

PHILIP FORD

Philip John Ford 1949–2013

PHILIP FORD was a leading scholar of French and Neo-Latin Renaissance literature, especially poetry. He participated throughout his career in the movement that has seen the vast body of literary works written in classicising Latin from the fifteenth century onwards come to be taken seriously as an object of study. When Philip's research career started, Neo-Latin studies were just beginning to acquire the status of a discipline. He became arguably the most energetic, ambitious, and persuasive promoter of that discipline to emerge from his generation onto an international stage. At a time when the relation of Neo-Latin studies to classics, modern languages. and English was still in the process of being worked out, his last book, on language-choice in sixteenth-century poetry, was a pioneering model of how to integrate the study of Neo-Latin and vernacular (French) writing in a reflective, dynamic, and non-hierarchical way. His expertise in humanist imitation of antiquity stretched to Greek as well as Roman literature: he transformed our understanding of the Renaissance reception of Homer in and beyond France. Among the many writers whom we understand better thanks to him, two colossi preoccupied him most: Ronsard, the greatest French poet of the sixteenth and indeed perhaps of any century; and the Scottish humanist George Buchanan, who lived for many years in France.

Philip's scholarly achievements were not compartmentalised from the rest of his life. They were symbiotic with a vast range of activities undertaken with unusual gusto. These ranged from teaching, mentoring, organising, leading, and language-learning to cooking, music, and above all family life. The intensity of Philip's engagement with all of these was

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made possible by a certain regulating of time and space. Home was largely separate from work; having risen early, he would cycle from one to the other. Work was centred for decades on an attic office spectacularly strewn with piles of papers and books whose order was apparent to him alone (and above which hung two oars from student days). While Graduate Admissions Tutor in his Cambridge college, each day he would make himself spend fifteen minutes in the Tutorial Office before lunch and another fifteen after. Such regulating was not for him an end in itself; it is what enabled him to give his utmost across the board. At a deeper level than that of routines and of distinctions between spheres, it is striking that the people who knew him in different spheres speak of the same qualities: curiosity, kindness, amiability, humour, integrity, modesty, dependability, judgement, determination, energy, pragmatism, enthusiasm. Whatever the sphere, he 'was always entirely Philip', and 'remained very Philip'.¹ The overriding impression is of a unified purposefulness centred on discovering, nurturing, developing, serving-and enjoying.

He died from cancer on 8 April 2013, aged 64, having known only for a few weeks that he was gravely ill. His death produced shock and grief throughout those different spheres and in many countries, not just because it was premature and sudden and because he was widely admired and relied upon, but because he inspired deep affection and gratitude. This memoir, while put together by someone who knew him mainly in just one sphere (as departmental colleague), incorporates much that has been supplied by those who knew him in others.

I

While Philip's adult life was in many respects far removed from that of his upbringing, it seems also to have been continuous with it in deep-seated ways.

He was born into a working-class London family on 28 March 1949 to a mother from the East End and a Catholic Liverpudlian father. Philip's mother Leah was descended from Sephardic Jews, originally Portuguesespeaking, who had arrived from the Netherlands in the seventeenth century. Up until the late nineteenth century, the men on her father's side had been rag merchants, general dealers, pen cutters and eventually commercial travellers. The first male in the family to marry outside the Sephardic

¹Conversations with Simon Franklin and John O'Brien respectively (both Dec. 2013).

community seems to have been Philip's great-grandfather Moses, who married an Ashkenazi Jew, Leah Joel. Although Philip's mother's family continued to think of itself as Sephardic rather than Ashkenazi, she herself used some Yiddish words.

The younger of Moses and Leah's two children was someone who had a strong early influence on Philip: his grandfather, Abraham, who possessed, and helped instil in younger family members, a powerful sense of self-belief. A Communist, he tried (but failed) to organise London cab drivers into a cooperative. Abraham's own marriage marked a stage in the loosening of the family's ties to Judaism as a religion. He married a non-conformist Christian, Esther Annie Cooper, in a Registry Office. (The males of this Cooper line had been London bakers at least as far back as the mid-eighteenth century.) But culturally the family remained proudly Jewish. Abraham stood with the Jewish community when Oswald Mosley's Fascists marched on the East End in 1936; but, equally, he may have done this because of his strong socialist principles. And Philip's mother Leah, who was Esther and Abraham's first child, went to shul as a child. Philip saw Judaism as an important influence on his life, without seeing himself as Jewish. He referred to his mother's extended family as the 'Jewish relatives'.2

Philip was not alone in inheriting this energy, drive, initiative, and self-belief from Abraham and others. When growing up, Philip thought of Paul as his uncle, whereas in fact he was Philip's half-brother. Paul had been brought up as Abraham and Esther's son after Philip's mother Leah had him when unmarried, years before meeting Philip's father. It was only about two years before Paul's death that Philip learned all this. Paul co-founded an amateur theatre company and remained in retirement an exceptional swimmer at Masters level. Another of Abraham and Esther's children, Alf, a world champion at Masters level, had founded the Sans Egal swimming club in Ilford. The young Philip swam there too, and won many medals.

In comparison, the family background of Philip's father, Peter Ford, loomed less large in Philip's early life. Having lost an eye in Africa during the Second World War (as a result of a Jehovah's Witness bomb), Peter became a guard in a prisoner-of-war camp in Scotland. After the war he became a London postman with a Fleet Street beat. He was partial to a bet on the horses. Peter's Catholicism became strong at the end of his life, but the outcome of Philip's Jewish–Catholic parentage was that Philip

² 'parents juifs', entry for 20 July in Philip's 1968 diary.

himself did not have a religious upbringing. While Philip seems to have ended up being close to an atheist, as a student he had often attended chapel and talks on religion; and his own wedding, funeral, and son's baptism were held in the chapel of Clare College, Cambridge.

Philip's parents belonged to a working-class generation that wanted something different and better for its post-war children. However, he apparently decided when he was about twelve that, for this to happen, he would have to devise a suitable regime rather than expecting his parents to.³ They were proud of and occasionally baffled by his eventual life-path. His mother, a vivid and ebullient personality, was distressed when he left home for university.⁴ His parents' marriage was not always harmonious, and during his childhood and youth he was especially close to his mother, albeit in a way that involved a degree of shouting. Although the young Philip was less focused on his father (and chided himself later in life for having sometimes been dismissive of him), people who met Peter emphasise qualities of courtesy and kindness that were perhaps, one cannot help suspecting, part of his own subterranean legacy to his son.

Philip attended a primary school in Dagenham. He was later grateful to it for giving him a good start. He recalled that the backgrounds of many of the children were so deprived that the school assumed that their chances in life would depend to a high degree on whatever the school could offer them. Philip then got into a grammar school in Ilford, the County High School for Boys. He threw himself into activities and leadership roles that were to become, or to morph into, lifelong ones. He was a Prefect. He became General Secretary of the Classics Society. He swam for the school and captained his House swimming team. He played timpani in the school orchestra, played piano (eventually to Grade 8), went to concerts (such as Bach's St John's Passion with Peter Pears and the English Chamber Orchestra at the Proms on 26 July 1967).⁵ These were not disparate activities. They were partly connected by pleasure in discipline, endurance, rhythm, sound. Not particularly coordinated or balanced in his movements-as a La Clusaz ski trip later confirmed-Philip eventually gravitated towards another rhythmically pounding kind of sport: rowing. As a student at King's College, Cambridge he rowed both bow-side (leading the pace-setting) and stroke-side (a sign of exceptional adaptability). Although he could still be seen later in life at US conferences going for a 6.30 a.m. swim, it was rowing that became more prominent. Not only did

³Philip told this to his wife, Lenore Muskett. It was mentioned by the Revd Gregory Seach in his address at Philip's funeral in Clare College, Cambridge on 24 April 2013.

⁴Extra entry for 27 Aug., inserted between August and September, in Philip's 1968 diary.

⁵Programmes for this concert and others are among Philip's personal papers.

he eventually row for several years in the Fellows' Eight of Clare College, Cambridge but the mid- and late 1980s saw him doing three 7.15 a.m. fitness sessions per week with fellow crew member Simon Franklin. The balance and dexterity required by water polo, however, proved more elusive, at least if one can judge by the regular defeats suffered by the King's team he set up when a graduate, eager as ever to initiate and try out new things. That drumming, swimming, and rowing should come naturally to him would make sense to observers of his trademark gait—fast, vigorous, bouncing, angular, purposeful, accelerating when he spotted ahead someone whom he wished to greet in a conference corridor. It is perhaps not fanciful to see Philip's fascination for, and unusual sensitivity to, the metres of Latin verse (as handled by Buchanan and others) as grounded in this gift for rhythmic physicality.

To return to grammar school days: while Philip was in the Lower Sixth Form, the headmaster wrote to suggest that he tried for Oxbridge. As was standard in such contexts, the letter was addressed not to both parents, nor to the person who had taken charge of Philip's education (Philip), but to the person who, in this case, possibly had the least say in the matter, Philip's father. The long-serving H. S. Kenward was experienced at explaining to the parents of first-generation university applicants the middle-class rites, such as the gap year, which surrounded higher education. He suggested that Philip take the entrance examination after staying on for a term beyond A-levels (as was common): 'Dear Mr Ford, . . . The six months after leaving and before going to a University can be spent in employment and the candidate goes up with some money in his pocket and also more mature: the Universities approve of this.'⁶

Philip won an Exhibition to read French and Latin at King's College, Cambridge, to which he made the unusual addition of Modern Greek later in the course. The choice of college was perhaps determined both by King's College's particularly positive attitude towards applications from state schools and by Harry Kenward, who had studied at King's himself (1921).⁷ King's may have given financial support to Philip,⁸ as it did subsequently to fund the first year of his doctorate.⁹

⁶Letter of 27 Jan. 1966 by H. S. Kenward to Peter Ford, in Philip's personal papers.

⁷See the obituary for John Andrew Wilkins in *King's College, Cambridge: Annual Report 2011*, pp. 229–31 at 229. Wilkins, later a renowned VAT expert, was another working-class child who went to King's College from the Ilford County High School with Kenward's encouragement. ⁸Philip was exchanging letters with the college's Financial Tutor in the weeks before arriving: entries for 20 and 22 Aug. in 1968 diary, in Philip's personal papers.

⁹Philip mentioned this in the acknowledgements preceding his Ph.D. thesis, 'The Poetical Works of George Buchanan Before His Final Return to Scotland' (University of Cambridge, 1977).

With characteristic regularity, Philip kept diaries in his youth. Remarkably, he often wrote them in French (and occasionally ancient Greek), both to stretch himself and also to maximise privacy. The 1968 diary chronicles his gap year (during which he and his parents moved from Ilford to Bournemouth) and his first months at King's. It shows him driving himself onwards, castigating himself for the odd lie-in, urging himself to lose weight (having been a chubby child). It shows him interested in world politics (in that momentous year) in a way that continued throughout his life: well informed, keen on mutual understanding, tolerance, non-violence, and compromise, disliking any ideology that wanted victory over others.¹⁰ He liked the Liberals best, hearing Jeremy Thorpe and David Steel in his first term, and joining the Cambridge University Liberal Club Society in 1970.

University was a sudden transition from what had been a fairly fixed if intensively social framework of schoolfriends (such as Edward Garner) and extended working-class family to a world where 'Number of people you meet is incredible.'11 Many, mostly from middle-class backgrounds, were famously involved at King's in student activism, but Philip was not. Some of the life-long friendships he forged at King's as undergraduate and postgraduate were with other working class and/or grammar-school boys, such as Jerry Wilde (a medical student; Philip and he became godfathers to each other's children) and Allan Doig (architectural historian and now chaplain of Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford). Allan Doig, who arrived from Vancouver in 1973, remembers Philip as never intimidated by or preoccupied with the class hierarchies that pervaded Cambridge life but as intent on ignoring them, on encouraging others to do so, and on mixing with people from all backgrounds. Philip became in his third year Gastronomic Secretary of the King's Boat Club, licking his fingers to test the food he had prepared, with his all-consuming focus on the task at hand. He was an extraordinary cook. Planning and/or preparing meals was for him a fundamental means of forging community, from those student days, in which he was known for brilliant improvisation with whatever scraps happened to be in the shared fridge, to a later time in which at Clare College he would host dinners for the institutions he founded and co-founded-Cambridge French Colloquia and the Cambridge Society

¹⁰ For example, entries for 22 Feb., 6 April, 24 May, 5 and 6 June, 21 Aug., in 1968 diary, in Philip's personal papers.

¹¹Ibid., entry for 4 Oct. 1968.

for Neo-Latin Studies—or would carefully select wines that connected to the conference or seminar topic, or indeed to the speaker's nationality.

Π

Philip's intellectual itinerary took its turn towards both Neo-Latin and French Renaissance studies through the influence of Robert Bolgar. He and the amiable Patrick Wilkinson were Philip's undergraduate Latin supervisors at King's.

But before embarking on a Ph.D., Philip devoted a year to acquiring another language, Italian. He spent 1971–2 in Milan, tutoring the twin sons of a *contessa* (Giulia Maria Mozzoni Crespi, whose family owned the *Corriere de la Sera*) and teaching English at the Centro linguistico e audiovisivi. (He liked hearing Italians remark subsequently on his Milanese accent.) Wandering through the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II one autumn Saturday afternoon he stopped to listen to a fire-brigade brass band playing Verdi overtures and encountered someone who had stopped for the same reason—Michael Tilby, the future Balzac authority, whom Philip knew a little from Cambridge. So began another life-long friendship. Philip bought a Fiat 600 and the two spent weekends motoring around Northern Italy in this sixties icon.

In his late teens Philip would repair the family's temperamental car and worry about his parents driving it, his father being visually impaired and his mother having apparently once inadvertently run Philip over. But cars also became for Philip a means of curiosity and freedom. His relationship to them was as revealing as that of one of his favourite authors, Montaigne, to horses. It was hands-on; loyal; determined; optimistic to a point that could verge on comedy. Jerry Wilde recalls a Morris Minor van lovingly serviced by Philip himself before the pair took it around Europe in the summer of 1970. After the vehicle had spluttered at some 5 miles per hour to the summit of a mountain pass leading from France to Italy, onlookers in the panoramic car park burst into applause, to Philip's intense indignation. Jerry remembers similar indignation two years later when Philip's relief that there was little import duty to pay on the Fiat 600 was tainted by the insulting level of the Dover customs' valuation (£25).

When Philip returned to King's College, Cambridge in 1972 he began a Ph.D. on Buchanan under the supervision of the pioneering Neo-Latinist I. D. (Ian) McFarlane,¹² several of whose supervisees became leading practitioners of French Renaissance and Neo-Latin studies (Terence Cave, Dorothy Gabe Coleman, Ann Moss, John O'Brien).

Philip's thesis, completed in 1976 and approved in 1977, was entitled 'The Poetical Works of George Buchanan Before His Final Return to Scotland'. It is in two parts. Part I is a selective intellectual biography of Buchanan that focuses on educational, social, and religious dimensions. It tracks the humanist from his birth in Scotland in 1506, through his years of alternating from 1520 between France (mainly), Scotland, England, Portugal, and Italy-famously teaching at the colleges of Guyenne, Coimbra, and Boncourt—up to 1561 when he embraced Protestantism and returned to Scotland, where he died in 1582. Part II of the thesis is a study of Buchanan's (Latin) poetry, focusing on a wide range of genres (satires, elegies, and others) while mainly excluding some (tragedies, epigrams, psalm paraphrases, and the cosmological poem *De sphaera*). The thesis is highly original, though one would not know it from the modesty of the framing and self-presentation-which came to characterise all Philip's work. The thesis corrects numerous errors in previous biographical accounts and was the first serious and substantial study of Buchanan's poetry.

Part II in particular fed, in further-researched form, into Philip's first book, George Buchanan, Prince of Poets: With an Edition (Text, Translation, Commentary) of the 'Miscellaneorum liber' (Aberdeen, 1982). The book aimed to provide readers with the tools to read and evaluate Buchanan's poetry using criteria that were germane to it, notably the principles and practice of Neo-Latin versification, as enshrined for example in the bestselling Ars versificatoria (1511) by Johannes Despauterius. This aesthetic historicising was crucial to Philip's rehabilitation of Buchanan and others against the anachronistic charges (for example of false quantities) that classicists previously levelled at Neo-Latin poetry. Aesthetic evaluation of this kind is not currently widely practised in literary scholarship on the French Renaissance. Yet it was an enduring preoccupation of Philip's. He further pursued it in various publications, such as a 2009 article in which he argues that, unlike the authors of Renaissance verse manuals, Buchanan had an instinctive feel for sound and rhythm, for the variation in metrical practice between different ancient genres, and that, bending metre without seeming to fight it, he used 'rules' as opportunities for self-expression. Few if any critics would be equipped to show, as Philip does in that article, how Buchanan handled common metres in a way that was sensitive to meaning and tone.¹³

The title *George Buchanan, Prince of Poets* alludes to the widespread presentation of Buchanan (in the phrase 'poetarum nostri saeculi facile princeps') as 'easily the leading poet of the age'. This first occurred in Henri and Robert Estienne's 1565 or 1566 edition of Buchanan's hugely successful psalm paraphrases. As well as introducing Neo-Latin versification, Philip's book succinctly discussed Buchanan's poetry and drama before 1547, his relation to Horace and Catullus, and the poetry of his final years. Since the aim of getting Buchanan read once more was hampered by the absence of a modern critical edition of his works, Philip included in the volume a critical edition, with translation, of Buchanan's *Miscellaneorum liber*, which he chose because it included poems written at different times of the Scot's life and in different genres and metres. This edition was prepared in collaboration with the classicist W. S. Watt.¹⁴

The enormous project of a complete critical edition of Buchanan's poetical works, including his tragedies, remained a preoccupation of Philip's.¹⁵ Years later he came to an understanding with the Swiss publisher Droz that they would publish such an edition, with Philip as its general editor. He recruited a team, and the one volume to have appeared to date is Roger Green's edition of the psalm paraphrases.¹⁶ After Philip's death, overall responsibility was taken over by Ingrid De Smet, but the project remains at an early stage.

By the time that Philip gave a paper in 2006 in the church hall of the village of Killearn, where Buchanan was born, at a session of one of the two quincentenary conferences held in Scotland that year,¹⁷ he had made

¹³ P. Ford, '*Poeta sui saeculi facile princeps*: George Buchanan's poetic achievement', in P. Ford and R. P. H. Green (eds.), *George Buchanan, Poet and Dramatist* (Swansea, 2009), 3–17. Further examples include P. Ford, 'Leonora and Neaera: a consideration of George Buchanan's erotic poetry', *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, 40 (1978), 513–24 (Philip's first academic publication); P. Ford, 'George Buchanan's court poetry and the Pléiade', *French Studies*, 34 (1980), 137–52.

¹⁴See R. G. M. Nisbet, 'William Smith Watt 1913–2002', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 124, *Biographical Memoirs of Fellows*, III, (2004), 358–72.

¹⁵Ian McFarlane and Jozef IJsewijn had earlier envisaged an edition of just Buchanan's secular poetry (the *Poemata*): see R. Green, 'The poetry of George Buchanan 1973–2013', Annual Lecture of the Society of Neo-Latin Studies, 8 Nov. 2013, p. 9 http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/ren/snls/events/pastevents/annuallecture2013> (last accessed 18 February 2014).

¹⁶George Buchanan, *Poetic Paraphrase of the Psalms of David*, ed. and trans. R. P. H. Green (Geneva, 2011).

¹⁷The conference, co-organised with Roger Green, was mainly held in Glasgow. Philip's paper was published as '*Poeta sui saeculi facile princeps*: George Buchanan's poetic achievement' (see above, n. 13).

a huge contribution to putting Buchanan at the heart of European Renaissance and also Scottish studies. The other early modernist to do so was Philip's supervisor, Ian McFarlane, whose monumental biography, *Buchanan*, appeared in 1981. McFarlane explained the division of labour: he did not focus much on the Latin poetry, because Philip had studied it (at that point only in his thesis), though the latter 'has very kindly allowed me to include some findings of his research'.¹⁸ It may have been at least in part because of McFarlane's 1981 book that Philip pruned some of the biographical material of his 1977 thesis from his own 1982 book. If the overlap of interests was at all uncomfortable, Philip seems never to have shown it. He remained inspired by what Ann Moss calls 'McFarlane's ground-plan for a full recovery of the rich and little excavated treasure house of Neo-Latin poetry, with particular regard for that written in France'.¹⁹ In what turned out to be his own final months, Philip wrote, with characteristically self-deprecating generosity:

This book is dedicated to my Ph.D. supervisor, Ian McFarlane, who died ten years ago this year on 17 August 2002. In writing certain chapters, I kept finding that Ian had got there before me, publishing many years ago documents whose importance I thought I had discovered myself, opening paths of research whose originality was not always fully recognised at a time when Neo-Latin studies were still thought of as an eccentric side-show, and always bringing to bear a deep literary sensitivity to French Renaissance writing. In addition to this, he was a profoundly humane and generous scholar and teacher, from whose close attention and gentle mentorship I benefited enormously in my own development as a scholar.²⁰

Philip is probably alluding in particular here to a book manuscript by McFarlane, *Neo-Latin Poetry in Sixteenth-Century France*. It was completed some three decades before McFarlane's death but never published, possibly because the author felt there would be insufficient interest among readers at the time. In 2009 Philip joined, as co-leader, a project initiated by Ingrid De Smet to edit the typescript for publication. He negotiated a contract with a publisher; the editorial work continues.

The gentleness that Philip remembered in McFarlane's mentoring lurked beneath an austere surface. Handwritten notes that, like much else,

¹⁸I. D. McFarlane, *Buchanan* (London, 1981), p. xi. For an assessment of contributions of Ford and McFarlane to Buchanan studies as symbiotic and yet distinctive, see Green, 'The poetry of George Buchanan'.

¹⁹Ann Moss, pers. comm. (Jan. 2014).

²⁰ P. Ford, *The Judgment of Palaemon: the Contest between Neo-Latin and Vernacular Poetry in Renaissance France* (Leiden, 2013), p. xii.

Philip never threw away, began 'Dear Ford, ...', in contrast with the 'Dear Philip, ...' that his undergraduate supervisor Patrick Wilkinson had written from the start. Lavishing supportive praise was not McFarlane's style. Student friends remember Philip being on tenterhooks when heading to Oxford for supervisions, sure that McFarlane approved of what he was doing, less sure of the extent to which McFarlane approved of *him*. A moment recalled by one of the world's leading Neo-Latinists, Ann Moss, who was to become a firm friend of Philip's, suggests that he need not have worried:

I first met Philip in 1973 at the second congress of the International Association for Neo-Latin Studies [in Amsterdam], in circumstances that deserve at least a Latin epigram. We were both research students of Ian McFarlane, the father of Neo-Latin studies in this country, though Philip was much younger. We were all on a boat on one of the canals. McFarlane drew us together, introduced us, and made a gesture that could only be interpreted as 'Bless you, my children'.²¹

Philip continued this genealogical conception of the discipline's growth: at the 2012 Münster Congress of the International Association for Neo-Latin Studies, at which two panels were dedicated to McFarlane's memory, Philip delighted in calling his own supervisees—of whom some were present—McFarlane's 'grandchildren', as one of them (Ingrid De Smet) recalls.

III

However, after Philip had submitted his Ph.D. thesis in the summer of 1976, the institutional marginalisation of Neo-Latin studies meant that Buchanan, for all he had written and done in France, did not seem to have been a particularly canny choice for someone wishing, as Philip did, to forge a career in a university French department, especially in a period when undergraduate teaching needs drove appointments more than in some subsequent decades. Philip's future looked uncertain and bleak. He spent 1976–7 teaching English as a lector at the Centre Pédagogique Régional in Bordeaux. His friend Michael Tilby encouraged him to develop research interests that would translate more readily into French undergraduate teaching. Philip gravitated towards what was then an undergraduate staple: seventeenth-century French theatre. Under the supervision of Bernard Tocanne of the Université de Bordeaux III he gained a *maîtrise ès lettres modernes* by completing a project on the

²¹ Ann Moss, pers. comm. (Jan. 2014).

tragedy *Panthée* (first published in 1624) by the prolific Alexandre Hardy. The project later turned into Philip's critical edition of that play, published in 1984.²²

Panthée, its plot drawn mainly from Xenophon, actually kept Philip firmly in the Renaissance. He presented Hardy, born in 1570, as operating within a humanist tradition that influenced his conception of tragedy (strongly influenced by Seneca) and poetry (open to neologism and dialectal variety, equivocal about Malherbe's attempts to standardise and pare down the rich French language cultivated by Renaissance authors). Indeed, although Philip later became an expert teacher of seventeenthcentury literature, he seems to have retained a temperamental aversion, if not to the period, then to a certain dimension and image of it-'classicism' in the sense of restraint, uniformity of register, separation of genres, adherence to dramatic unities, and so on-that was more prevalent in the teaching experienced by him and his contemporaries than it is nowadays.²³ Or, as he put it in only the second week of his very first undergraduate term: 'Incredibly boring lecture on Corneille.'24 Days later, Boileau, who served as the fulcrum of this neo-classicising vision of seventeenth-century French culture, and so was set as Philip's first undergraduate essay, reduced him to an uncharacteristic struggle for focus: 'Did some reading, but found it difficult to get down to Boileau essay' (27 October); 'Tried to do Boileau essay this afternoon but listened to "Rite of Spring" on radio' (29 October).²⁵ For this timpanist and swimmer, the stifling prescriptiveness of the Art poétique was no match for Stravinsky's atavistic rhythms. But the struggle was still continuing eight years later, during Philip's first weeks in Bordeaux: 'I do not like Boileau. Can I therefore live with him, or should I change to something more sympathetic, such as Malherbe, for example?'26

If that 'something more sympathetic' for which Philip was searching was in the first instance Hardy, in the longer term it was the great poet Pierre de Ronsard—a sixteenth-century Stravinsky, as one might loosely

²⁴Entry for 14 Oct., 1968 diary, in personal papers.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Entry for 10 Oct. [1976] in notebook, in personal papers; underlining in the original.

²² Alexandre Hardy, Panthée, ed. P. Ford, Textes Littéraires series 53 (Exeter, 1984).

²³See also P. Ford, 'Montaigne in England', *Montaigne Studies: an Interdisciplinary Forum*, 24.1–2 (2012), P. Ford (ed.), *Montaigne in England*, 3–6 at 6. When Philip did venture deep into the seventeenth century, it was for a Latin didactic poem that was markedly heterodox and free-thinking: P. Ford, 'Claude Quillet's *Callipaedia* (1655): eugenics treatise or pregnancy manual?', in Y. Haskell and P. Hardie (eds.), *Poets and Teachers: Latin Didactic Poetry and the Didactic Authority of the Latin Poet from the Renaissance to the Present* (Bari, 1999), pp. 125–39.

call him, with his quest to explore extremes of bodily and mental experience and sensation through rhythm, sound, variety, formal experimentation, myth, and arresting imagery. Philip already knew Ronsard from his undergraduate work. Indeed, his undergraduate essay on Ronsard's Amours opened with a mission statement to which we have already seen him hold for Buchanan, and which would govern years of work on Ronsard: 'When criticising poetry of an age when criteria differ a great deal from those of today, it is easy to condemn the poetry unfairly. Perhaps the fairest approach is to decide what were the poet's aims and see whether he was successful in them.²⁷ Just as Philip did not espouse the modern critical theories, from structuralism onwards, that travelled from Paris to many parts of UK French studies from the 1970s onwards, so he seems not to have espoused the decontextualising New Criticism of I. A. Richards and others. Close reading and aesthetics, yes; decontextualisation, no. He remained consistent in pursuing his kind of historicisingnot as an antiquarian end in itself, but partly as a means of detecting and evaluating the aesthetic power of poetry. This approach might have seemed more old-fashioned to some in the 1970s than it did twenty years later, by when there had been a reinjection of history into Renaissance literary studies (thanks especially to New Historicism) and by when book history—of which Philip was a longstanding practitioner (culminating in his work on Homer and Montaigne)-had become central to Renaissance studies.28

The opportunity to start serious work on Ronsard came in the form of a Research Bye-Fellowship at Girton College Cambridge (1977–8), where he was part of the college's first intake of male Research Fellows. Although no stipend was involved, this was a lifeline. Hoping in Bordeaux that the appointment would be confirmed, Philip reflected that 'if not, things will

²⁷ Undated essay in personal papers.

²⁸ Two critical movements that largely post-dated his doctoral supervisor's generation but did go on to inform some of Philip's work, though not in a way that involved overt engagement with theory, were feminism and postcolonial studies. He published pieces on women writers (Camille Morel, Marguerite de Navarre), on the question of women's education, and on the demonisation of Catherine de Médicis, as well as co-editing volumes on women's writing and on masculinities. The impact of feminist approaches is also evident in his emphasis on the role of fantasy in the representation of women in male erotic poetry: see P. Ford, 'Jean Salmon Macrin's *Epithalamiorum liber* and the Joys of Conjugal Love', in P. Ford and I. De Smet (eds.), *Eros et Priapus: érotisme et obscénité dans la littérature néo-latine* (Geneva, 1997), pp. 65–84 at 83. For examples of the impact of postcolonial studies on Philip's work, see P. Ford, 'Anti-colonialism in the poetry of George Buchanan', in R. Schnur (ed.), *Acta Convenus Neo-Latini Abulensis: Proceedings of the Tenth International Congress of Neo-Latin Studies, Ávila 4–9 August 1997* (Tempe, AZ, 2000), 237–46; Ford, *The Judgment of Palaemon*, esp. p. 7.

indeed look extremely grim'.²⁹ He was welcomed by two distinguished French early modernists at Girton, Odette de Mourgues, and his future serial collaborator Gillian Jondorf, as well as by another down the Huntingdon Road at what was then New Hall, Dorothy Gabe Coleman. The latter two in particular shared Philip's deep interest in the classical underpinnings of Renaissance literature. They both helped him with Ronsard. After several articles, his work on the poet eventually culminated in a 1997 monograph, *Ronsard's 'Hymnes': a Literary and Iconographical Study* (Tempe, AZ). He wrote in its preface that 'Dorothy Gabe Coleman, who died in 1993, was a source of considerable inspiration to me in her close reading of texts and her numerous demonstrations of the importance of textual allusion for a full understanding of Renaissance writers.'³⁰

Ronsard's 'Hymnes' is an important and distinctive contribution to the vast field of Ronsard studies. Its distinctiveness lies in the seriousness with which it takes Ronsard's engagement with painting on the one hand, and with Neo-Platonism on the other. The first of those dimensions had already been announced by the title of an article Philip published in 1986. 'Ronsard the painter',³¹ a rejoinder to that of an influential collection edited by Terence Cave, Ronsard the Poet (London, 1973). The 1986 article examined a 1550 ode-an ecphrastic description of a painting-in which the underlying reality of the actual painting being described is left underspecified, at least at first reading. The article provides a brilliant reconstruction of the underlying scene being described by Ronsard's poem. The reconstruction rests on the poem itself and on ancient sources (Virgil, Homer, Heraclitus). This kind of approach was taken further in the 1997 monograph. It focuses on the remarkable hymns that Ronsard published in 1555–6 and 1563 on a range of philosophical, natural, and mythological subjects, such as gold, Bacchus, demons, death, justice, or the seasons, imitating classical models such as Hesiod, Lucretius, the Homeric hymns and Neo-Latin ones such as Marullus. Ronsard's hymns are rich and difficult, allusive and elusive, full of apparently allegorical narratives and motifs whose precise meaning is not immediately clear.

²⁹Entry for 24 April [1977] in notebook, in personal papers. On Philip's time at Girton, see the obituary by Gillian Jondorf listed in the present piece's concluding 'Note'.

³⁰ P. Ford, Ronsard's 'Hymnes', p. viii. See also P. Ford, 'The androgyne myth in Montaigne's "De l'amitié"', in P. Ford and G. Jondorf (eds.), *The Art of Reading: Essays in Memory of Dorothy Gabe Coleman* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 65–74 at 66.

³¹ P. Ford, 'Ronsard the painter: a reading of *Des peintures contenues dedans un tableau*', *French Studies*, 40 (1986), 32–44.

Ronsard's 'Hymnes' forges a powerful critical framework for understanding Ronsard's aims in this poetry. It argues that Ronsard's practice of ecphrasis often shades off into hypotyposis, the presentation in vivid visual terms of a real or imaginary scene that does not have a primary existence as a painting or sculpture, as it does in ecphrasis. So, although Ronsard probably knew the Château de Fontainebleau paintings commissioned by François I^{er} from Primaticcio and others—research trips took Philip there—many of the hymns are persuasively interpreted by Philip as quasi-ecphrastic, even in their structure: for example, some scenes in the hymns function as framing devices and vignettes, like the decorative elements in mannerist painting. This cohesive yet semi-secret overall architecture of the poems is connected in this interpretation to the feeling of harmony that Ronsard wishes ultimately to create in the reader, in keeping with Neo-Platonism. Going further than those who argue that for the Ronsard of this period Neo-Platonism was a vehicle for imagination and aesthetics, a poetic toolkit. Philip argues that Ronsard and others at the French court actively subscribed to a Neo-Platonising form of Christianity. Much of the book involves erudite, syncretist decoding of the poetry's allegorical elements within the terms developed notably by the fifth-century CE Neo-Platonist philosopher Proclus, whose views were disseminated especially by Conrad Gesner's partial 1542 edition.

So Philip's work on Ronsard is in the tradition of Edgar Wind's *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance* (London, 1958).³² It acknowledges, but diverges from, the critical-theory-inspired reading of works by Ronsard and others—as being not so much cohesive as torn between centripetal and centrifugal forces—that had recently been provided by Terence Cave:³³ 'Ronsard's style is copious, certainly, but that *copia* has a purpose.³⁴ Yet Philip's contribution to the hermeneutic debate is nuanced: he acknowledges not only that much textual detail continues to resist interpretation,³⁵ but also that there is now, and was in Ronsard's time, a degree of disconnect between the different elements that constitute actual reader experiences of the poetry:

³² 'Like them [sc. Botticelli, Primaticcio, Titian], Ronsard was representing pagan mysteries in his works, often in largely visual terms.' P. Ford, 'Neoplatonic Fictions in the Hymnes of Ronsard', in N. Kenny (ed.), *Philosophical Fictions and the French Renaissance* (London, 1991), pp. 45–55 at 55.

³³T. Cave, *The Cornucopian Text: Problems of Writing in the French Renaissance* (Oxford, 1979).

³⁴Ford, 'Neoplatonic Fictions', p. 55.

³⁵Ibid. See also T. Cave, 'Epilogue' in the same volume, pp. 127–32 at 128.

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The discovery of a unifying significance in a work of art may be an intellectually satisfying experience, but it is just one of a number of pleasures offered by Ronsard's poetry. ... As with the frescoes of the Galerie François I^{er} [at Fontainebleau], the sensuous beauty, wit, and harmony of Ronsard's work would have been appreciated by many more readers than those who would have grasped the intricacies of its thematic structure and allegorical significance.³⁶

IV

Turning to Ronsard, however momentous in professional terms, was dwarfed in its significance for Philip's life by another encounter that occurred around the same time. In 1978, while holidaying with his college friend Allan Doig in the latter's home city of Vancouver, Philip met a humorous, eloquent, straight-talking, bibliophilic,³⁷ history-graduate cousin of Allan's, who was also visiting, in her case from California. Philip met Lenore Muskett again in 1979 and 1981. Allan remembers Philip putting down the receiver in Cambridge after a transatlantic telephone call and announcing that he and Lenore were to marry, which they did in 1982. This very happy marriage was the rock on which the rest of Philip's life was built.

In 1987 Lenore gave birth to their son, Thomas, or Tom. It was not a straightforward birth. Tom was extremely premature, and the lives of both mother and baby were in danger. This crisis, and its fortunate outcome, had a profound and lasting effect on Philip. He was overwhelmed with joy. Lenore recalls a change that occurred in this man whose allround capability had developed, partly through childhood circumstances, into a high degree of self-sufficiency: fatherhood now focused him on someone who was part of him in a sense and yet other to him. And, although he spent much time with Tom, Philip was very good at respecting that otherness. On the one hand, Philip, who became a parent governor at Tom's comprehensive (The Netherhall School in Cambridge), was interested in whatever his son was doing and proud of his achievements: colleagues remember Philip's glow when Tom got a First in Latin American Studies at the University of Liverpool and later a M.Sc. in Global

³⁶P. Ford, 'Ronsard's erotic diptych: Le Ravissement de Cephale and La Defloration de Lede', French Studies, 47 (1993), 385–403 at 402.

³⁷ Having been the acquisitions librarian at Binghamton (State University of New York) when she left the USA to marry Philip, Lenore Muskett later spent several years managing the 'Books for Amnesty' shop in Cambridge.

Governance and Ethics at University College London. On the other hand, Philip was not an overbearing father. Indeed, Philip's Ph.D. students describe a judicious and supportive but light-touch and freedom-granting approach that seems to have been an extension of that domestic parenting style. In Philip's everyday conversations with his close colleagues, Lenore and Tom were constant reference points: 'None of this would be worthwhile without them', as he wrote in the preface to his last book. One of his colleagues remembers encountering father and son at lunchtime in the centre of Cambridge on a mission to buy Tom an interview suit. And the present writer is not alone in recalling with amusement how meetings in Philip's college study would occasionally be halted by telephoned requests for advice regarding homework and similar. Philip's mock-exasperated response, 'What do you want *now*?', might have been disconcerting were it not for the beam of utter delight on his face; he seemed to love being interrupted by his son.

To return to 1978: the partial reorientation towards French vernacular writing through Hardy and Ronsard bore fruit with Philip's appointment to a lectureship in French at the University of Aberdeen, where he stayed for three and a half years (1978-81). He embraced his new Scottish existence in his usual positive and open way. It shaped George Buchanan, Prince of Poets. The volume appeared with the Aberdeen University Press and Philip's collaborator W. S. Watt was the university's Regius Professor of Humanity. Philip joined a strong group of early modernists in the French Department, working alongside Alison Saunders, the authority on emblems,³⁸ and Henry Phillips, the seventeenth-century theatre and church specialist (who was to leave Aberdeen at the same time as Philip and for the same destination). Philip did not appear to harbour the least nostalgia for England. Indeed, an absence of tub-thumping nationalism was the flipside of his cosmopolitanism: his wife Lenore reports that he deemed the French way of life to be superior to the English in virtually every respect, with the exception of the institution of Oxbridge, which he thought preferable to the way in which the elite sectors of higher education in France are structured. One activity into which he threw himself in Aberdeen was the same as that pursued over many years by his halfbrother Paul: theatre. Philip's new friends included Carolyn and Bill Kirton, and Philip acted in plays directed by Bill-as Monsieur Smith in Ionesco's La Cantatrice chauve in the department's annual French play,

³⁸ Years later, Philip co-edited her Festschrift: A. Adams and P. Ford (eds.), assisted by S. Rawles, *Le Livre demeure: Studies in Book History in Honour of Alison Saunders* (Geneva, 2011).

and as the lead in a children's play written by Bill for a local drama group: 'Philip seemed to get pleasure from everything.'³⁹ A hardy non-complainer, he also seemed oblivious to the freezing temperatures to which his garret flat descended in winter, as his friend Jerry Wilde found to his discomfort when visiting.

In 1981, Philip left Aberdeen. He returned to Cambridge, this time for good. He was appointed University Assistant Lecturer (till 1986) and then University Lecturer (1986–99) in French, before becoming Reader in French and Neo-Latin Literature (1999–2004), and Professor of the same (2004–13). In 1982 he was elected Fellow of Clare College, Cambridge, the start of a 31-year-long attachment during which he would develop warm friendships with longstanding modern languages colleagues (Simon Franklin, Alison Sinclair, Tess Knighton) and more recent ones (Rodrigo Cacho, Helena Sanson). Alison Sinclair was on the college body that selected him: 'When asked in 1982 by the Fellowship Committee at Clare about his reasons for returning to Cambridge, his reply was characteristically brief, good-humoured, revealing, and remarkably simple. Cambridge was 500 miles closer to France.²⁴⁰

V

Within the Department of French at the University of Cambridge Philip was a quiet—in the sense of non-attention-seeking—new member, while starting to initiate and develop what became an extraordinary twintracked tradition of research events, one focused on French Renaissance studies, the other on Neo-Latin studies. For each, he exploited to the hilt the infrastructure and resources available to him at Clare College.

He initiated a 1985 colloquium and publication that was initially cashstrapped but turned out to be the first in a series of ten Cambridge French Colloquia, held 1985–2008 and published 1986–2012. His co-organiser for the first, 'Ronsard in Cambridge', and several more was his good friend Gillian Jondorf; the pair co-edited the first six volumes, before other co-editors replaced Jill alongside Philip. Some of the volumes were devoted to major authors (two are on Montaigne), but most provided a new look either at an established issue within Renaissance studies (human-

³⁹Bill Kirton, pers. comm. (Dec. 2013).

⁴⁰S. Franklin and A. Sinclair, 'Philip Ford: Fellow of Clare 1982–2013', forthcoming in the *Clare Association Annual* (Cambridge), quoted with kind permission.

ism and letters in the age of François I^{er}), an under-studied one (intellectual life in Lyon; poetry and music), or an emergent one (women's writing; self and other; masculinities). These events became the backbone that enabled the community of UK-based *seiziémistes* to identify and debate new research developments in the company of leading specialists from France and North America, who were also invited. Philip was invariably the initiator, the driving force, the chief fundraiser and organiser, and the 'immensely kind, genial, welcoming and ever-smiling host'.⁴¹ The present writer recalls seeing him bound onto the rostrum to deliver the opening address while pouring with sweat from dashing around resolving lastminute logistical issues. Philip also took sole care of the marketing and sale of the volumes.

Having something like the Cambridge French Colloquia up and running might have sufficed for most academics of the enterprising kind, but not for Philip. Ann Moss witnessed his role in forging Neo-Latin research communities and traditions:

In 1991, Philip initiated a series of Cambridge Neo-Latin symposia that were to meet in Clare College every two years out of three, and which he organised with the prodigious efficiency also in evidence in his parallel series of French colloquia. They were open to a growing band of postgraduate students, young research fellows, and a devoted following of national and international scholars. The symposia were variously themed and many of their sessions resulted in published collections of papers. These meetings were enormously important for the encouragement and companionship they gave to young researchers in this emerging field and contributed very effectively to its rising professional status.⁴²

Themes of the consequent volumes that Philip also co-edited include erotic writing, pastoral, drama. Out of these symposia emerged in 1992 the Cambridge Society for Neo-Latin Studies, co-founded by Philip, Ingrid De Smet (his first Ph.D. student), Philip Hardie, Hugo Tucker, and Zweder von Martels. The new society oversaw both the symposia and also 'the Cambridge Neo-Latin research seminars, instituted around the same time under Philip's guidance, and meeting at Clare on usually two evenings a term'.⁴³ Fellow stalwarts of this Cambridge Neo-Latin scene came to include over the years, in addition to those just mentioned, Yasmin Haskell, David Money, Andrew Taylor, and Paul White.

43 Ibid.

⁴¹ Ann Moss (describing Neo-Latin conferences), pers. comm. (Jan. 2014).

⁴²Ibid.

Philip did not however only embed Neo-Latin at a research level in the university. He also pulled off the unprecedented feat of embedding it at undergraduate level.

Post-medieval Latin, with the creditable exception of the Low Countries, has rarely had a place of its own in the university syllabus. In the United Kingdom, it was until very recently spurned by classicists, and only existed as a just about tolerated research interest of a few eccentric scholars employed in recognised departments such as History, English, and, very often, as in Philip's case, Modern Languages. McFarlane started the Neo-Latin renaissance at Cambridge, but it was Philip who brought it to birth. It was Philip's ability to get things done that has ensured it a place within the Modern Languages Tripos, with two papers on offer and available to undergraduates from other faculties.⁴⁴

He did not stop at the Cambridge level, for, in Ann Moss's words:

Philip was concerned that there should be a national Society for Neo-Latin Studies. Thanks to his prompting and his early oversight, this has now come into being [in 2005].⁴⁵ In addition to organizing conferences, it has deliberately decided to champion new initiatives involving public outreach by the way of its website with its links to Neo-Latin collections and research tools.⁴⁶ Its most innovative, and particularly useful, activity is an evolving on-line anthology of short poems or extracts from Latin writing produced between the fifteenth and the eighteenth centuries. Members contribute items subscribing to a template that comprises brief introduction, text, English translation, and notes that elucidate the more unusual linguistic features and point up some analogies in other authors. The anthology is targeted at undergraduates, postgraduates and others who need to practise or improve their Latin reading skills, and it is being used as a textbook for elementary Latin courses in several places. As Philip hoped, the community is committed to user-friendly strategies for the survival and growth of Latin language learning, without which research in the early modern field can be seriously deficient.47

Nor did Philip stop at this national level:

Over-arching all these ventures is the International Association for Neo-Latin Studies. It is surprisingly large. Its triennial congresses, held at different locations in Europe and North America since 1971, are big enough to necessitate several parallel sessions, and if it does not quite have the razzmatazz of the MLA, it scores on its congenial and collegiate atmosphere. This is at least one advantage of the fact that Neo-Latin is a haven for refugee enthusiasts, not a

⁴⁶<http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/ren/snls/> (last accessed 14 April 2014).

⁴⁴Moss, pers. comm. (Jan 2014). The two papers are 'Introduction to Neo-Latin Literature 1350–1700' (available to second- and final-year undergraduates; first taught in 2001–2) and 'A Special Subject in Neo-Latin Literature: Selected Authors' (available to final-year undergraduates). ⁴⁵Having worked behind the scenes for the society, Philip joined its executive committee in 2011.

⁴⁷ Moss, pers. comm. (Jan. 2014). Ann Moss was the society's founding President.

battleground for competition between professional rivals. Philip was a committed member of the Association from its second congress, at which we first met, and later, as was his wont, gladly shouldered administrative responsibility.⁴⁸

As the Association's Second Vice-President, he was chief organiser of its triennial congress (held at Cambridge in 2000) before serving for nine years as First Vice-President (2003–6), President (2006–9), and Past President (2009–12).⁴⁹

Within French studies too, he took on both national and international roles.⁵⁰ The twin tracks of French Renaissance and Neo-Latin studies came together in two further international leadership roles, one as Vice-President (2006–9) of the main learned society within France itself that promotes the study of sixteenth-century literature and culture (the Société Française d'Étude du Seizième Siècle),⁵¹ the other as President (2007–13) of the umbrella organisation of Renaissance societies and institutes across the world, including for example in Japan and Israel (the Fédération Internationale des Sociétés et des Instituts pour l'Étude de la Renaissance: FISIER). Philip was forever heading off to catch a Eurostar.

VI

In the midst of all this enabling and editing of other people's work, Philip's own research thrived. He did like a challenge: following the giants Buchanan and Ronsard came a larger one, Homer. The three were in fact intimately connected, not only because Philip often worked on them concurrently and because Buchanan and Ronsard partly moved in the same circles and had aesthetic common ground,⁵² but also more specifically because of a poet and teacher whom Buchanan and Ronsard both knew⁵³ and who had a famous impact on the course of French poetry by immersing Ronsard and his fellow Pléiade poets in ancient Greek literature: Jean Dorat.

⁴⁸ Ibid. Philip himself wrote an overview of the discipline's institutional and other progress: P. Ford, 'Twenty-five years of Neo-Latin studies', *Neulateinisches Jahrbuch: Journal of Neo-Latin Language and Literature*, 2 (2000), 293–301.

⁴⁹ Ingrid De Smet, pers. comm. (April 2014).

⁵⁰ In 2011 he joined the Executive Committee of the UK Association of University Professors and Heads of French.

⁵¹He was also a member of the Executive Committee 1997–2009.

⁵²See Ford, 'George Buchanan's Court Poetry and the Pléiade'.

⁵³See McFarlane, Buchanan, p. 163.

The great scholar of humanism Paul Oskar Kristeller (d. 1999) had brought to the attention of the Neo-Latinist Geneviève Demerson a manuscript held in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana in Milan. Demerson encouraged Philip to undertake a critical edition of the intriguing student notes (dated by Philip to 1569–71) which were among the manuscript's contents.⁵⁴

Philip was very proficient in Greek, and this enabled him produce in 2000 a publication that is particularly valued by specialists in Renaissance commentary. It is a carefully transcribed, translated, and annotated edition of the Latin notes of an anonymous student attending lectures on the *Odyssey* delivered by the influential French scholar, Jean Dorat. Entitled *Mythologicum*, the student's manuscript conserves Dorat's oral notes on Books X–XII and on part of one of the Homeric hymns. They constitute above all an interpretative account of Homer's narrative, exemplifying Dorat's attachment to that search for meaning beyond the surface of the text that beguiled so many of Dorat's predecessors and contemporaries. The manuscript reveals him applying the whole range of exegetical tools they used to extract 'deep' meaning: etymologies, word-play, anagram, numerology, moral and physical allegorisation, Biblical parallels.⁵⁵

In comparison with many contemporary mythographers Dorat emphasises the moral and physical meanings less than the philosophical and religious truths conveyed by Homer, whom he sees as a prophet or *vates*. Philip shows how this kind of interpretation was made possible by the humanist dissemination in the first half of the sixteenth century (by Gesner and others) of ancient and Byzantine commentaries on Homer's epics (Heraclitus the Rhetor, Porphyry, Eustathius of Thessalonika, Proclus).⁵⁶ Echoing his own interpretation of Ronsard's hymns, Philip argues that Dorat's engagement with the long tradition of Homeric exegesis is also innovative in its attempt to produce a unified interpretation of a given myth, and even of the *Odyssey* as a whole, rather than the discrete and unrelated interpretations of its details that characterise standard medieval and even humanist practice: 'Dorat suggested that the whole of the *Odyssey* had a single, coherent explanation: the passage of the human soul from life through death to the afterlife.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Jean Dorat, *Mythologicum ou Interprétation allégorique de l'Odyssée' X–XII et de l'Hymne à Aphrodite'*, ed. and trans. P. Ford (Geneva, 2000).

⁵⁵Ann Moss, pers. comm. (Jan. 2014).

⁵⁶ For a succinct but full list of these commentaries, see P. Ford, 'Classical myth and its interpretation in sixteenth-century France', in G. Sandys (ed.), *The Classical Heritage in France* (Leiden, Boston, MA, and Cologne, 2002), pp. 331–49 at 334–5.

⁵⁷P. Ford, 'Homer in the French Renaissance', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 59 (2006), 1–28 at 16.

This important edition was just one plank in a vaster project, that of assessing the Renaissance reception of Homer, and in particular of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Philip was able to undertake it thanks to a British Academy Research Readership, which freed him from university teaching and administration for two years (2003–5). The outcome was his magisterial *De Troie à Ithaque: réception des épopées homériques à la Renaissance* (Geneva, 2007). Although its stated focus is the one that so fascinated Philip—did people interpret the epics allegorically?—it ranges beyond even that large question.

The first half (chapters 1-3) surveys the European printing history of editions of the Iliad and Odyssev from the 1470s to the end of the sixteenth century. The scale of the enterprise is indicated by the valuable research tool that Philip appended to his volume, a 56-page bibliography of editions of Homer (excluding vernacular translations and the pseudo-Homeric Batrachomyomachia). This first half of De Troie à Ithaque examined Greek editions. Latin translations, and commentaries. Faced with a welter of potential material. Philip took the astute decision to track the changing patterns of interpretation by focusing especially on treatments of two controversial passages, the love-making of Zeus and Hera on Mount Ida (Iliad XIV. 341-56) and the Cave of the Nymphs (Odyssev XIII. 92–112). The survey's unprecedented breadth and depth enabled Philip to produce an original chronological framework that distinguished between the initial humanist reception of Homer's epics (up to 1540), a golden age of intensified and broader interest in them (1541–70), and a twilight (1571–1600). The volume's second half (chapters 4–6) then examines, against the backdrop of that chronology, the reception of the epics in France in particular, first by the great humanist Guillaume Budé and his generation (Jean Lemaire de Belges, François Rabelais, and others), then by Dorat and his generation (for example Denis Lambin), and finally by those such as Ronsard and Montaigne who wrote in the wake of the influential favouring of Virgil over Homer by Julius Caesar Scaliger in his posthumously published Poetics (Poetices libri septem, 1561). As some of these names indicate, this second, France-specific half of De Troie à Ithaque extends the analysis beyond editions, translations, and commentaries to include also imitations of Homer in vernacular prose fiction and poetry, as indeed in the art of Fontainebleau.

De Troie à Ithaque reshapes our understanding of the Renaissance reception of Homer's epics; it reveals in detail a degree of humanist and broader engagement far beyond what had been uncovered for example by the only previous monograph treatment of the subject in relation to France (a decent slim 1962 volume by Noémi Hepp,⁵⁸ which Philip presents in characteristically generous terms). Although Philip had long enjoyed an international reputation as an excellent Renaissance scholar, this project established him as a star of the discipline. He summarised some of the findings when invited to give in 2005 the prestigious Josephine Waters Bennett Lecture at the largest gathering anywhere of Renaissance specialists, the annual meeting of the Renaissance Society of America.⁵⁹ In 2009 he was elected Fellow of the British Academy. He had already been honoured by the French Government, which appointed him to the Ordre des Palmes Académiques (first as Chevalier in 2001, then as Officier in 2004), as well as by the Académie Royale de Belgique, which elected him Associate Fellow in 2004.

VII

Philip's attention then turned from Homer to yet another giant: Michel de Montaigne.

The immediate catalyst for this was an external circumstance, but the author of the *Essais* had been looming on Philip's research horizon especially since 1998, when he published a persuasive case for a homo-erotic element in what Montaigne wrote about his much mourned friend Étienne de La Boétie.⁶⁰ Philip had moreover explored Montaigne's connections both to his erstwhile teacher Buchanan and also to Homer.⁶¹ That Montaigne spoke to Philip as a human being as well as fascinating him as a scholar was evident from Philip's choosing as a reading at his funeral a passage—on grateful acceptance of the embodied human condition—from the chapter 'De l'expérience'. By gravitating towards Montaigne in what turned out to be the last years of his life, he was in fact following the same path as that taken by two early modern departmental predecessors

⁵⁸ N. Hepp, 'Homère en France au XVIe siècle', *Atti della Accademia delle Scienze di Torino, II. Classe di Scienze Morali, Storiche e Filologiche*, 96 (1961–2), 389–509.

⁵⁹ Published as Ford, 'Homer in the French Renaissance'.

 $^{^{60}}$ Ford, 'The and rogyne myth'. He had not contributed an essay to his 1989 co-edited volume on Montaigne.

⁶¹P. Ford, 'George Buchanan et Montaigne', in John O'Brien and Philippe Desan (ed.), *La 'familia' de Montaigne, Montaigne Studies: an Interdisciplinary Forum*, 13.1–2 (2001), 45–63; P. Ford, 'Montaigne's Homer: poet or myth?', *Montaigne Studies: an Interdisciplinary Forum*, 17 (2005), 7–16.

for whom he had such admiration and affection: Odette de Mourgues and Dorothy Coleman.⁶²

The external circumstance was the death in 2000 of the financier Gilbert de Botton. He had tried to acquire as many as possible of the copies known to have been in Montaigne's library: he reached nine (possibly ten). Where he could not buy Montaigne's actual copy, he bought another copy of the edition known to have been used by Montaigne. He also collected editions of Montaigne's works, from the earliest to the most recent. For a while after de Botton's death, it was uncertain where this remarkable collection would go. Jill Whitelock was at the time Head of Rare Books at Cambridge University Library, where she is now Head of Special Collections:

Philip was instrumental in securing the magnificent Montaigne Library of Gilbert de Botton for the University Library in 2007.... When the books arrived in Cambridge he publicised the acquisition with energy and enthusiasm, as advisor to the 2008 exhibition '*My booke and my selfe*': *Michel de Montaigne 1533–1592*, as author of the accompanying monograph *The Montaigne Library of Gilbert de Botton at Cambridge University Library* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, 2008), and as organiser of another international conference, for the French Department's Cambridge French Colloquia in September 2008, devoted to the 'Librairie de Montaigne'.⁶³

One fruitful outcome of the conference was the collaboration between the Library and the Université François-Rabelais, Tours to digitise books from the Montaigne Library—including Montaigne's annotated copy of Lucretius' *De rerum natura* (1563), the jewel of de Botton's collection—for the freely available web resource on Renaissance humanism, 'Les Bibliothèques virtuelles humanistes'.

Philip also gave many talks on the collection and hosted numerous private viewings of the Montaigne Library, including a visit on 6 May 2009 by Maurice Gourdault-Montagne, Ambassador of France to the United Kingdom. He was always generous in sharing his expertise not only with visitors, but also with

⁶² Montaigne was 'the author whom Odette [de Mourgues] most admired' according to Peter Bayley's obituary for her in *French Studies*, 43.1 (1989), 118–19 at 119. Although she lectured regularly on Montaigne, the only publication she devoted to him was her very last, elicited by Philip among others: O. de Mourgues, 'Passé, présent, futur dans les Essais', in P. Ford and G. Jondorf (eds.), *Montaigne in Cambridge: Proceedings of the Cambridge Montaigne Colloquium* 7–9 April 1988 (Cambridge, 1989), 1–6. Dorothy Coleman's increasing turn to Montaigne towards the end of her career culminated in her last book—D. Coleman, *Montaigne's 'Essais'* (London, 1987)—and a posthumous collection of her articles—D. Coleman, *Montaigne, quelques anciens et l'écriture des 'Essais'* (Paris, 1995).

⁶³ P. Ford and N. Kenny (eds.), *La Librairie de Montaigne: Proceedings of the Tenth Cambridge French Colloquium 2–4 September 2008* (Cambridge, 2012). The volume includes an essay by Philip on 'La Bibliothèque grecque de Montaigne' (pp. 25–38).

Library staff, whom he continued to support in recommending acquisitions to enhance the collection.

Philip had a close relationship with Cambridge University Library over many years \dots He served as the Chairman of the Library Syndicate from 2010.⁶⁴

He was 'a supportive and engaged Syndicate Chairman' characterised by 'kindness, humour, and above all, . . . integrity'.⁶⁵

VIII

Philip produced one more monograph. It arose from the life-long love of poetry that he shared with Montaigne. It was also grounded in Philip's other great cultural passion: multilingualism. Rooted in years of research and reflection, *The Judgment of Palaemon: the Contest between Neo-Latin and Vernacular Poetry in Renaissance France* (Leiden, 2013) was written fairly quickly once he got the opportunity with a research sabbatical year (2011–12).

The book charts for the first time, and on one level in precise statistical terms, the evolving language-choice of poets: should they write in Neo-Latin or in standard French (which was itself in fact just 'Francien', the dialect of most of North-Western France)? Philip's doctoral student Harry Stevenson assisted him in establishing the evidential and statistical basis. By showing that non-Francien speakers were at times more likely than Francien-speakers to choose to write poetry in Latin, The Judgment of Palaemon concludes that composing in Latin was felt by many to be more natural. French was more alien than Latin to many poets in France (Dorat among them). It is difficult to assess the likely influence of a book that has only appeared recently, but in the present writer's view this powerfully developed insight is likely to have a long-lasting impact—both unsettling and invigorating-on French Renaissance studies, not least because of the profound expertise with which Philip then develops it on his favoured terrain of textual analysis. Chapters are devoted to Joachim Du Bellay; Neo-Catullan poetry (Janus Secundus, Marullus, Baïf, Belleau, Labé); Martial and Marot (and the latter's Neo-Latin imitators); multilingual funerary collections or tumuli, Latin translations of Ronsard; and finally the Morel salon in Paris, movingly presented—in a spirit overtly

 ⁶⁴ Jill Whitelock, with input from Anne Jarvis (University Librarian, Cambridge University Library), pers. comm. (Dec. 2013).
⁶⁵ Ibid.

inspired by Philip's undergraduate supervisor Robert Bolgar—as an eirenic, Erasmian, Latin- and poetry-based language community, holding out against the forces that brought civil war to France.

The Judgment of Palaemon is Philip's 'great gift to Neo-Latin studies',⁶⁶ not because it privileges Latin over the vernacular, but because it uncovers in such compelling detail a two-way dynamic relationship—of influence, imitation, translation, emulation—between the two:

... indeed, with hindsight we can take it as a summation of all his work in the Neo-Latin field, brought here into close collusion with the French-language poetry of the Renaissance that was the subject of Philip's parallel research trajectory. There is much learning here, lightly worn. There is evidence drawn from manuscript sources, as well as printed books. There is a continuation of Philip's analytical expertise in detailed matters of language choice, metrics, and stylistic manoeuvres, now tellingly applied to a comparison of poems translated and imitated from Latin originals into French and, mainly, from French originals into Latin, with further comparative excursions into Greek, classical Latin, and Italian Neo-Latin writers. . . . Numerical tables account for all French poets of the period, their language of choice, and their geographical distribution, ... Most impressive of all is the consummate ease with which Philip is able to move about the whole of Latin poetry, ancient and modern, picking up specific vocabulary, turns of phrase, and images with which his Neo-Latins constructed their ancienne poésie renouvelée. The captivated reader senses that she is entering the very mind of the Renaissance humanists. McFarlane would have been very proud. . . .⁶⁷

A few days before he died, Philip was gratified to hold a copy of the printed volume in his hands.

IX

Philip wrote on many other topics and writers in the ninety or so articles he published in addition to co-editing no fewer than nineteen collective volumes or special issues (five of which appeared in 2011 and 2012 alone). A twentieth was almost finished at his death: the vast, two-volume *Brill's Encyclopaedia of the Neo-Latin World* (Leiden and Boston, MA, 2014). Its other two editors are Jan Bloemendal and Charles Fantazzi: '[Philip] was the one who was the architect of the structure of the *Encyclopaedia*, the chief editor.'⁶⁸

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⁶⁶Ann Moss, pers. comm. (Jan. 2014).

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Jan Bloemendal, pers. comm. (Dec. 2013).

Staggering though Philip's research achievements and activities were, they were only vaguely or barely known by many colleagues and undergraduate students in Cambridge who knew him well but in *other* respects. There were perhaps three reasons for this discrepancy: those other, nonresearch respects *also* appeared to be all-consuming, and so were easily assumed to be; no single individual had the energy or knowledge to follow Philip across all his spheres of activity; he did not broadcast his achievements.

He saw his teaching of undergraduates and postgraduates as part of his central mission. He supervised doctoral students working on a wide range of Neo-Latin and other topics, mainly early modern (including Ingrid De Smet, Margaret Duncumb, Paul White, Emilia Wilton-Godberfforde, Harry Stevenson, Adam Kay, David Porter, and Jaspreet Singh Boparai) but also medieval (Venetia Bridges). When sending him messages shortly before his death, his current and former undergraduates singled out his kindness and inspiring passion for the subject as a teacher. the reassuring smiles with which he greeted them at their admissions interviews, and the gentle and discreet rigour of his prompts to them: 'The moment in my interview when you raised your eyebrows at me and asked me whether I was really sure that "it was all Madame Bovary's fault" is engraved in my memory! I promise I will do exactly as you told me and put that "bit more effort" into final year."⁶⁹ He did not do his fair share of undergraduate admissions interviews: he did more than it, being the specialist in the most applied-for language (French) at what was in most years the most-applied for Cambridge college in modern languages (Clare). Quietly mindful of his own origins, he was passionate about widening participation in higher education long before most of his colleagues. Yet he was a traditionalist in the sense that he was more cautious than some about giving applicants the benefit of the doubt if their grammar was weak.

As in his research worlds, he both continued such ground-level involvement—in his Cambridge college, department, and faculty, for example as Director of Studies at Clare for twenty-five years from 1982—while also assuming ever-higher leadership roles. He was Admissions Tutor at Clare (1985–93), also chairing for the last three of those years the universitywide forum for admissions tutors (the Cambridge Admissions Forum). He was Chair of the Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages (1996–9),

⁶⁹ Reproduced by kind permission of Anna Wagner. These messages were collected and conveyed to Philip by his friend and colleague Rodrigo Cacho.

having been its Academic Secretary. He progressed to roles at school and university level: from 2006 to 2010 he was Deputy Chair of the Council of the School of Arts and Humanities (forming a duo with his old Clare friend the Russianist Simon Franklin when the latter became Chair in 2009), a member of the university's General Board, and of the General Board's Education Committee. Philip implemented at these higher levels the holistic approach to graduate welfare that he practised himself as a supervisor and mentor: having been Graduate Admissions Tutor at Clare (1995–9), as Deputy Chair of the School he enthusiastically led the implementation, within the university's arts and humanities, of the new regime of support for postgraduate skills training and career development that had been ushered in by the 2002 Roberts Report. This culminated in the establishment of the School of Arts and Humanities Graduate School (1 January 2010).

Philip's style in such roles was not to adopt an Olympian blue-skiesthinking position or to ignore some issues in order to devote all his attention to others, but to be pragmatically engaged across the board in issues large and small. Whoever emailed him about anything would get a prompt and courteous answer, from first-year undergraduate to Vice-Chancellor. He thrived in the committee-led decision-making environment of the University of Cambridge because he was honest, had no secret agendas or self-promoting aims, and so could be entrusted take the out-of-committee decisions upon which such a system relies for the wheels to keep turning. He was an astute, realistic appraiser of personalities and political possibilities. His fundamental gentleness could be laced with toughness or even obduracy when he felt it was needed: not one to be plagued by self-doubt, he could dig his heels in. One colleague and devoted friend describes his can-do approach as verging occasionally on the 'maddeningly optimistic', while also pointing out that he would look to build bridges after a heated argument. He was not a bearer of grudges. He was a facilitator who got people with different outlooks to work together constructively, and so was easy to take for granted because so dependable and not attention-seeking. He was not prone to gossip, nor to a sense of superiority in relation to the majority of academics whose energy, commitment, and gifts were dwarfed by his. The only person whose organisational skills the present writer heard him criticise was himself, when fatigue or the sheer volume of his activities led to oversights or delays, as inevitably happened on occasion. Some things certainly irritated him: unwillingness to take one's routine turn at a task; allowing personal issues such as resentments to interfere with one's professionalism; and intellectual showiness if he thought its aim was to conceal an absence of knowledge.

Although he was profoundly public-spirited, believed strongly in the institutions for which he worked, and pushed himself very hard, he seems to have done so more because he wanted to than because he felt he ought to. He hugely enjoyed most of his work. Researching, learning, and teaching were for him different facets of one and the same enterprise; and the pull that Renaissance humanism exerted on him was due in part to the primacy it gave to education. For him, learning was not just something to get others to do. His own language-learning was extraordinary. Acquiring a new language was a joy. In addition to French, Italian, Latin, and ancient and modern Greek, he had a very good grasp of Dutch (acquired to help him work on Erasmus and interact with Dutch and Flemish scholars), German, and Spanish (influenced by his son Tom-the pair also took a night class in Russian together at Tom's school); Philip also had a very basic knowledge of Hebrew:⁷⁰ he could at least order a meal in Hungarian: and he had a go at Swedish (Lenore remembers the air filling with surprising sounds as he practised his pronunciation at home). Students and teachers in his own faculty found him turning up in their classes when he took a Diploma in Italian (1994) and a Certificate in Dutch (2000), gaining a Distinction in each. Applicants for an undergraduate place in French and Italian found him putting them through their paces in both languages. Members of the International Society for Neo-Latin Studies had in him a President who could address them in a range of languages at their famously polyglot congresses. Language was the prime medium-with cuisine coming a close second-through which, with relish, he discovered and experienced difference. He loved spending every summer in Burgundy where he and Lenore owned a house, not because it was an escape from all the calls on him, but because he could immerse himself in the ways and the everyday exchanges of French village life. Not batting an eyelid, indeed rather enjoying it, when colleagues at the Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies would address him as 'Phil' came as naturally to him as modulating forms of address in the languages he spoke.⁷¹ Yet, whatever the situation, he would somehow remain visibly and utterly himself, helped by a lack of modulation in one department, that of his dress,

⁷⁰ It was put to telling use in P. Ford, 'Le Rôle de la poésie hébraïque dans l'enseignement de Charles Utenhove', in I. Zinguer, A. Melamed and Z. Shalev (eds.), *Hebraic Aspects of the Renaissance: Sources and Encounters* (Leiden and Boston, MA, 2011), pp. 182–90.

⁷¹His undergraduates affectionately nicknamed him 'Pipford' and 'PFord'.

as his wife Lenore recalls once pointing out to him, to his surprise, as he strode happily alongside her on a Californian beach—in jacket, trousers, sandals, and socks. Always neat and smart, he spent no time whatsoever, according to Lenore, trying to picture how he looked visually to others.

This physical artlessness actually made him an expressive, unique physical presence. Most striking of all was his laugh: an explosive guffaw, frequent and generous, in the sense that Philip had the gift of making one feel that one's lame quips really were funny—many a conference and seminar speaker must have felt grateful.

But there was another characteristic sound. Around the coffee-table in the [Clare College] SCR, with people looking with more or less interest at the papers . . ., Philip would look up, say, 'Right', or 'So', or occasionally 'Now', by way of introducing a discussion about things that collectively we might need to do—or to think about doing. You knew when you heard one of these monosyllables from Philip that he was preparing to get us in gear, reminding us of tasks to be done, and always with some view of what the obligations (or the way forward) might be.⁷²

On tricky issues, Philip's whole body would become a vehicle for thought as he stood, head back, hands on hips, rocking from foot to foot while deliberating, then leaning wholly forward when a decision was reached.⁷³

I see this unstudied expressiveness in the photograph that precedes the present memoir. If Philip looks pleased, that is because he was. The picture was taken by Lenore, in the dining room of their home, for the British Academy website when he was elected Fellow: 'Philip was incredibly proud of being elected to the BA, but he would never have told anyone about it. . . . For him, his achievements were personal goals, a sort of life plan that unfolded. If anyone asked what he did for a living, he would just say that he taught French, and he left it at that.'⁷⁴ This was not false modesty; it was an absence of the ego and arrogance that sometimes accompany academic distinction. Philip's pride at his achievements was of a straightforward, limited, skin-deep, not profoundly self-regarding kind. He was fundamentally orientated towards others, and most deeply of all towards two people, one of whom, in her reflections on what made him tick, omits to mention her own incalculable role: 'Philip was proud of his academic achievements, but he was prouder still of his son. In later life, it

⁷²Alison Sinclair, pers. comm. (Dec. 2013).

⁷³I am grateful to Allan Doig for this formulation.

⁷⁴Lenore Muskett, pers. comm. (Dec. 2013).

was Tom rather than his academic life that offered the greatest pleasure and gave the deepest meaning to his life, and I think this rather surprised him.⁷⁵

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Since so much of the above relies on what has been communicated to me by Note others, their contributions have not as a rule been individually acknowledged, except in cases of direct quotation. I am deeply grateful to Lenore Muskett and Thomas Muskett-Ford for talking and writing to me about Philip, and for allowing me to see and quote from his personal papers. Ann Moss kindly contributed a written assessment of his contribution to Neo-Latin studies, from which I quote at length; she thanks Jim Binns and Roger Green for supplying information. My warm thanks go to many people who supplied me with documents, insights, and memories, including Philip's nephew Mark, Jan Bloemendal, Venetia Bridges, Rachel Deadman, Allan Doig, Rodrigo Cacho, Ingrid De Smet, Erna Eagar, Stephen Fennell, Simon Franklin, Roger Green, Liz Guild, Yasmin Haskell, David Holton, Ann Jarvis, Bill and Carolyn Kirton, Jim Laidlaw, Marc Laureys, Michael Moriarty, John O'Brien, Alison Sinclair, Astrid Steiner-Weber, Harry Stevenson, Elsa Strietman, Andrew Taylor, Michael Tilby, Paul White, Jill Whitelock, Jerry Wilde, and Emma Wilson. Obituaries of Philip Ford, on some of which I have drawn for particular points, have been written by Ingrid De Smet in RHR: Renaissance, Humanisme, Réforme, 76 (2013), 8-10, and in the Neulateinisches Jahrbuch, 15 (2013), 5–9; Gillian Jondorf in The Year 2012–2013: The Annual Review of Girton College (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 109-10; Neil Kenny in French Studies, 67.4 (2013), 593-5; