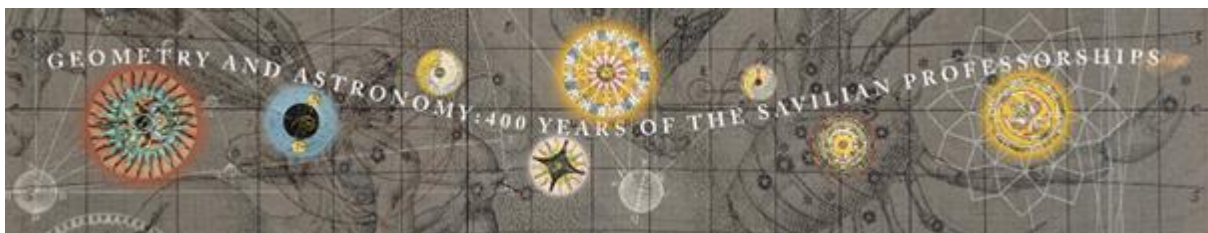


Geometry and Astronomy in New College, Oxford (2019), front cover

2019 has been a year of notable anniversaries, marking as it does both the 400th anniversary of the Savilian Professorships in geometry and astronomy, and the 40th anniversary of women students at New College.¹ In 1619, the scholar and diplomat Sir Henry Savile (1549–1622), Merton College

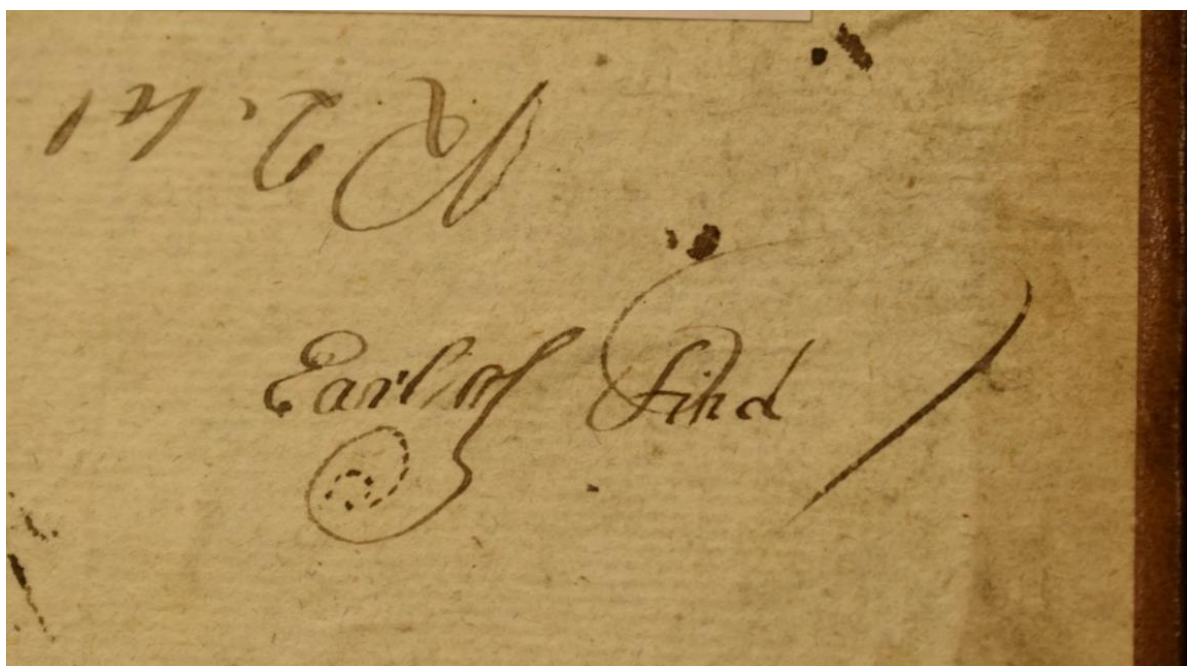
¹ The library marked both anniversaries with exhibitions in the Upper Reading Room utilising two state-of-the-art display cases acquired that year thanks to the kind generosity of two donors—‘New College Women Writers: A 40th Anniversary Celebration’ ran first followed by ‘Geometry and Astronomy: 400 Years of the Savilian Professorships’.



warden and Eton provost, founded two university chairs bearing his name; they have long been associated with New College, but it was not until the late nineteenth century that the chairs became statutorily linked to professorial fellowships at the college, as they remain today. Thus in November 2019, the library published a book to mark this Savilian anniversary, *Geometry and Astronomy in New College, Oxford: On the Quatercentenary of the Savilian Professorships 1619-2019*, edited by the Fellow Librarian and the Librarian.

