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William Worcestre, Sir John Fastolf and Latin Learning*

David Rundle

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Even if near-contemporaries of Sir John Fastolf on occasion spelt his surname as Falstaff, we are too wise to confuse the two.¹ The Lancastrian knight was nowhere near so jovial nor (whatever his enemies claimed) so cowardly as the Shakespearean incarnation. The real Fastolf also stands in contrast to fiction by being of some political significance in the reign of Henry V's infant son. He often acted as deputy to the new king's older surviving uncle, John, duke of Bedford, regent in France. War for Fastolf was lucrative business, allowing him to invest, back in England, in lands, building works and their accoutrements.² He was not among the peerage but he was a great lord, able to sustain a household which included a notable number of learned figures: Stephen Scrope, for instance, and William Worcestre.³ In his cultural life, we usually characterise him as sharing the tastes of Bedford, and so corroborating our sense of the norm of fashion among the English fifteenth-century aristocracy and those close to them.⁴ We know something of his books. An inventory survives from 1448 listing the belongings he had at his wainmain residence of Caister Castle,

* For their generous sharing of their expertise, I would like to thank Dr Richard Beadle and Prof. Daniel Wakelin. I would not have ventured into this territory if it had not been for my work preparing Ralph Hanna's catalogue of the manuscripts of Magdalen College, Oxford for print for Oxford Bibliographical Society; I wish here to acknowledge Prof. Hanna's diligence and friendship. For their assistance in access to the archives and manuscripts of Magdalen, I thank the ever-helpful staff. The following abbreviations are used below: Beadle and Richmond = R. Beadle and C. Richmond, *Paston Letters and Papers of the Fifteenth Century. Part III* [Early English Text Society, xxii] (Oxford, 2005); BL = London: British Library; CBMLC = Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues; Davis = N. Davis ed., *Paston Letters and Papers of the Fifteenth Century*, 2 vols (Oxford, 1971-76, reprinted for Early English Text Society [Special Series, xx-xxi], 2004); Hanna and Rundle = *Catalogue of the Western Manuscripts of Magdalen College, Oxford* (Oxford, forthcoming); Magd. = Oxford: Magdalen College; MCA = Oxford: Magdalen College Archives; MLGB3 = Medieval Libraries of Great Britain website: <http://mlgb3.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/>.

¹ The near-contemporary reference is in MCA, Fastolf Paper 85 (2), datable to 1463, and quoted and discussed by N. Davis, 'Falstaff's Name', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, xxviii (1977), pp. 513-515.

² K. B. McFarlane, 'The Investment of Sir John Fastolf's Profits of War', reprinted in id., *England in the Fifteenth Century* (London, 1981), pp. 175-197, and A. Smith, "'The Greatest Man of That Age": the acquisition of Sir John Fastolf's East Anglian estates' in R. E. Archer and S. Walker ed., *Rulers and Ruled in Late Medieval England* (London, 1995), pp. 137-53. On Fastolf generally, see A. Smith, 'Aspects of the career of Sir John Fastolf (1380-1459)' (unpublished DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 1982), and C. Richmond, *The Paston Family in the Fifteenth Century: the first phase* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 206-58.

³ The most extended work on this group of writers is D. E. Thorpe, 'Writing and Reading in the Circle of Sir John Fastolf (d. 1459)' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of York, 2011). I thank Dr Thorpe for her kindness in sharing with me her thesis. See also J. Hughes, 'Stephen Scrope and the Circle of Sir John Fastolf' in C. Harper-Bill ed., *The Ideals and Practice of Medieval Knighthood IV* (Woodbridge, 1992), pp. 109-46.

⁴ For Bedford's cultural interests, see J. Stratford, *The Bedford Inventories* (London, 1993) and ead., 'The manuscripts of John, duke of Bedford: library and chapel' in D. Williams ed., *England in the Fifteenth Century* (Woodbridge, 1987), pp. 329-50.

just north of Great Yarmouth.⁵ Included in the account are about twenty ‘Frenshe bookes’ kept ‘in the stewe hous’ and seven service books held in the chapel.⁶ Scholarship has found the vernacular books rather more interesting than the Latin liturgical volumes, though the inventory describes the latter in more physical detail. While none of those is known to survive, a few others which were in Fastolf’s possession are extant and chime with this interest in French.⁷ Patently we can presume that Fastolf had a facility in that language. If, though, we call to mind his voice — and some of those around him recollected some of his spoken words verbatim, or claimed they did — we imagine we hear him speaking in earthy English.⁸ In this, perhaps, our Fastolf is not so different from Falstaff.

Our present perceptions of Fastolf leave scant space for his engagement with what continued, in the fifteenth century, to be the most prestigious language used in England. Even though we know he owned some Latin books, we assume he cared little for its literature, leaving it to his priests and his secretaries, and those (or Worcestre at least) practised that language with an insouciance to its grammatical requirements.⁹ It appears, then, to be sharply ironic that, following Fastolf’s death on 4th November 1459 and the subsequent dispute over his will, a substantial part of his legacy was re-directed — with, it must be said, a certain legerdemain — to such a Latinate institution as the college dedicated to St Mary Magdalen recently founded as constituent part of the University of Oxford by William Waynflete, bishop of Winchester.¹⁰ Some new evidence, however, can be presented here which, while it may not require a revision of our sense of Fastolf’s cultural priorities, should, I propose, encourage a more capacious appreciation of the interests expressed in his circle. This article offers a change of perspective, a move beyond the stew house. Central to the discussion will be William Worcestre, for whom the conventional epithet is long-suffering, and whose scholarly inquisitiveness is known to have been voracious: from ancient Britain to England’s present troubles, from its flora and fauna to its castles and cathedrals — and beyond both in

⁵ MCA, Fastolf Papers 43. On the residence itself, see A. Hawkyard, ‘Sir John Fastolf’s “Gret Mansion by me late edified”: Caister Castle, Norfolk’ in L. Clark ed., *Of mice and men: image, belief and regulation in late medieval England* (Woodbridge, 2005), pp. 39-68.

⁶ The French books were noted by W. D. Macray in *Eighth Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts* (London, 1881), Appendix I, p. 268; the section is edited from MCA, Fastolf Papers 43, fol. 10 by R. Beadle, ‘Sir John Fastolf’s French books’ in G. D. Caie and D. Renevey ed., *Medieval Texts in Context* (London, 2008), pp. 96-112. Macray does not mention the service books, but the list at MCA, Fastolf Papers 43, fol. 10^v is identical with that in a lost roll, from which a transcript was made in 1744 which in turn was printed by T. Amyot, ‘A Transcript of Two Rolls, containing an Inventory of the Effects formerly belonging to Sir John Fastolfe’, *Archaeologia*, xxi (1827), pp. 232-80 at pp. 275-276 and reprinted at J. Gairdner, *The Paston Letters, A.D. 1422-1509*, 6 vols (London, 1904) [originally published 1872-75], iii, p. 188 (no. 389), except that the last item is more clearly described in the Fastolf Paper as ‘j mortyrologe couered with white ledre’. Hawkyard, ‘Fastolf’s Gret Mansion’, pp. 46, 60 identifies their location as the bath house, which was not being put to that use at the time the inventory was made.

⁷ Oxford: Bodleian Library, MSS. Bodl. 179 (medical treatises in French, s.xv¹) and Laud. misc. 570 (*Quatre vertus cardinales* and Christine de Pisan, *Epître d’Othéa*, 1450), both discussed by Beadle, ‘Fastolf’s French books’, pp. 97-98. The latter is illuminated by the ‘Fastolf Master’, for a listing whose work, see G. T. Clark, *Art in a time of war: the Master of Morgan 453 and manuscript illumination in Paris during the English occupation (1419-1435)* (Toronto, 2016), pp. 278-82.

⁸ For one example, see below p. ++.

⁹ The reference to there having been ‘bokes of Frenshe, Latyn and Englyssh’ in his chamber at his death is at Davis, i, p. 109. For Worcestre’s relationship to languages, see C. Nall and D. Wakelin, ‘Le déclin du multilinguisme dans The Boke of Noblesse de William Worcestre et dans son codicille’, *Médiévales*, lxxviii (2015), pp. 73-91. For an example of his insouciance, see p. ++ below.

¹⁰ I take the term ‘irony’ from C. Richmond, *The Paston Family in the Fifteenth Century. Fastolf’s Will* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 55: ‘if that is an irony, that is about all it is... Fastolf deserved better...’.

terms of lands he could only imagine (from Scandinavia to Brazil) and languages he could only gaze upon rather than read (from Greek to Hebrew).¹¹ What follows will reinforce our appreciation of his loyalty to his late employer's memory; it will add to our knowledge of him as a book collector, and it will introduce him as a would-be librarian. Through him, we will return to Fastolf who may, as a result, appear even less Falstaffian than usual.

