfurt, 1605), p. 225; T. Tanner, *Bibliotheca Britannico-Hibernica* (London, 1748), pp. 425-426.

¹⁸ Hyll’s will is Kew: The National Archives, PROB. 11/43/36.

association with the college and the brevity of the reference to him, without even his Christian name mentioned, suggests a lack of direct knowledge; it was probably Savage who considered the books would make an appropriate posthumous gift from his late friend to his own former college. The manuscripts' arrival, then, took place in the college's fifth decade and was not quite the foundational act that might be assumed. It was not simply an acknowledgement of the association between college and Dutch humanist but an augmentation of that identity.

The nexus, in other words, exists through a process of repeated replenishing which began in the early decades of Corpus's existence. Accretion after accretion has made it grow to such stature that it casts its shadow back upon the college's first moments, making it difficult for us to delineate those moments clearly. The central contention of this article is that the burden of tradition puts us in danger of overstating the impact of Erasmian inspiration on Corpus's creation at the expense of recognising its debt to other, more established forms of humanism. If, as a result of this discussion, the college comes to look less 'revolutionary' than I hope that, instead, we will be able to appreciate how it bore witness to the multi-faceted phenomenon we term 'humanism' as it had come to be practised in England by the second decade of the sixteenth century.

Erasmus had, by the mid-1510s, such a substantial reputation that it would have taken a super-human effort for the founder to have ignored him completely, and Fox had specific reasons to remember him. He may have been an early patron of the Dutchman, as he is one candidate for being the bishop in whose London house Erasmus had temporary lodging, probably in 1505.¹⁹ Fox certainly was the recipient of a presentation manuscript from the humanist, a translation of Lucian's *Toxaris*, offered as a new year's gift for 1506.²⁰ That codex itself does not survive — it appears that Fox did not think of including it in the books he later sent to his college. The gift is known from the printed edition which appeared in November 1506, gathering together Latin versions of Lucian by both Erasmus and Thomas More — an edition which also seems not to have been part of Corpus's sixteenth-century library.²¹ In the following years, communication between the bishop and the humanist was intermittent. It was More who, in 1516 (and so when the building of the college was reaching completion), informed Erasmus that the bishop of Winchester, 'vir ut scis prudentissimus', had praised the new version of the New Testament, saying it was worth ten commentaries, particularly for its rendering of 'figurae graecae' into idiomatic Latin.²² It may be that around this time Fox also supported a young man to travel to Louvain to study Greek and then to work with Erasmus: at least, when that youth, Edward Lee, turned against Erasmus, claiming to be able to correct his Greek, the latter wrote to Fox in the expectation that he could control Lee.²³

The man Fox poached from Magdalen to be his college's first president, John Claymond, must also already have been conversant with Erasmus's work, though corroboration to prove

¹⁹ *Erasmi epistolae*, epp. 185 and 186.

²⁰ *Erasmi epistolae*, ep. 187.

²¹ Desiderius Erasmus, *Opera omnia*, 9 'ordines' all in multiple 'tomi' (Amsterdam, 1969-) [hereafter ASD], ix/1 (1969), pp. 379-627, ed. C. Robinson; Thomas More, *Translations of Lucian*, ed. C. R. Thompson [Complete Works of St Thomas More, iii/1] (New Haven CT, 1974).

²² *Erasmi epistolae*, ep. 502, ll. 19-24.

²³ *Erasmi epistolae*, ep. 973 (25 May 1519). On this affair, see also Thomas More, *In Defense of Humanism* [The Complete Works of St Thomas More, xv] (New Haven CT, 1986), pp. xxxi-xli.

this reasonable assumption is surprisingly rare.²⁴ The list of his books from the early 1520s shows interest in humanist as well as classical texts but the only near-contemporary northern European represented is not Erasmus but John Anwykyll, who probably taught Claymond when he was a schoolboy.²⁵ It is true that it has been conjectured that Claymond may have met Erasmus when the latter visited in Oxford in 1499, but there is no evidence to prove that claim and some reason to doubt it.²⁶ In the letter praising the new college, which is the first known direct contact between the two, Erasmus says that he would not have written without the encouragement of mutual friends, implying a lack of close acquaintance.²⁷ That epistle was followed by another, albeit seven years later, when Erasmus dedicated an opusculum, his translation of Chrysostom's *De fato et providentia*, to Claymond. The President may have been flattered to receive these tokens of a famous scholar's esteem, but the autograph epistle of 1519 was not retained within the college, and the library's copy of the Chrysostom comes not from Claymond but is a seventeenth-century gift, in another of those subsequent acts of nurturing an association between Corpus and Erasmus.²⁸

What the dedication to the 1526 Chrysostom does demonstrate is that, by that date, Erasmus was aware of the wording of the college's statutes, for he plays on the theme of bees collecting honey which was — as we will discuss in a moment — a leitmotif of that document. His earlier letter of 1519 suggests no such acquaintance, and the mismatch of his eulogy with the reality of the foundation has sometimes precipitated the written equivalent of embarrassed shuffling of feet. Erasmus talks of both the college and its library as trilingual but the presence of Hebrew was not countenanced in the statutes, and, while the college did come to possess a small but highly significant group of Hebrew manuscripts, they were the bequest of Claymond, who died in 1536/7.²⁹ That does not mean that we should ascribe the exaggeration of Erasmus's letter to ignorance; instead, we would be better to see in it an example of his favoured technique, the hortatory use of praise.³⁰ This is to say that he described a Corpus not as he imagined it was but as he was encouraging it to become. Considering how the institution developed, we might conclude that some within its walls did,

²⁴ On Claymond, the most important work now is J. Woolfson, 'John Claymond, Pliny the Elder, and the Early History of Corpus Christi College, Oxford', *English Historical Review* [hereafter *EHR*], cxii (1997), pp. 882-903.

²⁵ Thomson, *Oxford*, UO24 (the Anwykyll is UO24.59). Claymond did come to own a copy of the 1519 edition of Erasmus's *Novum Testamentum*, which he gave to the college in 1526; it is now CCCO, Δ.19.6 (it does not contain any annotations).

²⁶ P. G. Bietenholtz ed., *Contemporaries of Erasmus. A Biographical Register*, 3 vols (Toronto, 1985-87), i, pp. 307-308.

²⁷ *Erasmi epistolae*, ep. 990, ll. 55-58.

²⁸ Allen, in editing ep. 1661, suggested that Corpus copy 'may have been sent to President Claymond' but admitted 'there is nothing to show that it was presented'. The copy in question is now CCCO, LL.L.1412.Ch/526(2), bound with two other editions of Chrysostom by Erasmus (both Basel, 1525), *De orando Deum* and *Quod multae quidem dignitatis...*, the whole volume being bequeathed to the college by a former member, James Rosewell (d. 1684), on whom see *AO*, p. 1281. The three printings have overlap in the scripts which annotate their margins, and so probably circulated together before being cropped and put into the present seventeenth-century binding; at the opening title-page, there were names written, now erased, with one forename visible: 'Marye'. There is no sign of a copy of the 1526 edition in the college's 1589 library catalogue: Thomson, *Oxford*, UO33.

²⁹ On these matters, I refer the reader to Joanna Weinberg's article in this issue.

³⁰ For discussion of this technique in general, see D. Rundle, "'Not so much praise as precept": Erasmus, panegyric and the Renaissance art of teaching princes' in N. Livingstone & Y. L. Too ed., *Pedagogy and Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 148-169. The point is well-made in relation to this specific letter by Charles-Edwards and Reid, *Corpus*, p. 55.

indeed, take the encomium as a spur to further intellectual endeavours and that, thus, the college grew into its Erasmian identity. To understand how far that may have been the intention of the founder, our best source is the set of statutes Fox provided for his college.