I

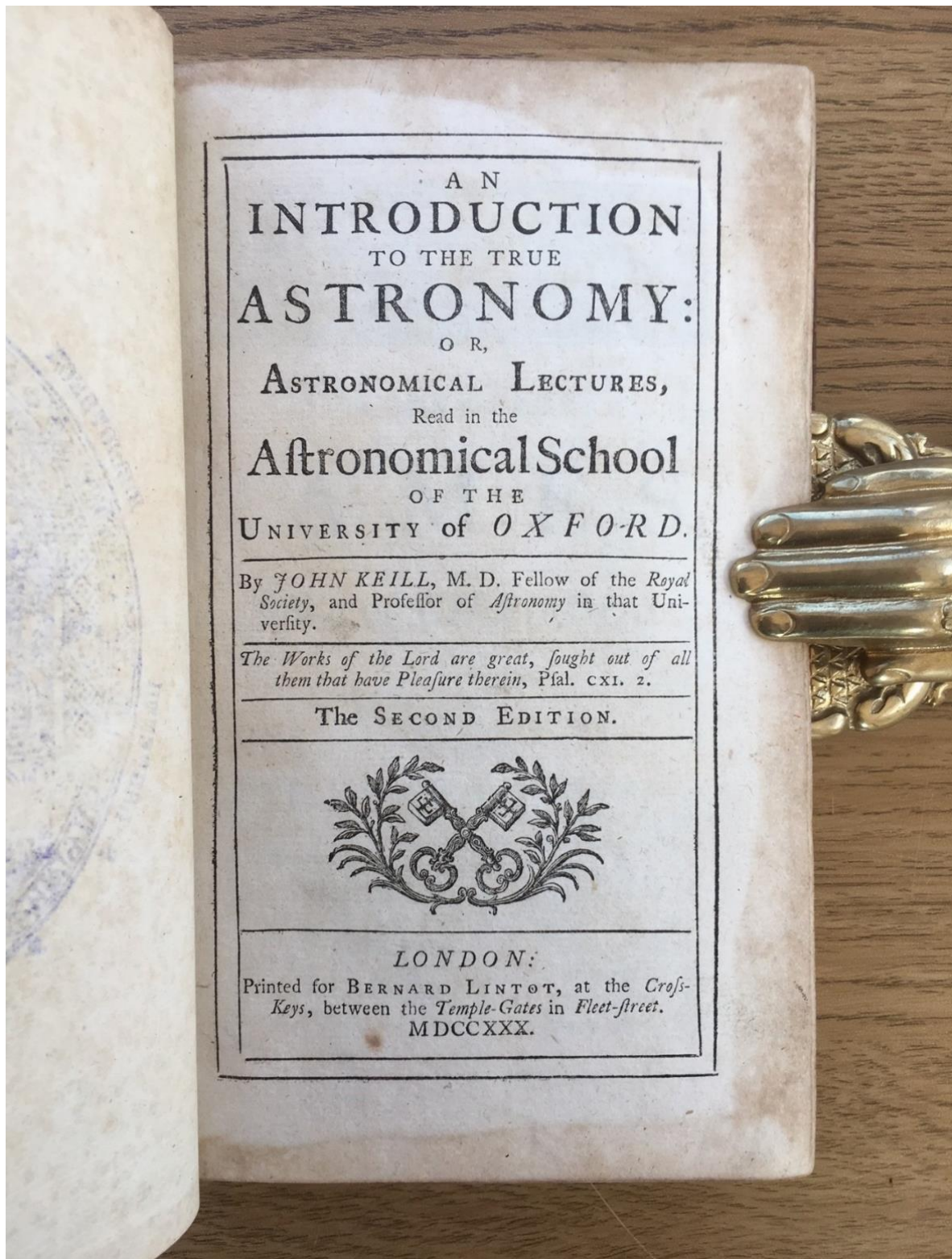
Both anniversaries have occasioned significant related acquisitions for the library over the course of the year. In May 2019, New College Library purchased a copy of the first English edition of *Exercitatio geometrica* (Edinburgh, 1684) by the sixth Savilian professor of astronomy, David Gregory (1659–1708)—an Aberdonian, and the first non-Englishman to occupy a Savilian chair. Gregory lived in New College Lane, neighbour there to his fellow geometry Savilian, Edmond Halley (1656–1742), with whom he collaborated closely. That Gregory should write this *Treatise of Practical Geometry* (Edinburgh, 1745), and Halley's renown should be chiefly as an astronomer (not a geometer), indicates the extent to which the two chairs were largely interchangeable in those days. Our copy of Gregory's *Treatise* has an interesting provenance, bearing the inscription of an Earl of Findlater.