Worcestre probably never loved his master better than when he was dead.¹² He complained about the parsimony shown to him by Fastolf while the latter was alive; after his death on 5th November 1459, Worcestre complained about others' mean-spiritedness towards his late employer's memory. It was unsurprising that an old knight with a blood-spattered career should, in his last years, turn his mind to the fate of his soul. He had already patronised the local abbey of St Benet's at Holm in Norfolk, expanding its church so that he as well as his wife could be buried within the new Lady chapel he built. His final plan was grander, however; the founding of a new college, serving as both a chantry and almshouses. Fastolf vacillated over where it should be: at times, he considered the abbey at Holm to be an appropriate location, and that remained an alternative to what emerged as the preference for establishing it within his own main residence of the castle he had renovated at Caister, near Great Yarmouth. One difficulty with this plan was the costs of a licence which it would incur; Fastolf could not have envisaged how that obstacle would have been exacerbated by the disputes that arose between the executors of his will. The testament of June 1459 gave responsibility to a group of ten, with the first named being William Waynflete and the list also including William Worcestre and John Paston. The last of these claimed that Fastolf had, in his dying days, orally appointed him the main executor, and that this constituted a nuncupative will superseding the previous one; Worcestre was not convinced. Accusations, counter-accusations and court cases followed, with the wrangling continuing for over a decade. The decisive intervention came with the ruling by the Archbishop of Canterbury on 13th February 1470 that Waynflete himself should have charge of administering Fastolf's

¹¹ The overview of his interests reflects the one notebook of his, Cambridge: Corpus Christi College, MS. 210 which has been edited, as W. Worcestre, *Itineraries*, ed. J. H. Harvey (Oxford, 1969), supplemented by id., *The Topography of Medieval Bristol*, ed. F. Neale [Bristol Record Society Publication, li] (Bristol, 2000). The fundamental work on him remains K. B. McFarlane, 'William Worcester: a preliminary survey' reprinted in id., *England in the Fifteenth Century*, pp. 199-224. Some excellent work has been done recently: D. Wakelin, *Humanism, Reading and English Literature 1430-1530* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 93-127 and id., 'William Worcester writes a History of his Reading', *New Medieval Literatures*, vii (2005), pp. 53-71, and C. Nall, 'William Worcester Reads Alain Chartier: Le Quadrilogue Invectif and its English Readers' in E. Cayley and A. Kinch ed., *Chartier in Europe* (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 135-147. For a helpful listing of manuscripts hitherto associated with Worcestre, see Thorpe, 'Circle', p. 345. Many scholars — and a few contemporaries (see p. ++ below) — prefer to spell his surname as if it were the cathedral city, and he was born in that diocese, but this misdirects, given that he was proud of being a native of Bristol. His own usage varied with 'Wyrcestre' or 'Worcestre' being most frequent: see N. Davis, 'The Epistolary Usages of William Worcester' in D. A. Pearsall and R. A. Waldron ed., *Medieval Literature and Civilization: Studies in Memory of G. N. Garmonsway* (London, 1969), pp. 249-274 at p. 255.

¹² The following paragraph simplifies the story of legal shenanigans, now best told by Richmond, *Fastolf's Will*. See also id., 'Once again: Fastolf's Will' in K. Dockray and P. Fleming ed., *People, Places and Perspectives. Essays on Later Medieval & Early Tudor England in Honour of Ralph A. Griffiths* (Stroud, 2005), pp. 115-130, A. Hanham, 'The Curious Letters of Friar Brackley', *Historical Research*, lxxxi (2008), pp. 28-51, and J. Rose, 'Medieval Estate Planning: The Wills and Testamentary Trials of Sir John Fastolf' in S. Jenks, J. Rose and C. Whittick ed., *Laws, Lawyers and Texts. Studies in Medieval Legal History in Honour of Paul Brand* (Leiden, 2012), pp. 299-326.

goods.¹³ He, in turn, came to an agreement with the Pastons and re-routed the remaining resources of the estate away from the proposed foundation to his own college of Magdalen, established in Oxford in 1458.¹⁴

Worcestre was dogged by the conviction that Fastolf's will had been disregarded and dishonoured. The matter of the testament — and, with it, the fate of the intended college — was the principal matter of many of his business letters in the 1460s and early 1470s. It was something he could not forget even when compiling his private notebooks, after the 'Great Fastolf Will War' was over and lost.¹⁵ At the end of the 1470s, he recalled something he was told sixteen years earlier by his colleague (and relative), Thomas Howes, that Fastolf had called for God's vengeance on any who meddled with 'my testament and last wyll'.¹⁶ The next year, Worcestre copied out a comment, derived from John of Salisbury, to the effect that all too often a ruler had as heirs his enemies, and marked in the margin 'nota pro J. Fastolf'.¹⁷ It was probably a few years before writing those words that he had not been able to resist (as Ralph Hanna has noticed) annotating a thirteenth-century copy of Isidore's *Etymologiae*, at the point where 'nuncupatio' is defined:

nota bene in causa testamenti nobilis viri Iohannis Falstolf de anglia Militis super querula inter executores super testamentum scriptum et testamentum nuncupatuum pretensum ad nullas testamentum suum in scriptis sub sigillo suo plenario et auctoritate confectum in maximum preiudicium et vastationem bonorum domini militis ad valorem quinque milia marcarum Anglie qui obiit Anno cristi 1459.¹⁸

He wrote this in a markedly more formal script than was his wont, as if he intended others to take note of it. Indeed, he may have had a specific reader in mind, given that this manuscript passed to William Waynflete's foundation of Magdalen and — it is my contention — it was given to the bishop by Worcestre himself. This makes it a particularly pointed insertion.

Worcestre certainly presented Waynflete with other books. The best-known was a case of a failed or, rather, ineffectual presentation: on 10th August 1472, Worcestre visited the bishop at the episcopal manor of Esher and gave him a 'librum Tullij de Senectute per me translatus in Anglicis sed nullum recepi de Episcopo'.¹⁹ It has less often been commented

¹³ MCA, Fastolf Papers 93.

¹⁴ For the early history of Waynflete's foundation see G. Harriss, 'William Waynflete and the Foundation of the College, 1448-1486' in L. W. B. Brockliss ed., *Magdalen College Oxford. A History* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 1-43.

¹⁵ The phrase is Richmond's, *Fastolf's Will*, p. 88.

¹⁶ Cambridge: Corpus Christi College, MS. 210, p. 319, edited in W. Worcestre, *Itineraries*, ed. J. H. Harvey (Oxford, 1969), p. 246.

¹⁷ Cambridge: Corpus, MS. 210, p. 159, ed. *Itineraries*, p. 322. The source is John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 4.xii (ed. C. C. I. Webb, 2 vols (Oxford, 1909), i, p. 276, ll. 26-30), himself discoursing on Ecclesiasticus 10.viii.

¹⁸ Oxford: Magdalen College, MS. lat. 8, fol. 66^{ra}. The passage is *Etymologiae*, V.xxiv.12. A seventeenth-century reader must have noticed this annotation, for a hand of that period adds to the rear pastedown 'De testamentis Fastolf'. Note that the description of this manuscript in H. O. Coxe, *Catalogus codicum mss. qui in collegiis aulisque oxoniensibus hodie adservantur*, 2 vols (Oxford, 1852), ii, p. 11 is erroneous in terms of contents and date.

¹⁹ Cambridge: Corpus, MS. 210, p. 321, ed. *Itineraries*, p. 252. For Waynflete's presence at Esher at this point, see V. Davis, *William Waynflete bishop and educationalist* (Woodbridge, 1993), p. 171. The manuscript is not known to survive. The translation, begun for Fastolf, is assumed to be that which appears in William Caxton's 1481 printing, though it is there somewhat implausibly ascribed to John Tiptoft, earl of Worcester: see Wakelin, *Humanism, Reading*, pp. 153-156.

that this appears in Worcestre's notebook on a page stuffed with examples of the injustice of the contemporary world, including the siege of Caister Castle itself in 1470.²⁰ Waynflete, for his part, might have considered it unwise to encourage this Fastolf loyalist with generosity at that point: he was not to be fobbed off with a secretary's literary effusion (particularly, perhaps, one which reminded him that he had passed his own three score years and ten) when what interested him were the materials relating to the dead knight's estate which he knew remained in Worcestre's charge. It was at the end of that year, on 7th December, that an indenture was made for the purpose of ensuring that Worcestre relinquished to the bishop any materials relating to his late master; the agreement was primarily concerned with 'all maner of dedis chartres Rolles of Courtes and Accompts and all other escrits and muniments ... concernyng any of the maners londs or tenements late of sir John Fastolf knight' but it also stated that:

...ferthermore the said William Worcestre promitteth that in all maters concernyng the lond or goods of the seid sir John Fastolf wher in the seid Reuerend Fader or his College of saint marie magdalene in Oxonford ... hath any interesse or title The seid William Worcestre shall in no wise hurt nor be ayenst any of them therinn but the same William Worcestre during his life unto the seid Reuerend Fader and to the precedent of the seid College and to his Successours shall yeve playn informacion and declaracion to his knowlege as ... good concience shall require that all suche londs and goods as bethe not in possession of the seid Reuerend Fader shall come to the hands of the seid Reuerend Fader...

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In return for his good service, Worcestre was to receive a total of £100, divided into several payments. A tight deadline was set of 2nd February 1473 but the process dragged on through that year and into the next and, consequently, so did the matter of remuneration.