The statutes are worthy of a fuller philological study than is possible here. I will confine myself to one impression: their style is so uneven as to be odd. They open unsurprisingly with an invocation of a Pauline dictum (Hebrews 13:14), which is followed by a brief description of a ladder of spiritual ascent — a symbol familiar to us from humanist neo-Platonism but here explicated in such a way as to suggest closer kinship to writings associated with Bernard of Clairvaux.³¹ The imagery then shifts quickly and sharply, to introduce the concept of the beehive, one in which we can find the influence of Pliny the Elder and, perhaps, of Petrarch.³² That metaphor reappears so often in the statutes that it acts something like a central conceit, except reference to it is intermittent and obtrusive into a prose which is generally much plainer. A stylistic tension is acknowledged explicitly in the first chapter, *de statutorum commoditate*, which begins by invoking a well-known passage in Cicero's *De legibus* but ends by requesting any Ciceronian not laugh at the *barbara vocabula* which will be used to ensure 'facilem et aptam intellectionem'.³³ The shifts and conflicts in style hint at the statutes being the product of a committee, who employed statutes of earlier colleges as templates, revised them and then prettified them — but only fitfully — by a humanist turn of phrase. The effect is a text which stylistically is only in small part humanist and thus is notably unErasmian.

That is a matter of expression rather than of the substance of the educational programme the founder envisaged for his college. We can find more evidence of humanist leanings if we look to the duties prescribed for the public lecturers. The provision of such lectures was not unprecedented, as William Waynflete had ordained something similar for his foundation of Magdalen but the statutes for that college did not stipulate specific texts to be used.³⁴ In establishing set-texts, there is something unusual in Corpus's statutes — but, it must be said, if we were to expect Fox to express his loyalties by specific reference to Erasmus, we would be disappointed. To my knowledge, no work of his was named in any of the statutes of the new university colleges founded in the first half of the sixteenth century. To find him mentioned explicitly, we would need to regress, as it were, to school, and look at the statutes established in 1518 for John Colet's re-foundation of St Paul's, but there Erasmus had a direct link with the enterprise, having dedicated *De copia* to Colet.³⁵ In Oxford, the first Low Countries humanist to be established as required reading was, instead, the man Erasmus

³¹ *Statutes of the Colleges of Oxford*, 3 vols (London, 1853) [hereafter *Statutes*], ii, part 10, p. 1. For a similar discussion of the right and left sides of Jacob's ladder (Genesis 28:12), see the anonymous sermon, associated with Bernard, in *Patrologia latina*, clxxxiv (Paris, 1862), col. 1016. For the different use of the concept by Platonist humanists, see D. F. Lackner, 'The Camaldolese Academy: Ambrogio Traversari, Marsilio Ficino and the Christian Platonic Tradition' in M. J. B. Allen and V. Rees, with M. Davies ed., *Marsilio Ficino: his theology, his philosophy, his legacy* (Leiden, 2002), pp. 15-44.

³² For important discussion, noting the direct influence of Pliny, see J. Woolfson, 'Bishop Fox's Bees and the Early English Renaissance', *Reformation and Renaissance Review*, v (2003), pp. 7-26; cf. id., 'The Renaissance of Bees', *Renaissance Studies*, xxiv (2010), pp. 281-300. For Petrarch's influential discussion of bees, see M. L. McLaughlin, *Literary Imitation in the Italian Renaissance* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 22-48.

³³ *Statutes*, ii, part 10, p. 2.

³⁴ *Statutes*, ii, part 8, pp. 47-49, and (for a similar provision at Brasenose) part 9, pp. 15-17.

³⁵ The statutes of St Paul's (in English) are printed at J. Lupton, *A Life of John Colet* (London, 1887), pp. 271-284, with the relevant section at pp. 279-80. The dedication of *De copia* is *Erasmi epistolae*, Ep. 260; as well as that text, the statutes mention the short verse work *Institutum Christiani hominis*.

perceived as his forerunner, Rudolph Agricola, but that was in 1555, in the two Marian foundations, Trinity and St John's; the context in each case shows it was his *De inventione dialectica* that was to be studied.³⁶ The previous year, in Cambridge, the statutes for the royal foundation of Trinity College, also recommended Agricola.³⁷ In that town, however, he was only the second northern European humanist to be cited in this way. The statutes promulgated by Henry VIII in 1545 for St John's, Cambridge made reference to Thomas Linacre, who had funded lectureships in medicine in both universities and whose translations of Galen were specifically proposed for teaching.³⁸ Incidentally, Linacre, a friend of Claymond, had sent a copy of the 1517 *editio princeps* of *De sanitate tuenda* to Richard Fox but, as with the other humanist works dedicated to the bishop, it did not make its way to his Oxford college.³⁹

Absence of explicit mention cannot, of course, be taken to imply absence of influence, and there are some respects in which Erasmus has been found to be silently echoed in the phrasing of the stipulations for Corpus's public lectures. It is often remarked that the statutes strike a combative note when establishing the programme for theology: the Bible should be interpreted using the Church Fathers, 'non Liranum, non Hugonem Viennensem, ac caeteros ut tempore ita doctrina longe posteriores'.⁴⁰ It has recently been noticed that this injunction probably takes its cue from Erasmus, who similarly chose Lyra and Hugh of St Cher as butts for his mockery when defending his *Novum instrumentum*.⁴¹ It can be added that the listing of Church Fathers — Jerome, Augustine, Ambrose, Origen, Hilary, John Chrysostom and John Damascene — may similarly owe something to the 'Methodus' that prefaced the *Novum instrumentum*, but, if so, there are some notable differences. Erasmus ranked Origen as providing the most useful commentaries; he includes all the others cited in the statutes, with the exception of John Damascene, but he additionally recommended four other Greek Fathers: Basil, Gregory Nazianzen, Athanasius and Cyril.⁴² The contrast suggests that, while the drafters had Erasmus in their mind, they were willing to show some independence from him. At the same time, by transposing Erasmian statements into a new context, they may have been carried away by their own rhetoric: the implication of their emphasis on returning

³⁶ *Statutes*, iii, part 12, p. 50; *The Statutes of Trinity College, Oxford* (London, 1855), p. 44 (where Cuthbert Tunstal is also mentioned, for his *De arte supputandi*). On Agricola, see F. Akkerman and A. J. Vanderjagt ed., *Rodolphus Agricola Phrisius, 1444-1485* (Leiden, 1988).

³⁷ Cambridge: Trinity College, MS. O.9.7b (D. R. Leader, *A History of the University of Cambridge. Volume 1* (Cambridge, 1988), p. 346 implies erroneously that Agricola appears in the 1552 statutes); I thank Adam Green, Senior Assistant Archivist at Trinity, for his assistance on this matter. The presence of Agricola accords with the 1535 injunctions provided for Cambridge and presumably (though they are lost) for Oxford, though the others recommended with him — Philip Melanchthon and George of Trebizond — do not appear in the same sets of statutes. On those injunctions, see F. D. Logan, 'The First Royal Visitation of the English Universities, 1535', *EHR*, cvi (1991), pp. 861-888.

³⁸ *Early Statutes of the College of St John the Evangelist in the University of Cambridge*, ed. J. E. B. Mayor (Cambridge, 1859), pp. 253-55.

³⁹ On Linacre's friendship with Claymond, see n. 89 below. Fox's copy of the 1517 translation is now London: Royal College of Physicians, D1/34-b-1(2); the dedication is printed in *Letters of Richard Fox 1486-1527*, ed. P. S. and H. M. Allen (Oxford, 1929), pp. 109-110. Corpus did receive early a copy of Linacre's 1517 Galen, as one of the gifts of John Claymond; it is now Φ .A.3.12(1), on which see Thomson, *Oxford*, UO33.181.

⁴⁰ *Statutes*, ii, part 10, pp. 50-51.

⁴¹ Thomson, *Fox and Bees*, p. 15, noting *Epistolae Erasmi*, ep. 456 (ll. 123-125).

⁴² The list in the 'Methodus', like the 'Apologia' prefaced to the *Novum instrumentum*, has a fuller list but one which has notable differences from that in the statutes (both name Hilary and Chrysostom, but Erasmus does not include John Damascene and instead recommends): Erasmus, *Ausgewählte Werke*, ed. H. Holborn (Munich, 1933), p. 160. The *Enchiridion* of 1503 gave a shorter list, confined to the first four Fathers mentioned in the statutes: ASD, v/8 (2016), p. 118, ll. 325-326.

ad fontes, without any intermediary, gives little space for the use of the latest texts - of Valla's *Adnotationes* which Erasmus had edited, for example, or, indeed, the *Novum instrumentum* to which they were nodding and which Fox had reportedly praised above commentaries.

The statutes' direction to the exclusions expected in the theology teaching should alert us to the importance of what is omitted as much as what is included. In this regard, there is an absence that deserves comment: in the discussion of the place of logic in the college, there is no reference to Duns Scotus. What makes this noteworthy is that, in the following decade, both Thomas Wolsey for Cardinal College and, in Cambridge, John Fisher for St John's, found a use for the subtle doctor's works.⁴³ In contrast, it had been a central contention of the early Quattrocento promoters of the *studia humanitatis* that Italy had been infected by the logic teaching of the barbarians, by whom they meant primarily the *Britanni*, whose works were popular in Italian universities; they set about providing a cure and, in so doing, some in England came to share their allergy to the Dunce.⁴⁴ In other words, the Corpus statutes, in their omission of Scotus, may well be drawing on a longer tradition of humanism. If so, it was a revolutionary act which did not gain followers among other humanist-inclined college founders.

This, necessarily, is an *argumentum ex silentio*; for explicit evidence of the statutes looking back to the humanist tradition before Erasmus, there are the requirements laid down for the humanity lecturer. He was expected to provide three lecture series, with specific classical authors cited for two of them, while for the third, he was to discourse on: 'vel Elegantias Laurentii Vallensis, vel Lucubrationes Atticas Auli Gellii, vel Miscellanea Politiani'.⁴⁵ The shifting in this short list between the 'modern' and the ancient makes it, at first sight, curious but, individually, none of the three was a *recherché* inclusion. All of them would have met with Erasmus's approval: his penchant for Valla is well-known, Aulus Gellius was praised in the *Adagia*, a work in which the dedication of the 1500 first edition to William Blount, Lord Mountjoy, specifically recommended Politian's *Miscellanea* (alongside the works of Ermolao Barbaro and Pico della Mirandola).⁴⁶ Equally, the drafters of the statutes had no need for his advice to prompt their selection of any of them. Aulus Gellius was an established presence in Oxford libraries, as was Valla's *Elegantiae*.⁴⁷ Politian's *Miscellanea* was less frequently seen. It was chained to the shelves in a couple of Cambridge colleges in the early sixteenth century but, contemporaneously, it does not appear in the records of Oxford institutional libraries, nor in the later 1589 catalogue of Corpus itself.⁴⁸ That, though, should be not taken to imply that

⁴³ *Statutes*, ii, part 11, p. 127; *Early Statutes*, ed. Mayor, pp. 313, 376 (cf. pp. 110, 122, 252).

⁴⁴ I discuss this topos in D. Rundle, *England and the Identity of Italian Renaissance Humanism* (in preparation).

⁴⁵ *Statutes*, ii, part 10, p. 49. This list was later repeated in the *Statutes of Trinity, Oxford*, p. 45.

⁴⁶ See for instance, *Adagia*, iv.437 [ASD, ii/1 (1993), pp. 436-437]. The dedication to Mountjoy is *Epistolae Erasmi*, ep. 126 (ll. 127-142).

⁴⁷ For instance, Humfrey, duke of Gloucester had given a copy of Aulus Gellius to the university library in 1439: Thomson, *Oxford*, UO1.128. There is a manuscript of Valla's *Elegantiae* in Claymond's former college of Magdalen, MS. lat. 193, which was certainly in Oxford at the start of the sixteenth century when it was bound there. On the early English reception of the *Elegantiae*, see D. Rundle, 'Humanist Eloquence among the Barbarians in fifteenth-century England' in C. Burnett & N. Mann ed., *Britannia Latina* [Warburg Institute Colloquia, viii] (London & Turin, 2005), pp. 68-85 at pp. 83-84. Fox gave his college a printed copy of the work (Louvain: Johann Veldener, ?1476), now CCCO, Φ.A.2.7, which it appears he owned when bishop of Exeter (1487-1492); it also includes annotations of an earlier owner and (at, eg, fol. 21) by Claymond.

⁴⁸ P. D. Clarke, *The University and College Libraries of Cambridge* [Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues, x] (London, 2002), UC10.5 and UC22.53.

no copy reached the college — in fact, Claymond’s own heavily-annotated copy survives.⁴⁹ More widely, Politian was a known quantity in English literary circles by the early sixteenth century, in part because of his influence on William Grocyn and Thomas Linacre.⁵⁰ The particular logic for its inclusion here is explained by that feature of the list which I have described as seeming curious: Politian himself had opened his work by declaring he was following the style of Aulus Gellius, and this was a point reiterated by Juan Luis Vives in 1513.⁵¹ It was presumably with this appreciation of Politian’s model in mind that the drafters of the statutes bracketed the two authors together. As a result, they compiled a selection which was probably intended to suggest ‘advanced’ reading rather than the more basic (like Niccolò Perotti’s popular *De cornucopia* or Erasmus’s *De copia*), and offered texts where the advantage for teaching was that the lecturer could delve into any of the three for a suitable passage, rather than having to progress through a single text.

There was, then, a precise pedagogical purpose to this list but in it also lies a further implication: by establishing these three works as canonical texts it gives the impression that eloquent Latin comes solely from Italy. This would have pleased Lorenzo Valla who, in the *Elegantiae* (as elsewhere) celebrated the Latin language as the patrimony of the descendants of ancient Rome.⁵² Such chauvinism was already undercut by the ability of some English writers, along with other northern Europeans, to emulate the humanist style promoted by the likes of Valla, but that was clearly not a reason to reject the Quattrocento tradition of the *studia humanitatis*. There is, though, another way in which the statutes move away from the intellectual identity constructed for themselves by earlier Italian humanists and that concerns the most radical feature of the educational programme, the presence of Greek.

Corpus was, of course, not the first English institution to require Greek learning — that honour goes to Colet’s St Paul’s School. It was certainly the first university college to make statutory provision for it but the justification for doing so relies on an historical claim about the language’s expected presence in Oxford. The relevant chapter introduces the discussion of the Greek lecturer by explaining:

Secundus autem herbarius nostri alvearii Graecorum Graecaeque linguae erit et appellabitur Lector, quem propterea in nostro alveario collocamus quod sacrosancti canones commodissime pro bonis litteris et imprimis Christianis instituerunt ac iusserunt eum in hac universitate Oxoniensi, perinde ac paucis aliis celeberrimis gymnasiis nunquam desiderari, ...⁵³

The language here, with its reference to *bonae litterae*, is at its most Erasmian, though that is not the only influence detectable. ‘The most holy canons’ alluded to are a decree of the

⁴⁹ CCCO, Δ.2.11, a copy of Politian’s *Opera*, 2 vols (Paris, 1512); its association with Claymond seems to have gone unnoticed — it is not listed by Thomson, *Fox and Bees*, for instance — but is apparent on most pages. Its lack of a donation note and absence from the 1589 catalogue may suggest that it was either not in the library or was in the circulating collection.

⁵⁰ C. H. Clough, ‘Thomas Linacre, Cornelio Vitelli, and Humanistic Studies at Oxford’ in *Linacre Studies*, pp. 1-23 at pp.5-7.

⁵¹ Angelo Poliziano, *Miscellaneorum centuria prima* (Florence: Antonius Miscominus, 1489), sig. ai^v; Juan Luis Vives, *Early Writings 2*, ed. J. Ijsewijn, A. Fritsen and C. Fantazzi (Leiden, 1991), p. 146 (ll. 36-37).

⁵² I discuss these passages in D. Rundle, ‘Divided by a common language? Being eloquent versus being understood in fifteenth-century Latin’ in O. Margolis and G. Barrett ed., *Latinity in the Post-Classical World* (Cambridge, forthcoming).

⁵³ *Statutes*, ii, part 10, p. 49.

Council of Vienne in 1312 and its re-promulgation at the Council of Basel in 1434, establishing a requirement that the universities of Paris, Oxford, Bologna and Salamanca provide teaching in ‘linguas Hebraicam, Arabicam, Graecam et Chaldaeam’.⁵⁴ It is said that this stipulation was invoked by Gregorio Tifernate (di Città di Castello, 1414-1464) when persuading the University of Paris in the mid-1450s that they should employ him to teach Greek.⁵⁵ Erasmus was certainly aware of the stipulation: he first mentions it in his letters in 1501.⁵⁶ There is a verbal similarity in the statutes’ ‘celeberrima gymnasia’ to another humanist use of the decree: Antonio Nebrija, in his 1508 *Apologia*, drew attention to the wisdom of the Popes ‘qui scitis atque decretis suis sanxerunt litteras graecas et hebraeas in gymnasiis publicis debere legi et doceri’.⁵⁷ The Corpus statutes, however, make markedly more specific use of the conciliar decrees than either of these sixteenth-century precedents: a special duty has been placed on Oxford, one which is not presently fulfilled and which the college will help the community to honour. There is an implicit challenge to the wider university, which, in case it were too subtle, is made more overt by the clause immediately following:

...nec tamen eos hac ratione excusatos volumus qui Graecam lectionem in eo suis impensis sustenare debeant.

At the same time, this passage suggests a history of Greek learning in the West in which Oxford had (or should have had) a part, and is thus very different from the tale told by the Quattrocento’s first humanists. The statutes, that is to say, were, in other elements, as least as much indebted to the early trailblazers for the humanist cause as to the fashionable figure of Erasmus, but at that point they diverged from any of those precedents, and turned instead to a local tradition.

Greek in Quattrocento Italy and England

In the mythology that the Florentine humanists constructed to celebrate their own novelty, their role in the revival of Greek was one of their most notable achievements. They acknowledged as their teacher the Byzantine scholar and emissary, Manuel Chrysoloras (1355-1415), who spent some months in their city lecturing on his language. As the leading proponent of the *studia humanitatis*, Leonardo Bruni, later put it:

⁵⁴ The quotation is from the re-promulgation at Basel: *Sacrosancta concilia*, ed. P. Labbé and G. Cossart, 14 vols (Paris, 1671-72), xii (1672), col. 547. The story is slightly more complicated than the re-promulgation suggests as the original Vienne decree included Greek in the draft but that was removed and so does not appear in the text which became canon law as the Clementine Constitutions (or Liber Septimus) as Lib. V. tit. 1, cap. 1, though Iohannes Andreae’s commentary noted that absence.

⁵⁵ On this tale, see J. Butcher, ‘Filellenismo nell’orazione *De studiis litterarum*’ in J. Butcher, A. Czortek and M. Martelli ed., *Gregorio e Lilio. Due Tifernati protagonisti dell’Umanesimo italiano* (Umbertide, 2017), pp. 131-144 at p. 137.

⁵⁶ *Erasmii Epistolae*, ep. 149 (ll. 44-51), and cf. ep. 182 (ll. 180-183).

⁵⁷ Antonio Nebrija, *Apologia earum rerum quae illi obiiciuntur* (Granada, 1535), fol. v^v. For discussion, see C. del Valle Rodríguez, ‘Antonio Nebrija’s Biblical Scholarship’, in E. Rummel ed., *Biblical Humanism and Scholasticism in the Age of Erasmus* (Leiden, 2008), pp. 57-72.

Nam ... Chrysoloras Byzantinus, vir magnus quidem ac prope singularis, disciplinam graecarum litterarum in Italiam rettulit, quarum cognitio ... septingentos iam annos nulla nostros apud homines habebatur⁵⁸

Never mind that there were Greek-speaking communities in southern Italy, the implication of *nostri homines* in Bruni's words is that western civilization had been bereft of knowledge of one of the two languages which were essential to an identity as *litteratus* in ancient Rome. Bruni himself set about the challenge of rendering classic works like Aristotle's *Ethics* into Ciceronian Latin. Never mind that it had been translated before: it was the humanists' contention that the translation (which was intentionally *ad verbum*, not *ad sensum*) was so incompetent to make Aristotle ineloquent, as Bruni explained in his preface to his new version of the text:

Aristotelis *Ethicorum* libros facere latinos nuper institui, non quia prius traducti non essent, sed quia sic traducti erant, ut barbari magis quam latini effecti viderentur. Constat enim illius traductionis auctorem (quicumque tandem is fuerit quem tamen ordinis praedicatorum fuisse manifestum est) neque grecas neque latinas litteras satis scivisse. Nam et greca multis in locis male accipit et latina sic pueriliter et indocte reddit, ut vehementer pudendum sit tam supine crasseque ruditatis... Ita semigrecus quidem et semilatinus fit in utraque deficiens lingua in neutra integer...⁵⁹

As this extract shows, Bruni had a passing interest in who his predecessor might have been. He was right in his surmise that a Dominican was involved in its production, but the version we know as the *recensio recognita* was an adaptation by William of Moerbeke (d. 1286) of an earlier translation.⁶⁰ The person responsible for that work (in part revising the efforts of others) was Robert Grosseteste (c. 1170-1253), not himself a friar but a friend to the Franciscans, teaching at their house in Oxford and leaving his library to that convent.⁶¹

Bruni's translation was certainly an international success; it was circulating in England a little over a decade after its publication in the late 1410s. Moreover, the follow-up to it, a rendition of Aristotle's *Politics*, produced in the mid-1430s, was intended from the first to have an English readership, being sent to Humfrey, duke of Gloucester.⁶² This pattern of export to the edges of civilization played well to the self-image the humanists wanted to project of being the educators of Europe, saving culture from recent barbarism. A move of texts out from Italy to other countries was, however, not the only vector of travel for humanist creativity.

⁵⁸ Leonardo Bruni Aretino. *Humanistisch-philosophische Schriften*, ed. H. Baron (Leipzig, 1928), pp. 125-26.

⁵⁹ Bruni Aretino, ed. Baron, pp. 76-77. On his criticism, see E. Franceschini, 'Leonardo Bruni e il "Vetus Interpres" dell'Etica a Nicomaco' in *Medioevo e Rinascimento: studi in onore di Bruno Nardi*, 2 vols (Florence, 1955), i, pp. 297-319. On the methods of translation, see P. Botley, *Latin Translation in the Renaissance* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 1-62. For the context of study of the work, see D. A. Lines, *Aristotle's Ethics in the Italian Renaissance* (Leiden, 2002) and id., 'Aristotle's Ethics in the Renaissance' in J. Miller, *The Reception of Aristotle's Ethics* (Cambridge, 2012), pp. 171-193.

⁶⁰ Edited in the Aristoteles latinus project (xxxvi/1-3, fasc. quartus) by R. A. Gauthier (Leiden, 1973).

⁶¹ On Grosseteste, see, as well as R. W. Southern's classic *Robert Grosseteste: the growth of an English mind in medieval Europe*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1992), esp. pp. 296-315, R. Weiss, 'The Study of Greek in England during the fourteenth century' in id., *Medieval and Humanist Greek* (Padua, 1977), pp. 80-107, and A. C. Dionisotti, 'On the Greek Studies of Robert Grosseteste' in A. C. Dionisotti, A. Grafton & J. Kraye ed., *The Uses of Greek and Latin. Historical Essays* (London, 1988), pp. 19 - 39. His translation is also edited Aristoteles Latinus project (xxxvi/1-3, fasc. tertius), ed. R. A. Gauthier (Leiden, 1972).

⁶² On both of these points, see Rundle, *Identity of Humanism*.

Relevant for our discussion is the case of Antonio Beccaria, who was secretary to the duke of Gloucester in the late 1430s and early 1440s. While at the duke's court in Greenwich, he composed translations both from the *volgare* and from Greek — some of the *vitae* by Plutarch which were so popular in humanist circles, as well as anti-Arian texts of the Church Father, Athanasius.⁶³ The latter endeavour resulted in a larger selection of that Church Father's oeuvre than was available in Italy, and so, on his return to his home-city of Verona, Beccaria was importing new texts to humanism's heartland. It was not only the evidence of his own industriousness that he carried back in his saddle-bags; he also travelled to Italy with Greek manuscripts he had acquired in England.

One of those codices, an early thirteenth-century copy of Ps-Dionysius the Areopagite, has notes in Latin which have rightly been identified as in Beccaria's hand.⁶⁴ It has a prestigious pedigree, having been made at St Denis in Paris for the use of Robert Grosseteste. It is plausible, then, that it passed with other of that bishop's books to the Oxford Franciscans — though other Greek volumes associated with him and his followers were dispersed more widely. For instance, an Octateuch made in Southern Italy with chapter numbers added in Grosseteste's circle was later owned by the priory of Christ Church, Canterbury, but that was not the end of its travels.⁶⁵ We know that it travelled back to Italy; what has not been previously noticed is that, like the Ps-Dionysius, it has markings by Antonio Beccaria; after his death, the manuscript was among those that passed to the canons regular of San Leonardo in Mondonego, above his hometown of Verona.⁶⁶ We might imagine that Beccaria's ability to return to Italy with these two volumes suggests the low regard in which Greek learning was held in mid-fifteenth century England. Or we might, equally, relish the irony that Beccaria was importing into Italy Greek manuscripts from a land often synonymous in humanists' mind with barbarous scholasticism and, what is more, books associated specifically with Robert Grosseteste, who had been integral to the translating work that was lampooned by Leonardo Bruni.

If Christ Church priory did willingly discard its Greek Octateuch in the 1430s or 1440s, it was not many decades before the same house was complicit in the revival of the study of that language. The central figure was William Sellyng, who was its prior from 1472 until his death in 1494. According to John Leland, writing in the second quarter of the sixteenth century, Sellyng showed interest in 'meliores artes' from soon after the arrival in the cathedral precincts, before he was sent, in 1454, to the priory's Oxford satellite of Canterbury

⁶³ For the *volgare* translation (of Boccaccio's *Corbaccio*), see G. Albanese, 'Per la fortuna umanistica del Boccaccio', *Studi umanistici*, ii (1991), pp. 89=150; for those from Plutarch, see M. Pade, *The reception of Plutarch's Lives in fifteenth-century Italy*, 2 vols (Copenhagen, 2007), i, pp. 222-223 and 315, and ii, pp. 25-28, 70; for those from Athanasius (and more generally on Beccaria's time in England), see D. Rundle, 'From Greenwich to Verona: Antonio Beccaria, St Athanasius and the Translation of Orthodoxy', *Humanistica*, v ([2012 for] 2010), pp. 97-108.

⁶⁴ Oxford: Bodleian, MS. Canon. Gr. 97, on which see R. Barbour, 'A Manuscript of Ps.-Dionysius Areopagita copied for Robert Grosseteste', *Bodleian Library Record*, vi (1958), pp. 401-416; [Bodleian exhib. cat.,] *Greek Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library* (Oxford, 1966), no. 36; [Bodleian exhib. cat.,] *Manuscripts at Oxford* (Oxford, 1980), no. XXII.1.

⁶⁵ Oxford: Bodleian, MS. Canon. Gr. 35, on which see *Greek Manuscripts in the Bodleian*, no. 38.

⁶⁶ The interventions I attribute to Beccaria include the running headers and some of the notes (eg fol. 26^v, 67, 71). I propose that this volume, running from Genesis to the early chapters of Ruth is a match for no. 103 in his gift to San Leonardo: *Biblie libri pars una a Genesi usque ad Rhuth*. For the list of those books, see G. P. Marchi, 'L'umanista Antonio Beccaria alla corte di Humfrey di Gloucester e di Ermolao Barbaro', *Università di Padova. Facoltà di Lingue in Verona. Annali*, ser. 2, i (1966-67), pp. 1-41.

College (adjacent to the future site of Corpus).⁶⁷ Sellyng himself later recalled that he studied there Latin eloquence with Stefano Surigone, an itinerant humanist who also, a few decades afterwards, had John Claymond among his pupils.⁶⁸ Sellyng continued his education in Italy: Leland implies that he learnt Greek in Bologna from Politian, whom Sellyng ‘linguarum antiquae elegantiae addictissimus, arcissima sibi coniunxit amicam familiaritate’.⁶⁹ Leland is also the origin for the statement that, on a later embassy to Italy in 1487, Sellyng took with him a young Thomas Linacre and introduced him to Politian. There is some confusion in these claims — Sellyng received a doctorate at Bologna in 1466, when Politian was only twelve — but it is certain that Sellyng knew Linacre and that he himself did master Greek.⁷⁰ Whether, back in England, the prior of Christ Church also acted as a teacher in the language is open to some debate. The one piece of evidence usually adduced is a short passage in a notebook of William Worcestre.⁷¹ To that, we might add that there was at least one scribe working for the priory in the later 1470s who gained enough competence to write Greek letters.⁷² Sellyng himself, in 1486, produced a Latin rendition of a homily by Chrysostom, and so became the first Englishman to translate a Greek text in his native country.⁷³ Sellyng’s Chrysostom was to enjoy some popularity in the decade after his death in a clerical humanist circle involving Christopher Urswick, who, like Richard Fox, had been with Henry, earl of Richmond, at the time of his invasion in 1485.⁷⁴ In those years, Sellyng was remembered (in the words of his funerary inscription) as ‘Graeca atque latina lingua perdoctus’.⁷⁵ It was a reputation which was probably known to Richard Fox, not least because they had served on the same embassy to France in 1490-91.⁷⁶

Canterbury (or, more widely, West Kent) was by no means the only English locale to show an interest in Greek in the later fifteenth century.⁷⁷ Contemporaneous with Sellyng’s studies

⁶⁷ John Leland, *De viris illustribus*, ed. J. Carley (Toronto, 2010), p. 808.

⁶⁸ On Surigone, see R. Weiss, *Humanism in England during the Fifteenth Century*, 4th ed., ed. D. Rundle and A. J. Lappin (Oxford, 2018) [hereafter Weiss⁴ with page reference to the third edition (1967) given in square brackets], pp. 211-212 [pp. 138-39] and, for Claymond’s debt to him, Thomson, *Fox and Bees*, p. 75.

⁶⁹ Leland, *De viris*, ed. Carley, p. 808. Weiss⁴, p. 234 [p. 154] proposes that Sellyng’s Greek teacher was likely to be Andronicus Callistus.

⁷⁰ For the association between Sellyng and Linacre, see J. W. Bennett, ‘John Morer’s Will: Thomas Linacre and William Sellyng’s Greek Teaching’, *Studies in the Renaissance*, xv (1968), pp. 70-91, and J. M. W. Willoughby, *The Libraries of Collegiate Churches*, 2 vols (London, 2013), SC206 (pp. 38-42).

⁷¹ The notes occur at BL, MS. Cotton Julius F. VII, fol. 118, discussed by Bennett, ‘Morer’s Will’, pp. 80-81.

⁷² The scribe was Theoderic Werken, the manuscript in question Cambridge: Trinity College, MS. R.17.5, discussed in Rundle, *Renaissance Reform*, ch. IV.

⁷³ The translation survives in three early manuscripts, one in private hands and the others in the BL, MSS 15,673 (fol. 3-28) and 47,675 (fol. 2-28). As a translator, he was preceded by John Free, whose work, however, was done in Italy and only one of his translations reached England (he sent his version of Synesius’s *De laude calvitii* was sent to Thomas Bekynton, bishop of Bath and Wells; it survives as Oxford: Bodleian, MS. Bodl. 80). On Free, see R. J. Mitchell, *John Free. From Bristol to Rome in the Fifteenth Century* (London, 1955) and Rundle, *Renaissance Reform*, ch. V.

⁷⁴ On the fashion for this translation, see D. Rundle, ‘God’s city: the civic construction of the *ecclesia* in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries’ in M. Bose and V. Gillespie ed., *After Chichele* (forthcoming).

⁷⁵ The inscription is lost, but provided by E. Hasted, *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent*, 2nd ed., 12 vols (Canterbury, 1797-1801), xi (1800), pp. 456-457 (reading ‘perdoctus’ for Hasted’s ‘praedoctus’). For similar praise, see also the priory’s obit book, BL, MS. Arundel 68, fol. 4 (olim 2), discussed in my ‘God’s city’.

⁷⁶ Charles-Edwards and Reid, *Corpus*, pp. 20-21.

⁷⁷ West Kent because John Morer (or Mower) who was vicar of St Mildred’s, Tenterden, also possessed Greek books, which he left to Linacre: Bennett, ‘Morer’s Will’, p. 91.

was the engagement shown by the circle of George Neville, archbishop of York.⁷⁸ Neville himself attracted the attention of a couple of Byzantine émigrés: one, Emmanuel of Constantinople, presented him at the turn of 1468 to 1469 with a collection of Greek texts (Demosthenes, Aeschines and others) which he had transcribed.⁷⁹ In the middle of the following decade, George Hermonymos was sent by the pope to plead with Edward IV for the release from prison in Calais of the archbishop, who was, not for the first time, under the king's suspicion.⁸⁰ Hermonymos's embassy could not be accounted entirely a success: Neville was released but, in 1476, died, while the diplomat himself suffered imprisonment. Before those events, however, Hermonymos had arranged a presentation manuscript for Neville, in Latin, of apophthegmata he had translated from his native tongue.⁸¹ Hermonymos subsequently stayed away from England, at a safe distance in France, but his links with the Neville circle did not end with the archbishop's demise. He later presented a manuscript he had produced of the Ps-Aristotelian *De virtutibus*, in both Latin and Greek, to Neville's former confidant, John Shirwood, who had been made bishop of Durham in 1484, a see he held until his death, in Rome, in January 1493.⁸²

The association between Hermonymos and Shirwood probably went back some years before that gift. It seems to me that the scribe chosen for the apophthegmata manuscript dedicated to Neville was the same person who was employed by Shirwood for the writing of three Latin manuscripts, made in the early 1470s and now in Corpus Christi College.⁸³ Their present location serves as a reminder that the main source for the college's earliest books were those which had been collected by Shirwood on his travels. He had often been employed as a diplomat to Italy and was in the 1487 embassy that also included Sellyng and Linacre (it must have been an intellectually high-powered mission); he was also a voracious reader, knowledgeable in Greek as well as Latin. His manuscripts and incunables in the latter language were given to Corpus by its founder, who had been Shirwood's successor as bishop of Durham, and who, it seems, came across them at Bishop Auckland, where an episcopal palace was located.⁸⁴ Fox did not remove everything; John Leland mentions that Cuthbert Tunstal, when he was bishop of Durham (from 1530), found at Auckland 'the Greek treasures' which had been left there by Shirwood.⁸⁵

⁷⁸ On his humanist interests, see Weiss⁴, pp. 214-220 [pp. 141-145] and M. Lowry, 'John Rous and the Survival of the Neville Circle', *Viator*, xix (1988), pp. 327-338.

⁷⁹ Leiden: Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS. Voss. Gr. F. 56.

⁸⁰ On Hermonymos, see now M. P. Kalatzi, *Hermonymos: a Study in Scribal, Literary and Teaching Activities in the Fifteenth and early Sixteenth Centuries* (Athens, 2009).

⁸¹ BL, MS. Harl. 3346, with another copy being MS. Harl. 3348, while a third, addressed to William, abbot of St Albans (whether this is Albon or Wallingford is unclear), appeared at auction at Christie's London rooms on 12 July 2017 as lot. 17. The last is in a different script from the two Harleian manuscripts and I tentatively suggest that it may be by Hermonymos himself. For the scribe of the Harleian manuscripts, see below.

⁸² Oxford: Bodleian, MS. Rawl. G. 93. On Shirwood, see *BRUO*, pp. 1692-93, Weiss⁴, pp. 227-31 [pp. 149-52], and D. C. Skemer, 'Words Not Written in Stone: John Shirwood's Epitaph for a Canon of Exeter Cathedral' in C. P. Hourihane ed., *Manuscripta illuminata: Approaches to Understanding Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts* (Princeton NJ, 2014), pp. 108-43.

⁸³ The three manuscripts for Shirwood are CCCO, MSS 60, 92 and 93. I briefly discuss them and propose the link with BL, MSS Harl. 3346 and 3348 in Rundle, *Renaissance Reform*, ch. VII.

⁸⁴ The tale is well rehearsed by Willoughby, *Colleges*, pp. 60-61.

⁸⁵ Leland, *De viris*, ed. Carley, pp. 442-444.

This fact provides scholarship with a quandary, which was expressed by P. S. Allen: ‘why did not Fox secure the Greek books for Corpus as well as the Latin?’⁸⁶ Allen responded to his own question — ‘no answer is possible, nor ever likely’ — though he inclined to assume that if Fox had known of them, he would have taken them, so they were probably either not brought to or positively hidden from his attention. That is improbable: since whoever had stewardship of Shirwood’s collection at Bishop Auckland was willing to part with the Latin volumes, a large proportion of which was classical and humanist, it is unlikely that they would fight to retain Greek manuscripts that would have appealed to a similar but smaller humanist-inclined audience. The implication, then, must be that Fox, in the last years of the fifteenth century, was not overly concerned about receiving them: he wanted to build up his humanist library, but he was not a member of that intellectual avant-garde which was engaging with and promoting the study of Greek.

If Fox, then, was a late convert to the Hellenic cause, it may have been through a realisation that men like Sellyng and Shirwood were being followed by increasing numbers, as witnessed not only by the ongoing tradition of translation, but also by the editing and printing of ancient works in Greek. In that activity, Erasmus played his part, though the endeavour might better be termed ‘Aldine’ than ‘Erasmian’ humanism. Indeed, when Fox bought Greek books for his new foundation, those from the Venetian press of Aldus Manutius were so dominant that it might be his purchasing policy was targeted towards them.⁸⁷ Those gained for Corpus by the first President were more eclectic in their origins, but editions in which Erasmus had a role were few among them.⁸⁸ John Claymond was not himself a scholar of Greek: he certainly came to have some acquaintance with the language, though he may have been largely self-taught and only began studying it in his forties.⁸⁹ He was, however, a promoter of the language from when he was President at Magdalen; that support was to continue after his move to the new foundation, and was not solely confined to the college itself.⁹⁰ His major contribution at Corpus was the securing for its library not only the printed books, but also the Greek manuscripts which had been owned by William Grocyn (d. 1519).⁹¹ The college thus became the inheritor of another strand of English interest in the language.

Claymond would have remembered Grocyn, who was divinity reader at Magdalen in the mid-1480s, when he entered the college. That was before Grocyn went to Italy in 1488 and learnt Greek, partly from Politian. It is sometimes asserted that, on his return, he gave the first public lectures on that language in Oxford.⁹² Rival claims to being the earliest Greek teacher

⁸⁶ P. S. Allen, ‘Bishop Shirwood of Durham and his Library’, *EHR*, xxv (1910), pp. 445-456 at p. 455.

⁸⁷ The volumes are listed in *BRUO*; the information is helpfully repeated and augmented by Thomson, *Fox and Bees*, pp. 55-58.

⁸⁸ These volumes are also listed in *BRUO* and Thomson, *Fox and Bees*, pp. 58-65. Note, for instance, that they include, a Chrysostom but in the Verona edition of 1529 (CCCO, LC.14.e.1-2), not those at Basel in which Erasmus was involved.

⁸⁹ His late learning of Greek, as well as his promotion of the study while at Magdalen, is demonstrated by a letter written to him by Thomas Linacre, which is now CCCO, MS. 318, fol. 135; the most readily available transcription is now that at Thomson, *Fox and Bees*, pp. 77-78 (and, for an image of the letter, in Linacre’s autograph, see *Linacre Studies*, pl. I). For his ownership of some Greek books, see Thomson, *Oxford*, UO24.44-49 and for his use of Greek texts in his Pliny commentary, see Woolfson, ‘Claymond’, p. 892 (n. 4).

⁹⁰ For his interest in Greek at Magdalen, see the preceding note. For his bequest funding six scholarships at Brasenose College, with the recipients required to attend the Corpus Greek lectures, see J. M. Crook *Brasenose. The Biography of an Oxford College* (Oxford, 2008), p. 15.

⁹¹ For the extensive book-lists that resulted from this transaction, see Thomson, *Oxford*, UO25-32.

⁹² The source is A. Wood, *Historia et Antiquitates Universitatis Oxoniensis*, 2 vols (Oxford, 1674), ii, p. 36.

in the university have been advanced for Emmanuel of Constantinople and for the visiting Italian scholar, Cornelio Vitelli.⁹³ If either of those did teach, it was probably privately; equally, what we know of Grocyn's pupils — they included Thomas More and Richard Croke — makes it possible that his lessons were also given privately, but in London. For our purposes, there are three other elements of Grocyn's engagement with Greek, which deserve re-emphasising. First, Erasmus commented that Grocyn had already mastered some Greek before leaving Oxford's New College for Italy: he travelled not because he was ignorant but because he knew enough to realise he wanted to learn more.⁹⁴ The only corroboration of Erasmus's claim is slight: in a section of the register of the University of Oxford written by Grocyn in a humanist-influenced script, he writes his name in Greek.⁹⁵ This act was not itself original; it was (like his Latin script) imitative of an earlier intervention in the Register, by John Farley (d. 1454), another Wykehamist, who had similarly signed in Greek letters.⁹⁶ It is suggestive of Grocyn consciously considering himself a successor to earlier scholars. He is unlikely to have known that the register was not the only occasion when Farley demonstrated his knowledge of the Greek alphabet: he also wrote his name in a koine Psalter which had once been in the circle of Robert Grosseteste.⁹⁷ The second point is that what marks Grocyn out from Farley is that he could benefit from an increased Greek presence. Several of the manuscripts he owned were written by itinerant Byzantine scholars. Some had been produced by John Serbopoulos who was resident at Reading Abbey at the end of the 1490s.⁹⁸ In one two-volume set that Grocyn owned, Serbopoulos shares the copying with another scribe whom we have mentioned briefly, Emmanuel of Constantinople. They provide the text of the Suda, with — this is the third point — the prototype used being the copy previously given to the Oxford Greyfriars by Robert Grosseteste.⁹⁹

England, then, could partake in the Renaissance of Greek in part through the grace of Grosseteste. Those who held the books he once perused would not have fully appreciated their debt to him. They were also a small minority; for a larger and more dispersed group of fifteenth-century scholars, the attractions of 'lincolniensis' lay elsewhere. The interests of Thomas Gascoigne are more typical than those of his contemporary, Farley, say, and he is

⁹³ Catto, 'Scholars and Studies', p. 780; Clough, 'Linacre, Vitelli'.

⁹⁴ *Erasmii epistolae*, ep. 540 (ll. 56-57).

⁹⁵ Oxford: University Archives, NEP/supra/Reg F, fol. 127^v.

⁹⁶ Reg F, fol. 114^r, 114^v, 115^v, 116^v and cf. NEP/supra/Reg Aa (*olim* Reg. Aa5), fol. 106^v. On Farley, see Rundle, *Renaissance Reform*, ch. VI and for the significance of the registry to Oxford humanism, id., 'The Playpen: reform, experimentation and the memory of Humfrey, duke of Gloucester in the Registry of the University of Oxford' in J. Willoughby and J. Catto ed., *Books and Bookmen in Early-Modern England* (Toronto, 2018), pp. 17-39.

⁹⁷ Cambridge: Corpus Christi College, MS. 480, fol. 288^v, noted by [Bodleian exhib. cat.,] *Duke Humfrey and English Humanism* (Oxford, 1970), no. 39c. Farley also wrote his name in Greek in an astrological collection, now Oxford: Bodleian, MS. Auct. F.5.29. For another relevant manuscript, see the final paragraph of this article.

⁹⁸ These are now CCCO, MSS 23, 24, 106, 109 and see next note. On Serbopoulos, see *Repertorium der griechischen Kopisten 800-1600*, 3 vols each in 3 parts to date, i/A [Großbritannien], ed. E. Gamillscheg and D. Harlfinger (Vienna, 1981), no. 180 (pp. 106-107), and A. Coates, *English Medieval Books. The Reading Abbey Collections from Foundation to Dispersal* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 110-112.

⁹⁹ CCCO, MS 76 and 77, in which Emmanuel provides the first codex and the first part of the second, Serbopoulos taking over at fol. 94. The manuscripts derive from Leiden: Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS. Voss. gr. F. 2. On this, see [Bodleian exhib. cat.,] *Greek Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library* (Oxford, 1966), no. 59 (pp. 34-35), and N. G. Wilson, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Greek Manuscripts of Corpus Christi College, Oxford* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 12.

usually considered to have wallowed in scholasticism, though he was not averse to a gentle dousing with humanist reading.¹⁰⁰

That the convent of the Greyfriars should be a source for the likes of Farley and Grocyn can appear in retrospect to be deeply ironic, given that Franciscans are often suspected as the perpetrators of an attack on humanist teaching in the year after the foundation of Corpus. Our knowledge of this incident is partial, in every sense: our main source is the letter that Thomas More wrote to the University of Oxford defending and promoting humanist studies.¹⁰¹ He claimed that there were those in Oxford who, to show their opposition to Greek, described themselves as Trojans.¹⁰² He surely exaggerated their presence better to persuade his intended audience to the cause of *bonae litterae*, just as his assertion that Cambridge was more enlightened was intended to needle the pride of any loyal Oxonian (he was probably alluding to the public lectures on Greek recently given by Richard Croke in the other university).¹⁰³ It was necessary to his rhetorical strategy to understate the position that the study of Greek had already achieved, but he could not deny its established presence.¹⁰⁴ The foundation of Corpus was, in fact, evidence of that: the statutes certainly envisaged some grammatical teaching in the language (Theodore of Gaza is explicitly mentioned) but its stipulations, allowing the students for instance to speak Greek instead of Latin at dinner, suggests that it did not intend the instruction to be *ab initio*.¹⁰⁵ The teaching elsewhere of the likes of Grocyn and his godson, William Lily, master of St Paul's, made possible a supply of appropriately prepared young men. That is to say that the 'institutionalization' of Greek teaching at Corpus was possible because of the indigenous tradition that already existed. This being so, in the war supposedly raging over its future, 'the Trojans' were launching not a pre-emptive strike but a rear-guard action against a growing trend.

It was also very quickly apparent how substantial were the forces ranged against any Franciscan or other anti-Hellenist. The events which stimulated More's letter had centred on a royal visit to Oxford, which also included Thomas Wolsey. At or around that time, the cardinal announced his intention to fund public lectures in the humanities — thus, including Greek — at the university.¹⁰⁶ This largesse was singled out by Erasmus for praise, in a letter which preceded by a little over a month that to John Claymond, and which surpassed the later one in its effusive style.¹⁰⁷ Wolsey's plans were to undergo revision in the subsequent years,

¹⁰⁰ R. M. Ball, *Thomas Gascoigne, libraries and scholarship* (Cambridge, 2006).

¹⁰¹ More, *In Defense*, ed. Kinney, pp. 129-149; the involvement of Franciscans, in emulation of their fellow friar, Henry Standish, is proposed in the introduction to that volume: pp. xxviii-xxxi.

¹⁰² More, *In Defense*, ed. Kinney, p. 132 (ll. 15-26). On the incident, see C. W. D'Alton, 'The Trojan War of 1518: melodrama, politics and the rise of humanism', *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, xxvii (1997), pp. 727-738.

¹⁰³ More, *In Defense*, ed. Kinney, p. 144 (ll. 19-23); see J. McConica, *English Humanists and Reformation Politics under Henry VIII and Edward VI* (Oxford, 1965), p. 80.

¹⁰⁴ See, in particular, More, *In Defense*, ed. Kinney, p. 142 (ll. 4-17).

¹⁰⁵ *Statutes*, ii, part 10, p. 49. The copy of Theodore provided by the Founder in 1519 was the Aldine of 1495; it is now Φ.A.3.5. There is a copy in the library of a parallel text with Erasmus's translation, OO.3.24 (Basel, 1523), but that was in Cambridge in the sixteenth century, where it was bound by Nicholas Spierinck and later owned by 'Francis Alen' (presumably the Allen who matriculated at Trinity in 1586: see Venn online) and then migrated to Oxford (it was owned by John Devenish, presumably the man who received his MA from Magdalen Hall in 1601: *AO*, p. 398); it was bequeathed to Corpus by Brian Twynne (d. 1644).

¹⁰⁶ McConica, 'Rise', pp. 67-68 and G. D. Duncan, 'Public Lectures and Professorial Chairs', *HUO*, iii, pp. 335-361 at pp. 336-39.

¹⁰⁷ *Erasmii epistolae*, ep. 967.

culminating in the foundation of Corpus's outsize neighbour, Cardinal College in 1525.¹⁰⁸ How fully Wolsey's intentions were realised in 1518 is not entirely clear, but his intervention at least began to remedy the absence of university lectures in Greek bemoaned in Corpus's statutes, within a year of their promulgation. If Corpus was a revolutionary, it was in danger of being trampled upon by those on its heels as they stormed the barricades of unreformed learning.

The Hive and its Bees

In concluding, there are a couple of implications that deserve to be expressed explicitly. The evidence on which this article has depended has been twofold: the statutes of the new college, and the early stocking of its library. It should be clear that there is something of a mismatch between them, the books intended for chaining sometimes not, as it were, abiding by the rules laid down for the institution.¹⁰⁹ One example of this is that, though 'his' statutes denigrated the works of Nicholas of Lyra, Fox himself did not consider it unworthy for the library to have a copy of them.¹¹⁰ More often, the curiosities are absences: it is not solely that there is no sign Fox gave a copy of Politian but also that he did not see fit to donate to his foundation any of the humanist manuscripts or printed books with which he had been presented during his career, even when he went blind around 1520. This should remind us that the bishop clearly did not envisage his legacy to be confined to his quadrangle at Oxford; the memory of his bodily self was to lie elsewhere, represented by the transi tomb he had made close to St Swithun's shrine in his cathedral at Winchester.¹¹¹ Corpus and the corporeal were to be separate. Like other college founders before him, Fox did not imagine that the new institution he had brought into being would be the sole expression of his posthumous reputation.

Nor (however far he micro-managed the building work) could his college be his creation alone.¹¹² We have seen how the statutes suggest drafting by committee; if I were to point to one among those involved who leaves most prominently their mark on the chapters we have discussed, it would be John Claymond: the intentions for the students' education seem to me to correlate well with his own experience of and aspirations for learning. Whether that supposition is credited, it is manifest that a plethora of humanist influences contributed to the vision of Corpus's educational programme. Humanism was incorrigibly plural and to describe the plan by a single adjective, 'Erasmian', would be a lazy simplification. I have exemplified the variety of traditions which informed the college through the renewed appreciation of Greek in England, reminding us of the engagement that occurred since the 1450s and which was the necessary precondition for the success of the new college. In doing that, I have drawn attention to a peculiarity of Greek interest in England. While immigrant scholars — both Byzantine and Italian — and imported books were essential to its development, one other stimulus existed which was not available elsewhere: probably

¹⁰⁸ On Cardinal College, see most recently D. Rundle and R. Hanna, 'Introduction' to R. Hanna and D. Rundle, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts to c. 1600 in Christ Church, Oxford* (Oxford, 2017), pp. 23-147 at pp. 25-33.

¹⁰⁹ Pace Schoeck, 'Humanist Books', p. 538 who sees 'close correspondence' between the two elements.

¹¹⁰ CCCO, Δ19.8-11, 23.1-2.

¹¹¹ For which, see Pamela King's paper, above, p. 00.

¹¹² *The Building Accounts of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, 1517-1518*, ed. B. Collett, A. Smith, J. Reid (forthcoming).

unconsciously and certainly ironically, those humanist-inclined Englishmen could draw for inspiration from resources available through the scholarship and beneficence to Oxford of Robert Grosseteste.

The analysis that I have presented has necessarily been circumscribed by the sources it has privileged. It has focussed on the institution, not the community — the hive, as it were, rather than the bees. This, it might be objected, is to deny the essence of any college, which, on the one hand, is a constituent part of a wider *universitas*, and, on the other, creates its own space in which individuals or small groups can discover for themselves beyond the requirements set down in any founding document. This second feature was central to the earlier humanist tradition in Oxford, where, within the confines of New College or Magdalen, some of its members could roam beyond the established curriculum.¹¹³ These activities could create their own traditions, passing from one generation to the next, as with Grocyn's looking back to Farley's work as registrar. In Corpus, the statutes had an unprecedented emphasis on discipline, with obedience expected to the President — whoever that may be in future generations. As King Utopus abolished monarchy in his new kingdom, so the founder himself may have recognised that the timespan in which he could exert influence was finite: his bees would form their hive around them. In the following decades and centuries, they constructed an identity which has become more Erasmian than Fox could have envisaged.

There is a final example which encapsulates that process and its implications. It is another manuscript, a ninth-century copy of Aristotle's medical works in Greek.¹¹⁴ It was given to Corpus by an alumnus, Henry Parry, in 1624.¹¹⁵ It patently speaks to the college's learned identity as established at its foundation, but it can also tell us more than that. It includes a couple of fifteenth-century annotations which have been tentatively but, I propose, rightly, attributed to John Farley. These go beyond the signing in Greek letters we find elsewhere: they include not just Latin transliterations of Greek words but also a brief attempt to provide an interlinear translation of the text.¹¹⁶ They hint at the level of understanding Farley was attempting to achieve before his early death in 1454. This is not the only interesting moment in the manuscript's history, for this volume, like others we have mentioned, had passed through the hands of Robert Grosseteste. Through Parry's gift, Corpus may have become a little more Erasmian but also, thanks to the routes that Greek learning had travelled through England, it became a little more Grossetestian.

¹¹³ For New College in particular see Jeremy Catto's article here, p. 00.

¹¹⁴ CCCO, MS. 108. For what follows, see R. W. Hunt et al., *The Survival of Ancient Literature* (Oxford, 1975), no. 54 (pp. 31-32).

¹¹⁵ *AO*, p. 1120; he was son of another Henry (1561-1616), also a Corpuscule, who became bishop of Worcester.

¹¹⁶ CCCO, MS. 108, fol. 162^v (with interlinear translation) and 178^v.