David Gregory, *A Treatise of Practical Geometry* (1745), inscription on front pastedown
New College Library, Oxford, NB.106.33

Also in May, as part of its contribution to the Savilian anniversary celebrations, the library purchased another fine book by a Savilian professor, again with an important provenance. John Keill (1671–1721), the eighth professor of astronomy, was Gregory's protégé from Edinburgh University, and the second Scot to hold a Savilian professorship. He first published his (Latin) *Introductio ad veram astronomiam* in Oxford in 1718—the astronomy lectures that he delivered to Oxford undergraduates in fulfilment of his Savilian teaching responsibilities at the university. An English edition of these appeared in 1721. Our copy, of the 1730 second English edition, was at one time held by the library of a Benedictine foundation in Yorkshire, Ampleforth Abbey, and it was subsequently deaccessioned for sale by Ampleforth. Like the first edition, our book carries a

dedication to James Brydges, 1st Duke of Chandos (1674–1744), of Handel *Chandos Anthems* fame. Brydges was a New College man, who in 1710 gifted his college £100 to help fund the Garden Quad and its wrought-iron gate screen.



John Keill, *An Introduction to the True Astronomy* (1730), title-page
New College Library, Oxford, NB.41.20

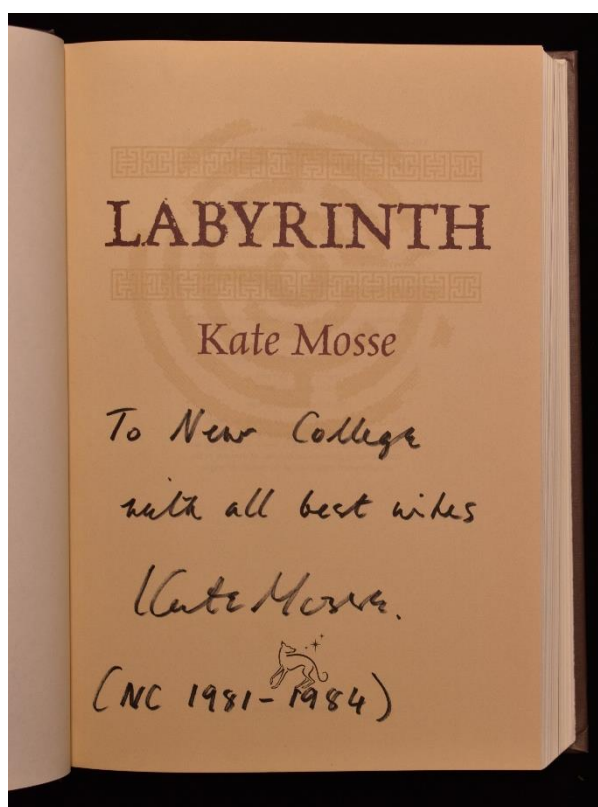
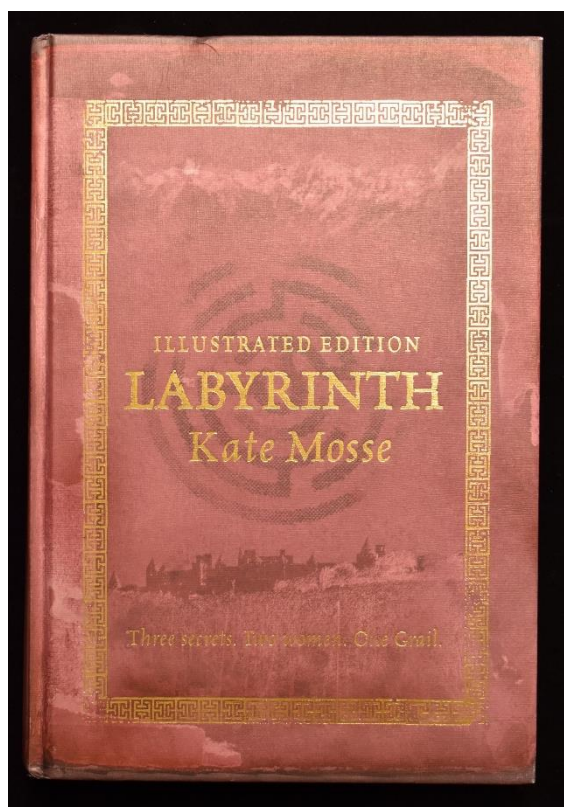
The book does indeed bear interesting signs of its former ownership, by way of Ampleforth's old white lozenge-shaped paper label to its spine, Ampleforth's shelf number label to its front pastedown, and that library's monastic nineteenth-century purple gothic-style stamp on the recto of the first endleaf: 'S. Laurentii Bibliotheca Monasterii Apud Ampleforth'.



Spine with lozenge-shaped paper label, and the bookstamp, 'S. Laurentii Bibliotheca Monasterii Apud Ampleforth'
New College Library, Oxford, NB.41.20

II

If we fast-forward from 1619 in Oxford some 360 years to 1979, women students are for the first time ever matriculating at New College. The past forty years have seen an outstanding literary output from New College women writers, who count among their number the novelists Rachel Cusk (b. 1967), Roopa Farooki (b. 1974), Rachel Johnson (b. 1965), Sophie Kinsella (b. 1969), and Kate Mosse (b. 1961). Modern collections in our library today will become the stuff of our special collections of the future; and we have the very pleasing obligation to collect the works of New College authors who are currently writing. We aim to make the library's alumni collection (our NC sequence) a comprehensive institutional print repository of books and pamphlets by and about New College women and men.



Kate Mosse, *Labyrinth* (2006)
New College Library, Oxford, NC/MOS

In November 2019, we were delighted to receive from the author a signed copy, with a dedication to the college, of a special, limited edition of Kate Mosse's iconic novel, *Labyrinth*, the UK's bestselling book of 2006. Of the printed books published in the twentieth-first century likely to be preserved among the special collections of libraries in 2219, no doubt beautiful rare editions and association copies (books associated with an author because of a previous owner's connections to the author) will be most prized. We were pleased that Kate Mosse also signed two of her books from our collection while they were on display on 27 October in our exhibition, 'New College Women Writers: A 40th Anniversary Celebration', which formed part of the college's celebrations.²

Other signed copies by New College women writers acquired for the library during 2019 include purchases of books by bestselling American, feminist author Naomi Wolf, and books presented by the American medieval scholar Ruth Mazo Karras.³ Ruth, and Caroline Kay, were the subject of a 2019 portrait by Paula Wilson, which the college commissioned, of these its first women MCR and JCR Presidents. Professor Karras is depicted in the portrait holding 'The New College Apocalypse' (1300–1310), an illuminated Anglo-Norman prose translation of the Apocalypse of St John, of sumptuous artistry, and one of the library's most celebrated manuscript treasures.

² Kate Mosse, *Citadel* (London, 2012) and *The Mistletoe Bride & Other Haunting Tales* (London, 2013), New College Library, Oxford, NC/MOS. Her signing the books on the evening of the exhibition has been recorded in catalogue entries for these books in SOLO, the online catalogue serving the Bodleian Libraries and most college and departmental libraries in the university.

³ Naomi Wolf, *Fire With Fire: The New Female Power and How It Will Change the 21st Century* (New York, 1993), *Promiscuities: The Secret Struggle for Womanhood* (New York, 1997), *Vagina: A New Biography* (New York, 2012), New College Library, Oxford, NC/WOL; Ruth Mazo Karras, *From Boys to Men: Formations of Masculinity in Late Medieval Europe* (Philadelphia, 2003), *Common Women: Prostitution and Sexuality in Medieval England* (New York, 1998), *Unmarriages: Women, Men, and Sexual Unions in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia, 2012), New College Library, Oxford, NC/KAR. Ruth Mazo Karras's presentation copies are inscribed: 'For the New College Library with gratitude'.



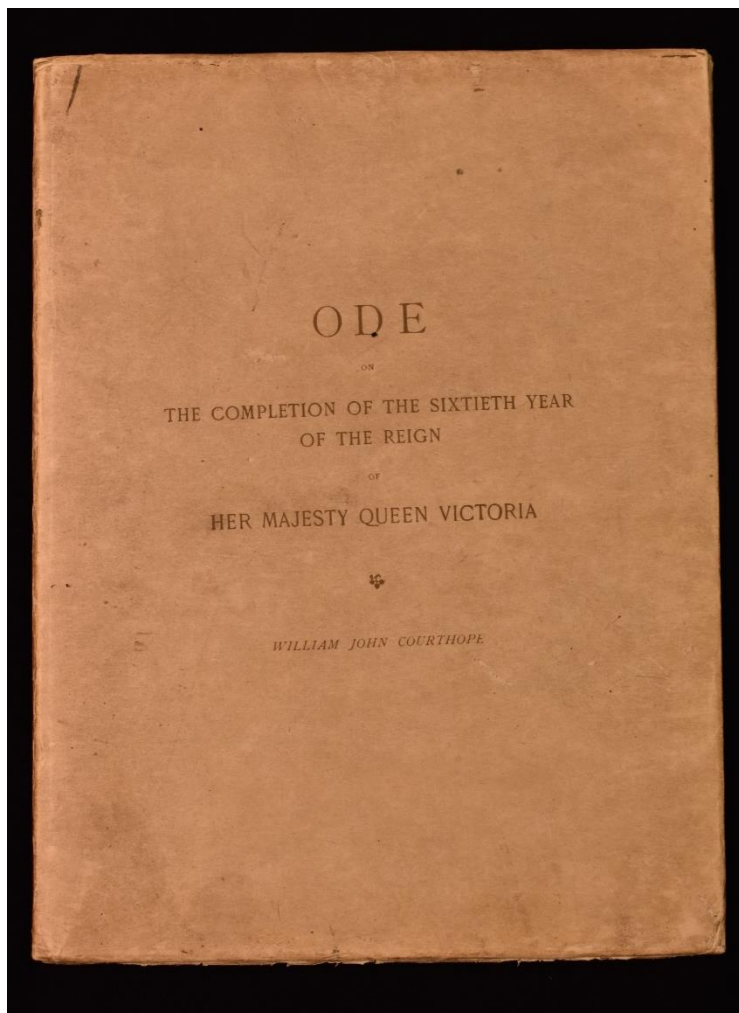
Paula Wilson, Portrait of Ruth Mazo Karras and Caroline Kay (2019), oil on board, 100 x 90 cms
New College, Oxford



‘The New College Apocalypse’ (1300–1310)
New College Library, Oxford, MS 65, f. 78v—this is the opening depicted in Paula Wilson’s portrait

III

2019 has seen another landmark for New College women writers in the appointment of New College alumna Alice Oswald (b. 1966) as Oxford Professor of Poetry, the 46th poet to take up post, and the first woman ever to do so. Alice was made an honorary fellow of New College also this year. Her widely acclaimed writing has won many awards, including the T. S. Eliot Prize for her book-length poem, *Dart* (London, 2002)—a prize, incidentally, most recently awarded to a current tutor in English at New College, Hannah Sullivan, for her *Three Poems* (London, 2018). The poetry chair was established in 1708; incumbents have included New College men Joseph Spence (1699–1768), Robert Lowth (1710–1787), and William John Courthope (1842–1917). In recent years Matthew Arnold, Cecil Day-Lewis, W. H. Auden, Robert Graves, Seamus Heaney, Paul Muldoon, Christopher Ricks, Geoffrey Hill, and Simon Armitage have occupied the chair. During 2019, the library acquired notable copies of Alice Oswald’s work. These included fine press limited editions, a 2002 *Forward* poetry anthology—with a signature by Alice Oswald to an extract from *Dart* (along with signatures from twelve other poet contributors to the volume)—and a Faber Collectors’ Editions copy of *Dart*, which features a cover panel and endpaper design by the artist,



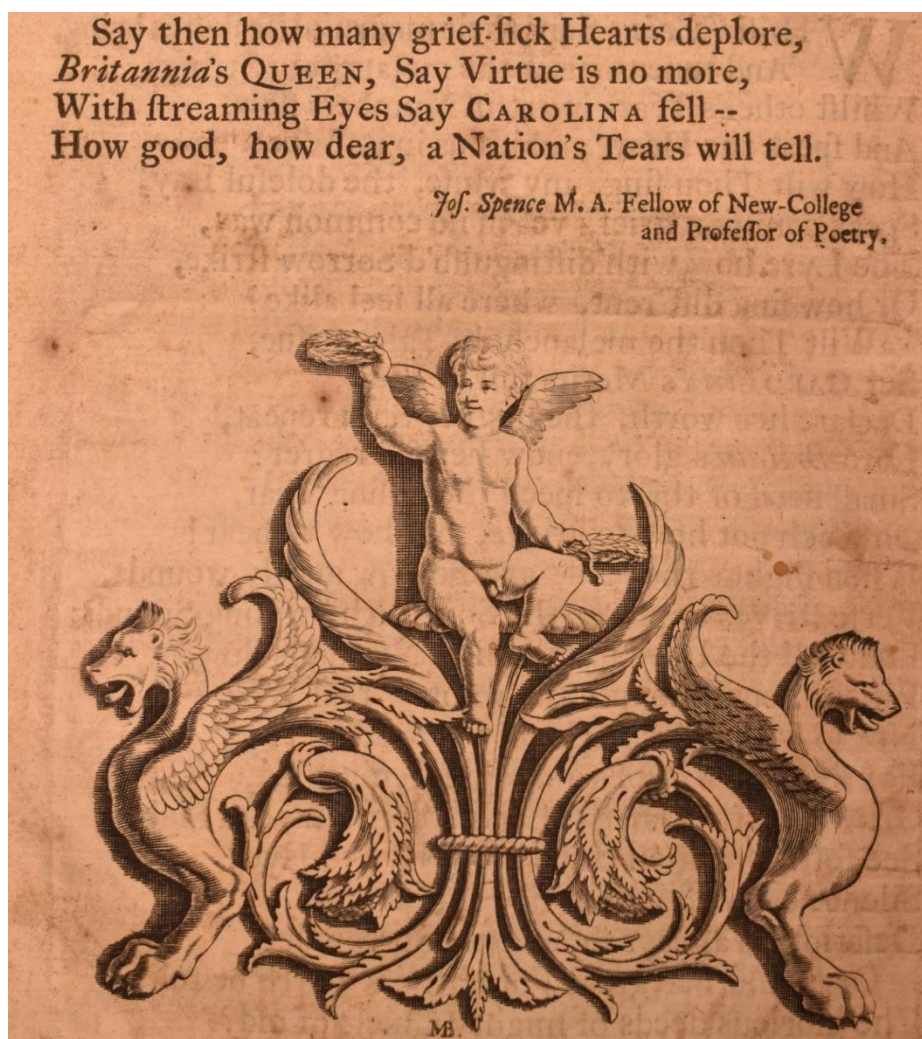
William John Courthope, *The Longest Reign* (1897)
New College Library, Oxford, NC/COU

Jonathan Gibbs, also signed by the poet.⁴ Other notable acquisitions by New College poets purchased this year for the library’s alumni collection include: Oxford Professor of Poetry William John Courthope’s *The Longest Reign: An Ode on the Completion of the Sixtieth Year of the Reign of Her Majesty Queen Victoria* (Oxford, 1897), and inscribed presentation copies of *Carmina Rapta: Being Verse Translations from the French, Spanish, Italian, German, Greek, Latin, with a few Arabic, Japanese and Armenian Renderings from French Prose Versions* (London, 1919) translated by J. Griffyth Fairfax (1886–1976) (and published exactly one hundred years ago), and Walter Russell Brain (1895–1966), Baron Brain of Eynsham’s *Poems and Verses* (Cambridge, 1961).

Courthope’s ode belongs to the tradition of Oxford University poets’ marking significant national events. It is of a kind with an early printed book in our collections, *Pietas Academiae Oxoniensis in obitum augustissimæ et desideratissimæ Reginae Carolinae*, published in 1738 also at the university press in Oxford. This

⁴ Oswald items acquired this year include, among others: Alice Oswald, *Tithonus: 46 Minutes in the Life of the Dawn* (Totnes: Letter Press, 2018), *The Forward Book of Poetry 2003* (London, 2002), and Alice Oswald, *Dart*, Faber Collectors’ Editions (London, 2016), New College Library, Oxford, NC/OSW.

is a volume of 110 poems written in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Arabic, German, Welsh, and English by members of the university on the death of Queen Caroline—who was widely mourned—and its final poem was written by an earlier Oxford Professor of Poetry, the New College alumnus Joseph Spence.



Pietas Academiae Oxoniensis in obitum angustissima et desideratissima Reginae Carolinae (1738), Gg 2v
New College Library, Oxford, BT1.39.5(6)

A friend of Ezra Pound, the Australian-born Fairfax was educated at Winchester College and New College. Our copy of his *Carmina Rapta*, another multi-lingual conception, is significant for its inscription by the author to its flyleaf: 'With the author's compliments & all good wishes for 1929. P.S. This is the last book of verse I published before taking to politics! For a Xmas poem see p. 20. J. Griffyth Fairfax'.⁵ He went on to become Conservative MP for Norwich between 1924 and 1929.

Our copy of Baron Brain's *Poems and Verses* is a limited edition Rampant Lions Press book, inscribed by the author. Walter Russell Brain was not known primarily as a poet but, rather, as a distinguished neurologist and president of the Royal College of Physicians. He first read history then medicine at New College, and he was made an honorary fellow of the college in 1952. To this day, a fine portrait bronze bust of him by Jacob Epstein (1880–1959)—who also created the arresting sculpture of Lazarus in the chapel—presides over the upper reading room of the library.

⁵ New College Library, Oxford, NC/FAI



Jacob Epstein, Portrait bronze bust of Walter Russell Brain, 1st Baron Brain, in New College Library, Oxford

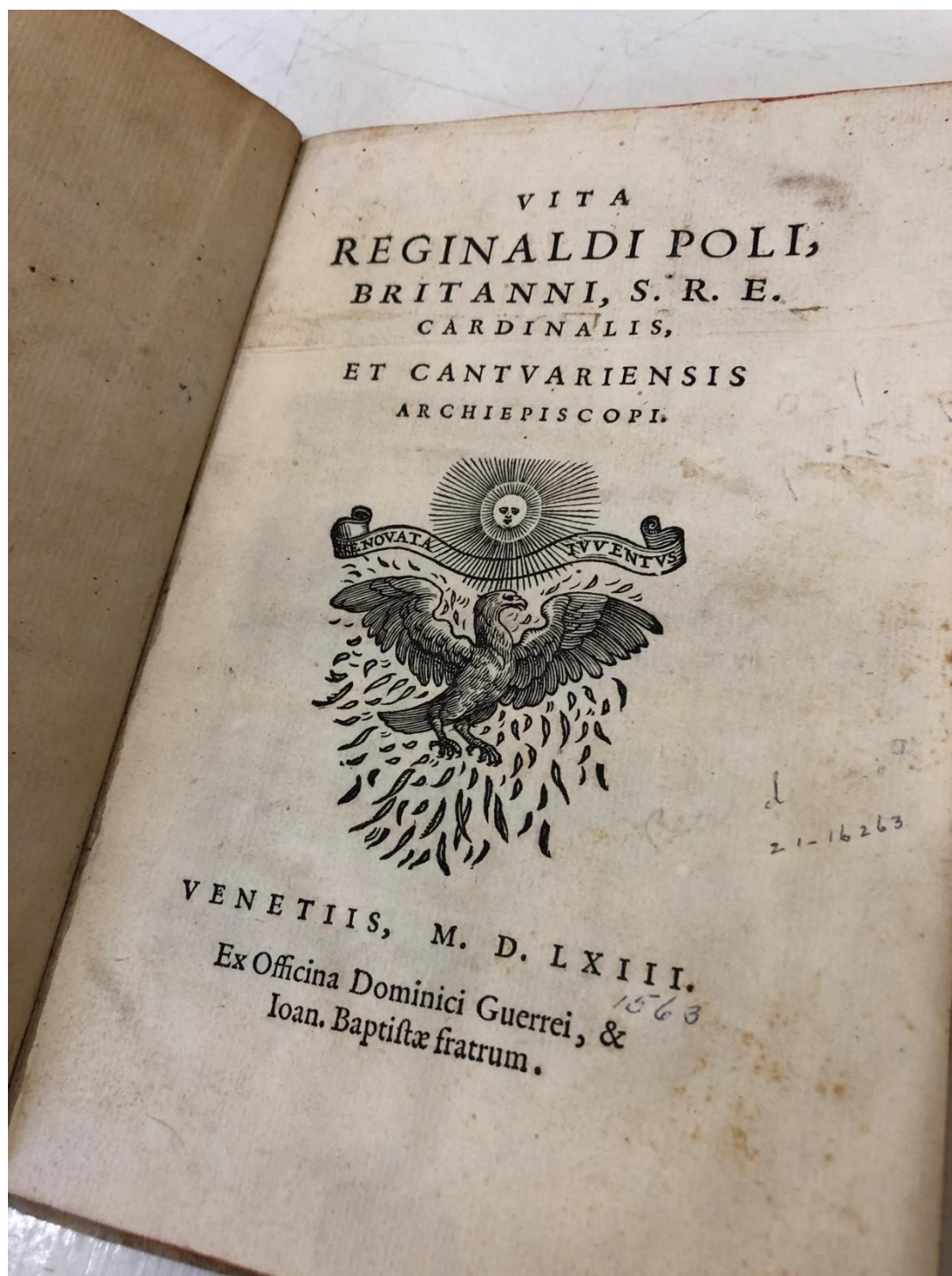
IV

Finally, the most significant addition to the library's early printed collections in 2019 has been a first edition copy of a biography of Cardinal Reginald Pole (1500–1558) written by his friend, the poet and archbishop of Ragusa, Ludovico Beccadelli (1502–1572). The purchase was enabled by the kind generosity of donors to New College Library. Pole remains the last Roman Catholic archbishop of Canterbury (1556–8); he died the same day as Queen Mary I, surviving her by some twelve hours. At one time mooted as a possible suitor to his distant cousin, Princess Mary, Reginald Pole was the son of Margaret Pole, Countess of Salisbury (1473–1541) whom Henry VIII would have executed. The execution was a result not least of her son's opposition to 'the King's Great Matter'; Reginald Pole composed the treatise *Pro ecclesiastica unitatis defensione*, published in Rome in 1538.⁶ (Reginald himself was out of harm's way in Italy, thereby spared the worst of Henry's vengeance to his own person, but the arrest and execution of Reginald's mother lay within Henry's control.) Cardinal Pole was also chancellor of both Oxford and Cambridge universities.

Translated from the original Italian into Latin by András Dudith (1533–1589), and printed in 1563 by a firm of Venetian printer brothers, Domenico and Giovanni Battista Guerra, our fine copy is bound in seventeenth-century Italian vellum and bears on its front pastedown the autograph of W. H. Burns of 'Clayton Hall, Manchester, 1881'. Clayton Hall was once owned by the wealthy textile merchant, Humphrey Chetham (1580–1653), whose bequest founded a library and a school—what are now the oldest surviving public library in the English-speaking world and Chetham's School of Music—and whose hub are medieval buildings in Manchester neighbouring Manchester Cathedral. Cardinal Pole's considerable significance to New College—though he himself had been educated at Magdalen—lies in the rich deposit of books and manuscripts he bequeathed to this college, including books that had previously belonged to the Belgian humanist, Christopher Longolius (1488–1522), who died in Pole's household and left Pole his library.⁷

⁶ *Reginaldi Poli Cardinalis Britannici, ad Henricu[m] Octauum Britannia Regem, Pro ecclesiastica unitatis defensione, libri quatuor* (Rome, 1538), New College Library, Oxford BT1.46.4.

⁷ See A. B. Emden, 'Longolius' Collection of Books', in *Opus Epistolarum Des. Erasmi Rotterdami*, ed. P. S. Allen, H. M. Allen, and H. W. Garrod (Oxford 1947), XI, pp. 379–83, Thomas F. Mayer, *A Reluctant Author: Cardinal Pole and His*



Lodovico Beccadelli, *Vita Reginaldi Poli, Britanni, S.R.E. Cardinalis, et Cantuariensis Archiepiscopi* (1563)
Title-page with printer's device and motto 'Renovata iuventus' ('Youth is to be renewed')
New College Library, Oxford, BT1.17.20

Christopher Skelton-Foord
Librarian
New College, Oxford

Manuscripts (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1999), and William Poole, '[A New Acquisition: Christophorus Longolius's Copy of the 1511 Parisian Edition of the *Corpus Juris Civilis*](#)', *New College Notes* 4 (2013), no. 9.