In December 1473, as these matters were ongoing, Worcestre presented another manuscript to Waynflete, an early twelfth-century copy of sermons by Ivo of Chartres, into which he entered a striking dedication note:

Suo domino Colendissimo Magistro Willielmo Waynfleete Sedis Ecclesie Cathedralis sancti Swythin Wyntoniensis Episcopo que olim Ante tempus consecracionis dicte Ecclesie Templum Dagon vocabat Tempore Paganorum gencium et presentatur domino prescripto Episcopo de Beneficio Domini Iohannis Fastolf Militis ob memoriam sui quamuis modicum fuerit quantitatis diei 16. mensis decembris Anno cristi 1473^o. per willielmum wyrcestr' [cypher].²²

For us, whose image of the writer of this note is necessarily formed by the pioneering work of K. B. McFarlane, this is likely to seem quintessential Worcestre: ever assiduous for Fastolf's memory, and at the same time, antiquarian to his finger-tips. McFarlane also hinted at

²⁰ On the siege, see Richmond, *Fastolf's Will*, pp. 197-208.

²¹ MCA, N&S 75, discussed by Richmond, *Fastolf's Will*, p. 255. The indenture is endorsed: 'Indentura Willelmi Worcestre alias Botoner facta domino Willelmo Waynflete Wintoniensi Episcopo de fideli gestu erga ipsum Episcopum et Collegium suum Oxoniensem.'

²² Magd., MS. lat. 26, fol. ii^v, with 'fuerit quantitatis' partially illegible; it is noted by, for instance, Davis, *Waynflete*, p. 94, and Wakelin, *Humanism, Reading*, p. 97. Coxe could not identify the text provided in this manuscript, so the contents are often described simply as a *Liber de sacramentis ecclesiae*.

Worcestre's humour and here it might be sly. The reference to Winchester Cathedral's pagan past as a temple to the god Dagon is often noted but then passed over without further thought. How did Worcestre come to make this statement? He was not the only person in the fifteenth century to provide this claim: it also appears in the *Historia maior* of the Winchester monk Thomas Rudbourne, who dated the foundation of the temple to the invasion of Cedricus in 516.²³ Was this all, though, that Worcestre might have had in his mind? The name of Dagon would have been already familiar to contemporaries, given its appearance in the Bible as the chief god of the Philistines, who snatched the Ark of the Covenant from the hands of the chosen people and displayed it next to a statue of their deity (I Samuel 5). It might have seemed an appropriate allusion to Worcestre as he lived through what he saw as the despoiling of Fastolf's estate. Perhaps he also comforted himself with another biblical reference to Dagon, whom the Philistines thanked for the capture of Samson, only to have their prisoner pull down the building on their heads (Judges 16).

If there was something subversive to that donation note, it did not affect Worcestre's standing with his lord of Winchester. It was presumably at the time of the presentation of this book that he received 20 marks in part payment for releasing some of Fastolf's manorial records into Waynflete's possession.²⁴ In the manuscript of Ivo, Worcestre does not precisely state that this too had once been a possession of Fastolf's, instead simply declaring that he was able to present it to the bishop through the beneficence of his late master. It is clear, though, that in his dealings with Waynflete, he was making a close association between business documents and scholarly volumes.²⁵ Moreover, if Worcestre had his suspicions about the bishop's actions, he also recognised that he could not afford to incur his blunt displeasure. The pace may have been slower than the indenture foresaw, but he continued to keep to the agreement made, receiving the final instalment of money in February 1474.²⁶ It is in this context that Waynflete came into possession of other books which had passed through Worcestre's hands. Four of these are already known, and to those we can now add nine extant manuscripts.

Three volumes now in Magdalen include explicit signs of ownership by Worcestre: they are a varied bunch. One is a late fourteenth-century copy, on paper, of Boccaccio's *De casibus virorum illustrium*, in which Worcestre adds his name in light brown ink, also using (as he sometimes did) his mother's maiden name, Botoner, and including the date of 1461; later, in black ink, he himself appended to that note the comment 'modo pertinet Episcopo' with 'Wynton' inserted above the line.²⁷ In contrast to the moralising literary text in this book, the second manuscript to mention reflects more philosophical interest. It may have been written by Worcestre himself; in its present form, it provides one work, Walter Burley's commentary on Aristotle's *Problemata* — the classical text being commented appeared,

²³ Rudbourne's text is printed, in abbreviated form, by H. Wharton, *Anglia sacra*, 2 vols (London, 1691), i, pp. 179-286, with the relevant passage at p. 187. Wharton was working from London: Lambeth Palace Library, MS. 183. On his work, see J. Greatrex, 'Thomas Rudborne, Mark of Winchester, and the Council of Florence', *Studies in Church History*, ix (1972), pp. 171-76, and J. Crook, 'Early Historians of Winchester Cathedral', *Proceedings of the Hampshire Field Club and Archaeological Society*, lviii (2003), pp. 226-41 at pp. 229-31.

²⁴ MCA, Fastolf Papers 101.

²⁵ For another manuscript that Worcestre definitely came to own through Fastolf's 'beneficium' but after the latter's death, see the discussion of Oxford: Balliol College, MS. 124 below.

²⁶ MCA, Fastolf Papers 101.

²⁷ Magd., MS. lat. 198, with this note at the top of fol. ii^v.

incidentally, in the list of Fastolf's French books.²⁸ A note in French witnessing that the volume belonged to 'Guillaume Worcestre autrement dit Botener de Bristoll' was written on the whittawed leather of the binding.²⁹ A contents list at the opening flyleaf shows that the volume was once more extensive, including:

Albertus de virtute lapidum preciosorum
Tabula vltimi libri Petri de crescencijs
per W Wyrcestr' compilata³⁰

The index which, according to this, Worcestre compiled for the last book of the *Ruralia commoda* by Pietro de' Crescenzi (the section ordering the agricultural tasks by the months of the year) provides — like the Burley — an association with his master's books, as the Fastolf list includes a 'Petrus de Crescencis'.³¹ While there are contrasts between the two codices in Magdalen just mentioned, the third which Worcestre came to possess stands further apart in age and prestige. It is an elegant twelfth-century copy of Cassiodorus's *Variae* which had been in the collection of Christ Church, Canterbury and was believed by them to have belonged to their martyred archbishop, Thomas Becket.³² Worcestre inserted his ownership note presumably after Fastolf's death, as he describes himself as staying near the city of Norwich, rather than being at Caister or on one of his master's estates.³³ We might wonder both how he came to hold it and what might have induced the monks of Christ Church to part with such a precious manuscript. It seems unlikely that they offered it up for ownership to a secretary; in a parallel case of a manuscript once owned by Becket that left their collection in the fifteenth century, it has been suggested it was given to John Tiptoft, earl of Worcester (a man not unknown to John Fastolf).³⁴ Might the Cassiodorus have been employed as a token for currying favour with Worcestre's master? We know of no direct contact between the cathedral priory and Fastolf, but we do know that Thomas Bouchier, archbishop of Canterbury, expressed himself in the knight's debt and promised to show him favour in 1456.³⁵ If the manuscript did reach Fastolf, it was not treated at Caister as one of the relics in his possession, but its associations with England's premier martyr could only have increased its allure.³⁶

²⁸ Magd., MS. lat. 65; see Beadle, 'Fastolf's French books', pp. 99, 105.

²⁹ The patch of leather on which this was written was cut out, presumably at the time of rebinding in the early seventeenth century, and is now glued to Magd., MS. lat. 65, fol. iii^v. The note was witnessed by Nicolas Nesaude, who was presumably of immigrant stock and a relative of John Nesaude who was a married householder in Southwark (where Fastolf had a residence) in the early 1440s; see England Immigrants 1330-1550 website: <https://www.englishimmigrants.com/person/51413> [accessed 30th July 2021].

³⁰ Magd., MS. lat. 65, fol. iii^v. The first text was either a copy of book II, tract 2 of Albert the Great's *Mineralia* or the second book of the *Experimenta* attributed to him: see L. Thorndike, 'Further Consideration of the *Experimenta*, *Speculum Astronomiae*, and *De Secretis Mulierum* Ascribed to Albertus Magnus', *Speculum*, xxx (1955), pp. 413-443 at 413-414.

³¹ Beadle, 'Fastolf's French books', pp. 99, 103.

³² Magd., MS. lat. 166. It includes the Christ Church pressmark (fol. 1: 'D ij. G^a v. sa'), and appears in Eastry's early fourteenth-century catalogue, in a section of items associated with St Thomas: Montague R. James ed., *The Ancient Libraries of Canterbury and Dover* (Cambridge, 1903), 84 (no. 835); we await the new edition of the catalogue by James Willoughby for CBMLC.

³³ Magd., MS. lat. 166, fol. iv^v: 'Pertinet W Wyrcestr' manenti iuxta Ciuitatem Norwicensem } Bo[cypher]toner'.

³⁴ C. de Hamel, *The Book in the Cathedral. The last relic of Thomas Becket* (sl, 2020), p. 22, discussing Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS. lat. 13038. On Fastolf and Tiptoft, see p. ++ below.

³⁵ Beadle and Richmond, no. 1031.

³⁶ For Fastolf and relics, see Richmond, *Fastolf's Will*, p. 58.

In addition to these books with explicit evidence of having been in Worcestre's possession, there is another in Magdalen's library in which Daniel Wakelin has shrewdly identified his marginalia. It is a collection of Cicero's rhetorical texts, together with Nonius Marcellus, and, as Wakelin explains, Worcestre's interventions are striking for being particularly interested in Nonius's references to Cicero's lost *De re publica*, a work which was highest on the list of desiderata of many humanists.³⁷ It can be added that, while the manuscript was made in Italy on paper in the mid-century and so close to when Worcestre must have been reading it, he was not the first Englishman to do so: he was preceded by someone with more substantial humanist credentials, Robert Flemyng, dean of Lincoln, learned in Greek as well as Ciceronian Latin, and donor of a substantial collection of books to his uncle's foundation of Lincoln College, Oxford.³⁸ Worcestre's classical interests in a book once owned by Flemyng are significant because they place him in contact with humanist fashions. His own compositions, in English and involving a translation of a work of Cicero's which, unlike the *De re publica*, had long been available, seem to look back more to a more established continental tradition, exemplified by the promotion of vernacular learning around the court of Charles V of France (d. 1380). There is, though, other evidence of Worcestre's humanist filiations, including his coming to own some of the books that belonged to England's humanist Wunderkind, John Free — a fellow Bristolian and Oxford alumnus (albeit a generation younger) who completed his education in Italy, became proficient in both the Ciceronian style and translating from Greek into Latin, and who settled in Rome, only to die there in late 1464 or early 1465, probably in his early thirties.³⁹ We will need to return to Free later in this discussion.⁴⁰

To supplement Wakelin's discovery of a set of marginalia, we can provide another. It appears in a twelfth-century manuscript of Solinus, in which, at one page, Worcestre notes the reference to the Taprobana (now commonly identified as Sri Lanka) and comments on it being the largest island in the world.⁴¹ It is a comment that parallels his interest in the geography of islands as frequently recorded in his notebooks.⁴² It therefore reinforces what we know of Worcestre, rather than placing him in new light, and the same can be said of the other volumes which we are about to meet.

Both the Nonius Marcellus and the Solinus are identifiable as having been read by Worcestre because his script is distinctive, though many would consider that adjective

³⁷ Magd., MS. lat. 206, discussed by Wakelin, *Humanism, Reading*, pp. 101-102.

³⁸ Flemyng's annotations occur at, e.g., Magd., MS. lat. 206, fol. 79^v, 81, 81^v (including Greek), 82, 113-126. On Flemyng's humanist interests, see R. Weiss, *Humanism in England during the Fifteenth Century*, 4th ed., ed. D. Rundle and A. J. Lappin (Oxford, 2011), pp. 150-162 [= 3rd ed. (Oxford, 1967), pp. 97-105]; [Bodleian Library exhibition catalogue], *Duke Humfrey and English Humanism* (Oxford, 1970), pp. 36-40, and R. M. Thomson, 'The Reception of Italian Humanism in Fifteenth-Century Oxford', *Italia medioevale e umanistica*, xlviii (2007), pp. 59-75 at p. 65 (but cf. D. Rundle, *The Renaissance Reform of the Book and Britain. The English Quattrocento* (Cambridge, 2019), p. 180n). For his connexion with Worcestre, see also n. ++ below.

³⁹ The fullest study remains R. J. Mitchell, *John Free. From Bristol to Rome in the Fifteenth Century* (London, 1955); see also Weiss, *Humanism*, 4th ed., pp. 164-72 [= 3rd ed., pp. 106-112], *Duke Humfrey and English Humanism*, pp. 48-50, and Rundle, *Renaissance Reform*, pp. 187-191.

⁴⁰ See pp. ++ and ++ below.

⁴¹ Magd., MS. lat. 50, fol. 66^v: 'Insula maxima totius mundi Taprobana habens cliii insulas circa in dicta insula'.

⁴² Mainly the islands around Britain (from Orkney to the Scilly Isles) and Ireland but also considering 'Brasylle' an island: *Itineraries*, ed. Harvey, pp. 8, 24, 308; cf. Wakelin, *Humanism, Reading*, pp. 98-99, and id., 'England: Humanism beyond Weiss' in D. Rundle ed., *Humanism in Fifteenth-Century Europe* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 265-305 at pp. 282-84.

euphemistic: ‘ugly’ or ‘atrocious’ are the terms more often used for his handwriting.⁴³ It is beyond my meagre rhetorical ability to redescribe in fully positive terms his script as we most often see it. His writing is at its most distinctive precisely when it is at its ugliest, which is usually in his notebooks, where his anglicana is not so much current as tripping over itself; it is formed of thin strokes but often with an uneven flow of ink and a cramping of the letters together to create off-putting overlap. That is all undeniable but I would plea in mitigation that these features may be because his note-taking was often done on the move: we know that he liked to pace out the length of a building and we might imagine him doing so with his long, thin paper quires in his hand, scribbling as he walked.⁴⁴ I will also add in defence of the character of this script that it was not incorrigible. Worcestre was (like many a fifteenth-century secretary for whom preparing a variety of documents was part of their job) certainly capable of writing more than one grade of script. I cite two pieces of evidence from among the documents already alluded to in this article. The first is the note about Fastolf’s will in the manuscript of Isidore where, though it is secreted into an inner margin, the ductus is steadier than in his notebooks.⁴⁵ The second exhibit is the note he sent to Waynflete confirming his receipt of monies for which, presumably because of its legal importance, he employs a cursive with substantially increased secretary influence, to the extent that we may even claim that Worcestre was capable of the calligraphic.⁴⁶

Within this range of scribal performance sits a particular group of witnesses to his hand: in many of the manuscripts which he had before him, he supplied a title or contents lists. In doing this, he wrote in a script which is larger than those in his notebooks and less hurried, but shares the characteristic range of letter-forms; it is closest to that used for the note in the Isidore volume. It is this style of writing which appears at the front flyleaf of his copy of Walter Burley — it is Worcestre himself who announces that he has indexed Pietro de’ Crescenzi. The same hand also writes the title at the front flyleaf in both the Cassiodorus and the Boccaccio which we have discussed. It does not, though, only appear in those books; the presence of a contents list in Worcestre’s script allows us to identify more books now in Magdalen as his. Thus, it has not been noticed before that he inserts a title in an early fifteenth-century copy of a commentary on the *Ad Herennium*, or that he also does so in a recent Italian manuscript, on paper, of Cicero’s *De divinatione* and *De fato*.⁴⁷ Likewise, we can now state that he had a twelfth-century codex of another staple classical text, Seneca’s *Epistles* because in that too he writes its title.⁴⁸ In one of these cases, we also have corroboratory evidence of his access to the texts: in one of his notebooks, Worcestre demonstrated his knowledge of the two Ciceronian philosophical works — copies of which were relatively rare in English libraries — by adding the incipits of both of them to a list of the pre-eminent Roman author’s writings he compiled.⁴⁹

His notebooks also bear witness to his interest in medicine, but, until now, there has not been any evidence of it being reflected in books now at Magdalen; in fact, titles in his

⁴³ Wakelin, *Humanism, Reading*, p. 94; id., ‘Worcester writes’, p. 56. Useful comment on Worcestre’s script is also available in O. da Rold, *Paper in Medieval England* (Cambridge, 2020), pp. 111-113.

⁴⁴ For his pacing buildings, see *Itineraries*, ed. Harvey, pp. xv, xvii-xviii.

⁴⁵ Magd., MS. lat. 8, fol. 66^v.

⁴⁶ MCA, Fastolf Papers 101.

⁴⁷ Magd., MSS lat. 82 and 62.

⁴⁸ Magd., MS. lat. 22.

⁴⁹ BL, MS. Cotton Julius F. VII, fol. 97.

hand appear in three relevant manuscripts (ranging in date from the twelfth to the fourteenth century): Constantine the African, a *Tacuinum corporum* and Isaac Iudaeus's *De dietis*.⁵⁰ A more eclectic range of texts, some scientific, some sermons, are collected together in a manuscript which was recently produced and must have reached Worcestre second-hand; in this too he adds a contents list.⁵¹ Finally, he does the same in a work of history, Trevet's Anglo-Norman Chronicle — a work which he excerpted in his notebook and which returns us to the known literary interests of Fastolf and his circle.⁵²

The interest of these interventions by Worcestre is not just that they increase our knowledge of the books to which he had access. Close attention reveals something more. While we have emphasised the variability of Worcestre's script, in these titles and contents lists, the ductus and aspect is notably uniform. Many, indeed, seem to have been written in the same ink. To make the implication of this explicit: it appears highly likely that they were added to the books as one campaign, Worcestre gathering them together and furnishing them with these succinct records. We can even provide a probable date-range for their addition. The Seneca just mentioned was once in the library of Evesham Abbey but by the third quarter of the fifteenth century it had travelled the breadth of the country and was in Cambridge in 1470. We know this because it includes an erased *caucio*, depositing it in one of the university's loan chests on 28th November of that year.⁵³ Worcestre, then, must have come by this book in 1471 at the earliest, presumably on one of his trips to Cambridge.⁵⁴ The titles could not, however, have been added much later. For this, his Boccaccio is informative since (as we have already mentioned) he appended to his ownership note, originally written in 1461, the statement that he had given the book to William Waynflete.⁵⁵ The title, which he added further down on the same verso to the front flyleaf, is written in a dark brown ink different from that used in either part of the ex libris. It appears, therefore, that Worcestre went through his volumes, inserting the contents notes, in the early 1470s, at the time that he was negotiating with Bishop Waynflete to hand over all the material he had that related to his late master. It would have been reasonable for Worcestre to decide it was the moment to sort through the papers and books he had in his study, and that these titles are the residue of that process.

Two further details are worth introducing into this discussion. The first is that, in two of these volumes, at the point that he gave them a title, he also at the same page wrote two initials: 'JF'.⁵⁶ Before we rush to the obvious conclusion, let us acknowledge that Fastolf was not the only person with those initials known to Worcestre. We have already mentioned John

⁵⁰ See, in particular, BL, MS. Sloane 4, and note Oxford: New College, MS. 162, discussed at p. ++ below. Those mentioned here are Magd., MSS lat. 51, 152, 169. Seven other copies of each of the works are recorded from other English libraries in the CBMLC identifications, available on the MLGB3 website, and of those four citations are from the sixteenth century.

⁵¹ Magd., MS. lat. 202.

⁵² Magd., MS. lat. 45. The brief excerpts begin at BL, MS. Cotton Julius F. VII, fol. 39.

⁵³ Magd., MS. lat. 22, fol. 134^v, transcribed in Hanna and Rundle; the chest stated is St John's, on which see G. Pollard, 'Medieval Loan Chests at Cambridge', *Bulletin of Historical Research*, xvii (1940), pp. 113-29 at p. 123 (not knowing this *caucio*).

⁵⁴ It appears he made one trip to Cambridge in 1470, when he met with John Argentein, see p. ++ below. He was there again in the latter half of August 1471: see his notebook, BL, MS. Cotton Julius F. VII, fol. 115, 122. Eventually, in 1474, he declared to Waynflete that he feared he would have to 'wythdrawe me to Cambrygge' and he was certainly there in 1475/6: see Beadle and Richmond, p. 190, and Harvey, *Itineraries*, p. 198.

⁵⁵ Magd., MS. lat. 198.

⁵⁶ Magd., MSS lat. 51 and 62.

Free, whom Worcestre considered a fellow countryman from Bristol, and of whose book collection, gathered in Italy, he came to own a few volumes. We might also note that both the manuscripts in which 'JF' appears were produced in Italy, one in the late twelfth century and the other in Worcestre's own lifetime. There is, though, no sign of Free leaving any mark in either of these volumes, so we cannot assert the presence of those initials definitely refers to him. There might, indeed, be reason to favour their identification with Fastolf: if Worcestre was preparing these books to be relinquished into Waynflete's possession and meant the letters to be intelligible to him, then the 'JF' who would have been familiar to the bishop was the knight whose estate he was working to ensure assisted the endowment of his college.

The second detail may seem at first unsurprising: in twelve of the Magdalen volumes which were once in Worcestre's possession, there is, most often on the same page as the title he provided, a mark combining one or two letters followed by an arabic number, the elements separated by interpuncts.⁵⁷ These, in other words, are what we tend to call shelfmarks or pressmarks, though that usage is overly precise in suggesting in what furniture a book sat, and the vagueness of the French *cote* is preferable.⁵⁸ As such markings are usually a feature of an institutional library, it is a natural assumption that the ones in these Magdalen books were added after the books' arrival in the college — natural but, remarkably, demonstrably incorrect. There are three factors which disprove that assumption. Magdalen is fortunate in having just over one hundred manuscripts and a smaller quantity of incunables which were in its library by the early sixteenth century: I have looked through them all and can state categorically that these *cotes* appear nowhere else in the collection but solely in volumes associated with Worcestre. If that causes pause for reflection, so should the fact that there exists one stray volume of Worcestre's that has such a mark but has no sign of ever having been in Magdalen. It is a copy of medical texts by Arnold of Villa Nova, made in Italy in the mid-fifteenth century by a Low Countries scribe, and with annotations by John Free; it belongs to Magdalen's neighbour just within Oxford's city walls, New College.⁵⁹ Its early modern career has not been fully reconstructed: it was in that library by the end of the seventeenth century and seems earlier to have been in private hands after it left Worcestre's ownership. His connexion with it is announced in his *ex libris* at the top of the verso of the front flyleaf, where he describes himself 'de Castro quondam prope Iermuth', that 'quondam' demonstrating he wrote it after Fastolf's death and his own forced departure from Caister Castle. Worcestre has also inserted on the same page a title, written in the same ink as seen in other manuscripts. There is, in addition, between the *ex libris* and the title, a *cote*.

The third factor we have to consider is the most revealing: these 'shelfmarks' are also identifiably in the handwriting of Worcestre himself. We should add that they are not in the same ink as the titles he write and, indeed, they vary among themselves in their colouring, some being in gray, some light brown, one a duller brown.⁶⁰ This suggests they were not all

⁵⁷ These are listed and discussed in more detail in the Appendix.

⁵⁸ As Richard Sharpe taught us in his 'Accession, Classification, Location: shelfmarks in medieval libraries', *Scriptorium*, 1 (1996), pp. 279-287.

⁵⁹ Oxford: New College, MS. 162. The manuscript does not appear in Thomas James, *Ecloga oxonio-cantabrigiensis* (London, 1600) but is in Edward Bernard, *Catalogi librorum manuscriptorum Angliae et Hiberniae* (Oxford, 1697); it is, however, in an early seventeenth-century Oxford binding. It has at fol. 71^v a late fifteenth-century price ('vi s viiiijd'); that it did not reach an institution is suggested by there being no sign of a chain-staple.

⁶⁰ Gray: Magd., MSS lat. 62, 169 and Oxford: New College, MS. 162; light brown: Magd., MSS lat. 45, 166, 198; duller brown: Magd., MS. lat. 82.

supplied in one sitting. Perhaps the earliest example is in Worcestre's manuscript of Boccaccio, where the mark appears to have been written at the same time as his ownership note, that is in 1461. Others were presumably added later in that decade, but most likely all were in place by the time Worcestre added titles on the same page in the early 1470s. The development of these *cotes* over time might explain why they do not fit obviously into a single pattern. When there is one letter, it usually refers either to a name (for instance, 'T' for Tullius in the Cicero volumes) or a title (so Cassiodorus's epistles has 'E'). When there are two, the first appears to be a subject listing and the second may be a name (this suits well 'M.C.' for the medical text of Constantinus the African). There is, however, not fully consistency and one seems to stand outside any system: for the Trevet, Worcestre provides not two letters and a number but a letter, a Roman numeral and an arabic one.⁶¹

What might have induced William Worcestre to concoct a set of *cotes* for these manuscripts? The process clearly started far too early for him to have in mind that they may eventually reach a university college where such a system might be useful: his own direct engagement with Magdalen was limited, and he visited there only in 1480, when he paced out the dimensions of the chapel but made no mention of the library just to its north in the complex of buildings.⁶² If he had perused their manuscript collection, he would have been disappointed not to find there those he had passed to the college's founder: Waynflete made one large gift of manuscripts (the gargantuan number of 800 is recorded) a year later, in 1481, and it was probably only then that the books that had been Worcestre's arrived on site.⁶³ As we can exclude that possibility, should we consider the addition of the *cotes* as being for Worcestre's private delectation, a sign that he had succumbed to what we might call catalogomania? Given what we know of his roaming mind, we would probably not want to exclude this possibility entirely but it cannot be a complete explanation. He was endowing these books with one of the known trappings of an institutional collection, an element of the organisational strategies which ensured they were kept secure and available for use by future readers. Worcestre was well aware of such systems: he could have seen examples close to him, for instance, among the books of Norwich Cathedral Priory or in the libraries of the well-provided Cambridge colleges.⁶⁴ In the 1460s, of course, there was one would-be college that was particularly in his mind, the one that his late master had wanted to found. Might he have had some aspiration that at some point these books would become part of that institution?

There are several objections to this suggestion. The first and most obvious is that, however much Fastolf or Worcestre himself wanted a college to exist, it was never legally founded. That said, until 1470 at the earliest, it was by no means fully evident that this would be the outcome of the dispute over the will. Moreover, lack of foundation does not necessarily equate to lack of functioning. There is an intriguing reference in the schedule of payments made following the death of John Paston on 22nd May 1466, relating to alms

⁶¹ Magd., MS. lat. 45: 'C.iv.6'.

⁶² *Itineraries*, ed. Harvey, p. 276.

⁶³ R. M. Thomson ed., *The University and College Libraries of Oxford* [CBMLC, xvi], 2 vols (London, 2015), p. 745 assumes 'octingentos' should be read as 'octogintos' but 800 certainly entered into college mythology; see the introduction to Hanna and Rundle.

⁶⁴ For Norwich see R. Sharpe et al ed., *The English Benedictines: the shorter catalogues* [CBMLC, iv]; for Cambridge colleges, see P. D. Clarke ed., *The University and College Libraries of Cambridge* [CBMLC, x] (London, 2002).

handed out at the time of its funeral: it includes money given to eight poor men and eight priests at Caister, and another to ‘the master of the College’ there.⁶⁵ This suggests that Fastolf’s intention of having a chantry of six priests and seven paupers, preceded over by a master, had been established within his castle, and lacked only the legal status its formal foundation would require. That absence of legal status, however, proved fatal, and could not forestall whatever arrangements were in place being disbanded in the following decade. Despite that eventual failure, in the 1460s, Worcestre could have had something more than a forlorn hope for the future of Fastolf’s college.

Yet, why would Worcestre have imagined that these books could have had a suitable home there? A chantry would have need liturgical volumes to carry out those duties and, as we have seen, some of those were already in Fastolf’s chapel.⁶⁶ Works of Cicero, however, or medical tracts were of no direct relevance to its purpose. Similar volumes were to be found in some other colleges and, in those locations, they served one or both of two purposes. The first was to support school-age instruction. It is a notable absence in Fastolf’s plans that there was no provision for such an element. This was in contrast to the plans drawn up by Ralph, lord Cromwell (d. 1456) for his estate of Tattershall in Lincolnshire — plans which are sometimes thought to have acted as a precedent for Fastolf.⁶⁷ The fundamental difference is instructive: as well as priests and paupers, Cromwell planned for there to be choristers and so, alongside the chantry and almshouses there was to be a school to educate them and others from the area.⁶⁸ In the various iterations of Fastolf’s plans, there is a notable silence about choristers: when, during his master’s lifetime, Worcestre had drawn up draft costings for the proposed college, he did so without mention of them, unless they were to be the two boys assisting at divine service.⁶⁹ Without choristers, there would have been little need for a school or for a book collection beyond the chapel books. Worcestre might, however, have reasonably estimated that masses sung for the speeding of a soul through purgatory would benefit from including unbroken voices. Given how Fastolf’s vision repeatedly changed in its detail, Worcestre may have imagined that Caister College might be like the foundation at Heytesbury in Wiltshire reformed by Walter, lord Hungerford where its ambitions grew over time so that it eventually a school was added to the proposal of a chantry and almshouses.⁷⁰ He may even have felt some confidence that the college in which he was so intimately involved might end up having such a feature, given that it was achieved for Tattershall after

⁶⁵ Gairdner, *Paston Letters*, iv, p. 230 (no. 637), cited by Richmond, *Fastolf’s Will*, p. 58 (quoting Alasdair Hawkyard). Cf. Davis, i, p. 127 where, a year earlier, Paston spoke of ‘my prestes and poremen’ being unpaid. A year before that, in 1464, Paston had petitioned the king to found the college: Davis, i, p. 122-25. See also Davis, i, p. 142, and Hawkyard, ‘Fastolf’s Grete Mansion’, p. 65, stating ‘the college was in existence by 1461’.

⁶⁶ See n. ++ above.

⁶⁷ J. M. W. Willoughby ed., *The Libraries of Collegiate Churches* [CBMLC, xv], 2 vols (London, 2013), pp. 520-538. The influence of Cromwell’s plan on Fastolf is mooted by Richmond, *Fastolf’s Will*, p. 62n. There was also the similarity of the difficulties surrounding the founder’s will: see S. Payling, ‘The “Grete Laboure and the Long and Troublous Tyme”: the execution of the will of Ralph, lord Cromwell, and the foundation of Tattershall College’ in L. Clark ed., *Exploring the Evidence: commemoration, administration and the economy* (Woodbridge, 2014), pp. 1-29.

⁶⁸ This is article 22 in the Statutes of Tattershall College: *Report on the Manuscripts of Lord De L’Isle and Dudley* (Historical Manuscripts Commission, lxxvii), 6 vols (London, 1925-66), i (1925), p. 182.

⁶⁹ MCA, Misc. 445: ‘pro duobus pueris de elemonis [i.e. elemosinis] inuectis ad adiuuandum in ecclesia pro diuino seruicio pro victu et vestitu eorum per annum – xxs’.

⁷⁰ M. Hicks, ‘St Katherine’s Hospital, Heytesbury: prehistory, foundation and refoundation, 1408-1472’, *Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine*, lxxviii (1983), pp. 62-69 at p. 65; see also Willoughby, *Colleges*, pp. 244-49 (only earlier liturgical books listed).

Cromwell's death by his executors, led by none other than William Waynflete. If Worcestre did have such confidence, we know that it was to prove misplaced.

The absence of a school on its site did not mean that a college had no use for learned tomes.⁷¹ This brings us to the second possible purpose of a book-collection. The range of texts Worcestre gathered were surely so recondite they would have made the heads of most school-boys ache; the works would have been of greater interest to those who had already received more training. They could, in other words, have been for the edification of the priests of the college. Worcestre may have marked up his manuscripts on the assumption that the collegians would have welcomed some corner of their establishment being reserved for books like these. It would have endowed the college with resources relevant to higher education. An association with the nature of university colleges was certainly in Worcestre's mind when, at some point in the late 1460s, fearful of what Waynflete had planned, he proposed that 'the fundacion of my maister Fastolf collage myght ben at Cambrygge yn case hyt shall nat be at Caste...', on the basis of the university's physical proximity to east Norfolk.⁷² Worcestre patently did not consider that alongside Peterhouse, Pembroke College and, indeed, King's, a Fastolf College would look out of place.

If Worcestre had a sense of the higher educational worth the college could have, which he intended to augment through his books, then a final objection stubbornly remains: this does not sit comfortably with our sense of what Fastolf would have wanted. Colin Richmond (as so often) puts it well when he comments that William Waynflete's 'passion for education had not touched Sir John'.⁷³ An ardent flame may not have been kindled in this calculating soldier's breast but there may, at the least, been some smoulders of interest. I would suggest, in fact, that it would have been difficult for Fastolf to have been oblivious to the uses of Latin learning and the institutions needed to support it. Let us briefly review the evidence.

We may not lay much store by matters of family connexion: his wife, Milicent (d. 1446) had the surname Scrope by her first marriage but was née Tiptoft. She was second cousin once removed to John Tiptoft, the earl of Worcester who, while spending time in Italy, hatched a proposal to provide the University of Oxford with humanist texts.⁷⁴ The earl and his distant relative through marriage, Sir John Fastolf, certainly worked together in government in the 1450s but this does not mean that, say, when they were both on the commission to investigate unrest in Kent in the wake of Cade's Rebellion that they took time to step aside and talk on bookish matters.⁷⁵ Yet, even if there was no intellectual conversation between them, there was some link between their secretaries since, as we have seen, Worcestre owned some of the books of John Free, who for some years in Italy worked for Tiptoft, and who drafted the earl's letter to Oxford.

⁷¹ A pertinent example is the College of All Saints, Maidstone, on which see Willoughby, *Colleges*, pp. 343-56.

⁷² Davis, ii, p. 354 with the date given as 'probably 1468'; it cannot be earlier than January that year and it must be before 1470.

⁷³ Richmond, *Fastolf's Will*, p. 55. For Waynflete's interests, see V. Davis, 'William Waynflete and the Educational Revolution of the Fifteenth Century' in J. Rosenthal and C. Richmond ed., *People, Politics and Community in the Later Middle Ages* (Gloucester, 1987), pp. 40-59.

⁷⁴ Rundle, *Renaissance Reform*, pp. 174-227.

⁷⁵ The commission is calendared at *Calendar Patent Rolls 1446-52* (London, 1909), p. 437. For the context, see I. M. W. Harvey, *Jack Cade's Rebellion of 1450* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 133-38.

When the University of Oxford responded to Tiptoft, they praised him as a second Humfrey, referring to Henry VI's youngest uncle, the duke of Gloucester who had been their benefactor in money and books — a magnificent act which Worcestre would later memorialise in his own composition, *The Boke of Noblesse*.⁷⁶ Following the duke's death under arrest in 1447, the university considered itself cheated of the books and other property which, they claimed, had been promised to them. The royal commission to deal with the duke's estate largely ignored their plea but the commissioners themselves were removed following the political and social tensions of 1450. A second commission was appointed and among its number was Sir John Fastolf.⁷⁷ We might not consider this very significant, in as much as there were more important issues than books for the commission to consider, and the sizeable quantity of manuscripts which had been in Humfrey's possession at his death had probably already been largely dispersed or given away, including some being directed to Henry VI's own foundation of King's College, Cambridge.⁷⁸ This cannot be taken to imply a personal interest in higher education on Fastolf's part but, equally, it demonstrates that he could not have been unaware of the concern for it shown by others. For evidence about Fastolf's own involvement in such schemes, we need to look earlier in his life, to his years in France.

There is a roll, made after his death, itemising his activities; though much space is taken up with his military escapades in the Lancastrian French lands, it lists more than just that. One entry states:

...Item factus est Capitaneus ville et Castri de Caane sub Johanne duce Bedfordie per vii annos continuos ... Et medio tempore suo Auxilio et concilio ad dominum Regentem necnon ad Iodowicum luxenburgh[ensem] Archiepiscopum Rotomagensem et Cancellarium Francie Vniuersitas clericorum studentium preuilegio pape factus [sic] est in dicta villa Cadomi.⁷⁹

When McFarlane said that Fastolf was 'credited with the idea of founding a university at Caen', he was over-reading this passage but not by much. It undeniably asserts that this major venture — the creation of the Lancastrian regime's third university in 1432 — came about through Sir John's advice and assistance.⁸⁰ Fastolf did not need to have a deep-seated selfless devotion to education in order to appreciate the use to policy of establishing an institution committed to Latin teaching. He surely realised that it would announce to the world that the English occupation of France could rise above the brutality of war, and that it could promote more peaceable pursuits, which would nurture the church and higher learning.

⁷⁶ BL, MS. Royal 18.B.XXII, fol. 23^v, providing an autograph insertion in a passage about Humfrey: 'yevyng as yt ys seyde to the value of m^l marks of all the vij sciences and of dyvinte as of lawe spirituall and cyvyle to the vniversite of Oxford...'; printed at *The Boke of Noblesse*, ed. J. G. Nichols (London, 1860), p. 45. We await the new edition of this work by C. Nall and D. Wakelin.

⁷⁷ D. Rundle, 'Two Unnoticed Manuscripts from the Collection of Humfrey, Duke of Gloucester', *Bodleian Library Record*, xvi (1998), pp. 299–313.

⁷⁸ The evidence for the manuscripts reaching King's is summarised by Clarke, *Cambridge*, pp. 283–284.

⁷⁹ MCA, Fastolf Papers 69, memb. 5.

⁸⁰ McFarlane, 'Worcester', p. 212. On the establishment of the university, see M. Fournier, *Les statuts et privilèges des universités françaises...*, 4 vols (Paris, 1890–94), iii, pp. 145–198; H. Rashdall, *The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages*, rev. F. W. Powicke and A. B. Emden, 3 vols (Oxford, 1936), iii, pp. 195–99, and L. Roy, *L'université de Caen aux xve et xvie siècles* (Leiden, 2006), pp. 11–50.

A pivotal role in founding a university is so far from the image often conjured of Fastolf's proto-Falstaffian character that we might want to dismiss this source. It is posthumous and it comes from the pen of someone who was not with him in the early 1430s, for the roll is the work of William Worcestre. We might accuse him of imposing his own interest in Latin learning on the memory of a dead man but, even if we were inclined to prefer our own perceptions to his, we would have to accept that the reputation he was constructing for his master could have been for him sufficient cause for his own actions. I would take it further and suggest that it was Worcestre's role, as a secretary, not just to reflect but also to shape his employer's interests. The meshing together of the lives of master and servant, entailed a merging of outlooks: a secretary would do his employer's bidding but would also mould through advice what his lord asked of him.

This is to say that when Worcestre took his books and foresaw for them an institutional future, he could earnestly believe he was doing as his master would have wanted. If the foundation of the university at Caen was an attempt to demonstrate the good working of a fully functioning English-run state in France, then Worcestre may have been imitating that in miniature, playing his part in willing into existence a college by suggesting that there were available the trappings of one designed on a grand scale. This does not mean that the collection he compiled was once his master's. As we have seen, one of the books came to him over a decade after Fastolf's death, and others — quite possibly the majority — might have been purchases made during the 1460s. Worcestre explicitly stated some of the books were his own property, a shrewd manoeuvre when the college had no legal right to exist and when it was apparent others might quash it. We cannot even be certain that when he says that he owns a book 'de beneficio domini Iohannis' that he had received it during Fastolf's lifetime; it is possible he is thinking more generally of the benefits offered to him by his employment and thus of the debt of gratitude he owed. Perhaps only the brace of manuscripts which he marked with 'JF' had been the property of Fastolf, or maybe not even those. We must avoid feigning certainty where there can be none: we cannot say for definite which if any of the surviving books were Fastolf's. All we can assert is that these were the sorts of books Worcestre believed his master would (taking his advice from his secretary) have considered appropriate to have somewhere in his castle, beyond the stew house.

There is a coda to this, as well as a conclusion to be drawn. It has been possible to demonstrate that the number of manuscripts which passed from one William, the secretary, to another, the bishop, was substantially larger than had previously been known. We have also been able to reconstruct the passage of their ownership: they were transferred as part of the tortuous negotiations over the fate of Sir John Fastolf's estate, in the first half of the 1470s, eventually reaching their new home of Magdalen College, Oxford, in 1481. The volumes that survive in that collection do not, in fact, reflect the full extent of what Worcestre relinquished at the stage; equally, the act of giving up those manuscripts did not leave Worcestre bereft of books. Let us consider those two points in reverse order.

We have already encountered some of the manuscripts which Worcester kept in his possession. Some, unsurprisingly, were his notebooks — written in scripts which few (in his lifetime or later) could decipher.⁸¹ There was also his collection of short medical treatises which, unlike his notebooks, was marked up in the same style as those which went to Magdalen; we can only guess at why he decided not to hand over this one.⁸² He was proud of this book, at least for a time. He stated that it was ‘nouiter compilatus’, but was disabused of that assumption when he showed it to the Cambridge physician, John Argentein, probably in 1470: Worcester succinctly reported their discussion in a note he added at the end of the first item identifying its author as Arnold of Villa Nova, ‘secundum relacionem m argentyne’.⁸³ We have noted that this codex had previously belonged to John Free; by a route which has not been clarified, a small cluster of books owned by Free, who died in Italy by early 1465, reached England were bought by Worcester.⁸⁴ They included one which Worcester possessed rather than read: it is a copy of Sophocles and Euripides in Greek, a language in which he had hardly even the rudiments (unlike the accomplished Free).⁸⁵ His one intervention in the book is a note recording that it had belonged to Free, ‘de Bristollia natus sed obiit in civitate Romana’ and that afterwards (‘postea’) he himself had bought it ‘auxilio domini Johannis Fastolf militis cui deum precipimus’. The final words echo those in his copy of Ivo of Chartres and, as there, do not mean that Fastolf was alive when he came to own this — taking Worcester’s words literally, his master would have been at least six years in the grave before he purchased it.⁸⁶

A similar inscription appears in a third manuscript. It belongs to Balliol College, and is in Free’s autograph; it provides his notes on Pliny’s *Natural History* and an excerpted version of Poggio Bracciolini’s translation of Diodorus Siculus.⁸⁷ Free’s hand is identified in notes inserted by Worcester but he is not here responsible for the statement that records that he gave to Balliol ‘de beneficiis domini Johannis Fastolffe’ — that was written in the college, by the person who writes the contents list at the front pastedown. As one of Worcester’s notes also mentions Free’s death, he could not have donated this before the second half of the 1460s and is likely to have been as late as the early 1480s, since there is another note in the manuscript, datable to 1480 at the earliest, by a Balliol man and Bristol priest, John Burton, whom Worcester met in that year.⁸⁸ More than half a decade after Waynflete had taken charge of Fastolf’s goods, Worcester was still remembering his master. It was appropriate that the manuscript should reach Balliol, given it was Free’s *alma mater*, but it would seem

⁸¹ There are three holster books which he used for note-taking: Cambridge: Corpus Christi College, MS. 210, and BL, MSS Cotton Julius F. VII and Sloane 4. A fourth of the same format, BL, MS. Add. 28208, stands apart as being Worcester’s accounts as supervisor of Fastolf’s manor of Castle Combe.

⁸² Oxford: New College, MS. 162, introduced at p. ++ above.

⁸³ Oxford: New College, MS. 162, fol. i^v, 31^{ra}. On Argentein and his contacts with Worcester, see D. R. Leader, ‘John Argentein and Learning in Medieval Cambridge’, *Humanistica Lovaniensia*, xxxiii (1984), pp. 71-85 (though the suggestion, at p. 73, that Argentein had this manuscript compiled is clearly in error).

⁸⁴ Not clarified, but I have a theory which I hope to expound elsewhere.

⁸⁵ Oxford: Bodleian Library, MS. Auct. F.3.25, with Worcester’s note at the front flyleaf; on this, see Wakelin, ‘England’, pp. 280-82. Free’s ownership is corroborated by the presence of his annotations at, e.g., fol. 16. Worcester’s own interest in the language is attested by BL, MS. Cotton Julius F. VII, fol. 123, where short Greek phrases, their transliteration and translation are inserted into his notebook by Robert Flemmyng, on whom see n. ++ above.

⁸⁶ Magd., MS. lat. 22, on which see p. ++ above.

⁸⁷ Oxford: Balliol College, MS. 124.

⁸⁸ The note is at Oxford: Balliol College, MS. 124, fol. 153 and for Worcester’s knowledge of him, see *Itineraries*, ed. Harvey, p. 322.

that Worcestre was hoping for gratitude to and prayers for Fastolf from an Oxford college other than Magdalen, a sign perhaps of his disillusionment with the bishop of Winchester and his schemes.

It may, though, be that at least one manuscript of Free's works did reach Magdalen. When John Bale was compiling his bibliographical listing of British-born writers in the middle of the sixteenth century, he included John Free with the statement that 'inter oratores vniversitatis Paduensis plura composuit. Iste demum obiit Romae A.D. 1465', giving as his source Magdalen College, Oxford.⁸⁹ This sounds very much like the sort of note that Worcestre added to the extant manuscripts of Free's just mentioned. It was not the only now-lost manuscript which Bale saw in Magdalen with an association to Worcestre, as one manuscript apparently opened with epistles composed by him, followed by medical treatises, 'abbreviationes doctorum' and a work of Roger Bacon's.⁹⁰

These references to volumes which are now no more than ghosts serve as a reminder that, while among the more than 230 western manuscripts now in Magdalen over a hundred arrived there before the 1540s, it suffered some weeding of its collection in the mid-sixteenth century. Bale is not our only witness to these losses; there is also the record of selected items drawn up by an agent of Marcello Cervini (later pope as Marcellus II), probably in the later 1520s.⁹¹ Some of the works included in that list survive, including two works of Cicero's, *De fato* and *Partitiones*, both of which were there thanks to Worcestre.⁹² Might he have been also responsible for the presence of a copy of another work by the same author, his *Topica*, which like these, was relatively scarce in England?⁹³ A yet rarer work which caught the agent's eye was by a modern Italian writer, the *Vita Henrici quinti* by Tito Livio Frulovisi.⁹⁴ We do not how Magdalen came to have a copy but it would have been an appropriate work for Worcestre to have read, given his interest in Henry V, inspired by his master's service to the warrior king.⁹⁵

This, finally, returns us to the figure with whom this article began. Sir John Fastolf has appeared intermittently and, at times, tangentially in the preceding pages. We have circled around him, and that is to the point: we necessarily approach him through others' records of his deeds and words. This is a lot of a prince (a title he deserves, despite his mere gentry status). Deborah Thorpe has described Fastolf as the centre of a circle, and it is one

⁸⁹ J. Bale, *Index Britanniae scriptorum*, ed. R. Lane Poole and M. Bateson (Oxford, 1902), p. 205. See Ralph Hanna's discussion in Hanna and Rundle, Appendix 3.

⁹⁰ Bale, *Index*, p. 117. I say apparently because, though described as 'epistolae ad diversos', the incipit provided, 'oratori neccesaria est sapientia', reads like a note drawn from Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*, lib. I. The last item, described as 'de valitudine astrologie' has been identified by Ralph Hanna as part of Bacon's *Opus maius*, ed. J. H. Bridges, 2 vols (London, 1900), i, pp. 376-403.

⁹¹ On this list, see J. M. W. Willoughby, 'Cardinal Marcello Cervini and English Libraries' in J. Catto and J. M. W. Willoughby ed., *Books and Bookmen in Early Modern England* (Toronto, 2018), pp. 119-49; Willoughby edits the list at pp. 143-44, and it is also available as Thomson, *Oxford*, UO45. For ease of reference, the following citations used the numbering in the latter.

⁹² UO45.8 = Magd., MS. lat. 62, item 2; UO45.9 = Magd., MS. lat. 206, item 3.

⁹³ UO45.3. As with the other two Ciceronian works, only seven other copies listed in MLGB3, four of them sixteenth-century catalogue entries.

⁹⁴ UO45.4. For a listing of the three surviving copies and two that are lost, see D. Rundle, 'The Unoriginality of Tito Livio Frulovisi's *Vita Henrici Quinti*, *English Historical Review*, cxxiii (2008), pp. 1109-1131 at p. 1129.

⁹⁵ For Worcestre's annotating of the anonymous *Gesta Henrici Quinti*, BL, MS. Cotton Julius E IV, fol. 113-127, see the edition by F. Taylor and J. S. Roskell (Oxford, 1975), p. xv.

which we can view only from outside its circumference: those around him define him.⁹⁶ Part of that definition was the expression of cultural interests, in French and English but also in Latin. Quite precisely which of the manuscripts discussed might have been his must remain undecided — we are in a better position to state which he could not have seen, because they came into his secretary's possession only after he had no more need for a secretary or any other worldly thing. Worcestre did associate his master posthumously with some of those books, and so the circumference remained in orbit, even after the centre-point had disintegrated to dust. We can be confident, however, that, in his lifetime, Fastolf's household was home to a collection of Latin manuscripts. Even if they never felt the touch of the old knight's own fingers, they were not, as it were, a closed book to him. On the evidence provided by Worcestre, Fastolf recognised the value of Latin learning and the need for structures to help it flourish. He most likely did not pay much thought to whether his college should be stocked with a library — it was the sort of detail which a prince could leave to a secretary. His ambitions, though, allowed a space for that possibility, one which his former servant continued to promote for twelve years or more following Fastolf's death. Worcestre's strivings proved futile, though perhaps not completely. The appropriation of a large part of what remained of his master's wealth by Waynflete for his own preferred schemes could legitimately be considered legal chicanery. This bishop's foundation was in a location which Fastolf would not have chosen and the organisation of the college was far from how he envisaged his would be, but there was one way in which the re-direction from Caister to Oxford was not an abuse of the knight's legacy. Waynflete and Fastolf shared a recognition of the importance of Latin learning, the continuing vigour of which each of them promoted after his own fashion. William Worcestre, for his part, could have reasoned that, if Waynflete was going to take so much of what remained, then he could also bear responsibility for the books that Worcestre himself thought were appropriate for Fastolf College. The result is that, in more than just financial endowment, Magdalen College has been enriched 'de beneficio domini Johannis Fastolf'.

⁹⁶ Thorpe, 'Circle of Fastolf'.

Appendix: Manuscripts once owned by William Worcestre now in Magdalen College, Oxford

Full descriptions of all the following manuscripts will appear in Hanna and Rundle, so only brief information is provided here, concentrating on the evidence for Worcestre's interventions. Those manuscripts for which his association is previously unnoticed are marked in bold.

The datings provided follow the system established by Neil Ker: see *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries*, 5 vols (Oxford, 1969-2002), ii, p. vii.

- [1] MS. lat. 8 — Honorius, *Imago mundi*; Isidore, *Etymologiae* (England, s. xiii in.) — Worcestre adds notes at fol. 66, and a *cote*, 'I prima' at fol. i^v.
- [2] **MS. lat. 22** — Seneca, *Epistolae* (England, s. xii²) — formerly owned by Evesham Abbey (ex libris at fol. 2^v; the *cote*, s. xiv², 'E prima' at fol. 1^v is presumably from that library), it was pledged by Edmund Albon in Cambridge's St John's chest in 1470 (partially erased caution note at fol. 134^v); Worcestre adds the title, 'Epistole Senece', at fol. 2^v.
- [3] MS. lat. 26 — Ivo of Chartres, *Sermones* (England, s. xii in.) — given by Worcestre to William Waynflete on 16th December 1473 (fol. ii^v: see p. ++ above).
- [4] **MS. lat. 45** — Nicolas Trevet, *Les cronycles* (England, s. xiv¹) — Worcestre adds both a title, 'Cronica Tryvet in gallica', and a *cote*, 'C.vi.6' at fol. ii^v.
- [5] **MS. lat. 50** — Solinus, *Collectanea rerum memorabilium*; Dares Phrygius; Apollonius Tyrius (England, s. xii¹) — Worcestre annotates at fol. 66^v and provides the *cote*, 'A.S.4', at fol. i^v.
- [6] **MS. lat. 51** — Constantine the African, *Pantegni* (Italy, s. xii med. – s. xiii) — Worcestre adds three notes at fol. i^v: a *cote*, 'M.C.4', below that a title 'Constantinus in pategni' and further down and to the left, the initials 'I. F.'.
- [7] **MS. lat. 62** — Cicero, *De divinatione* and *De fato* (Italy, s. xv med.) — Worcestre adds at the centre of fol. 3bis^v, a title, 'Tullius de Fato et diuinacione' and above it, a shelfmark: 'T.4', and below the initials 'I. F.'.
- [8] MS. lat. 65 — Walter Burley on Aristotle's *Problemata* (England, s. xv med.) — possibly written by Worcestre when at Oxford, it has an attestation to his ownership by Nicolas Nesaude, now attached to fol. iii^v, and, written on the same page by Worcestre, a contents list, more extensive than the present codex (see p. ++ above).
- [9] **MS. lat. 82** — 'Magister Alanus', commentary on *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (England, s. xv¹) — Worcestre provides at fol. ii^v a *cote*, 'T.3', and, below it, a title: 'Tullius in noua Rethorica cum commento'.
- [10] **MS. lat. 152** — Ibn Jazlah, *Tacuinum corporum* (England, s. xiii/xiv) — Worcestre adds the *cote*, 'P.T.7' at front pastedown.
- [11] MS. lat. 166 — Cassiodorus, *Variae* (?Italy, s. xii med.) — once owned by Thomas Becket, this was in the collection of Christ Church, Canterbury, before reaching Worcestre, who adds an ownership note at fol. iv^v: 'Pertinet W Wyrce Tyr manenti iuxta Ciuitatem Norwicensem' bracketed, with 'Bo[cypher]toner' by the bracket. At the same folio, but at separate sittings, he also writes a title: 'Epistole Regis Atheniensis elegantissime stilo' and a *cote*, 'E4', entered twice.
- [12] **MS. lat. 169** — Isaac Israeli, *De dietis universalibus* (England, s. xiii in.) — Worcestre provides a *cote* 'M.C.2' and a title, 'liber medicine de naturis ciborum' at fol. ii^v.

- [13] MS. lat. 198 — Boccaccio, *De casibus virorum illustrium* (?France, s. xiv ex.) — Worcestre writes at fol. ii^v his ownership note, amended to record its passing to William Waynflete (see p. ++ above), and also added a *cote* at the page: ‘Q.Q.1’.
- [14] **MS. lat. 202** — Grosseteste, *Sermones*; Pierre of Limoges, *De oculo morali*; Malachi of Ireland, *De septem venenis* (England, s. xv¹); Worcestre adds a contents list at back pastedown, now damaged, but appearing to end with ‘Botoner’. He also inserts another contents list at fol. 1^v, and, at fol. i^v, a *cote*, ‘A.2’.
- [15] MS. lat. 206 — Cicero, rhetorical treatises; Nonius Marcellus (Italy, s. xv med.) — previously owned by Robert Flemmyng (see n. ++ above), Worcestre adds his annotating symbol (e.g. fol. 113^v-114^v, 115^v, 116^v, 117-122^v, 123^v-124, 125, 126^v-127^v, 128^v, 129^v-137 etc), and, at the upper board and the front flyleaf, a *cote*, ‘N.T.1’.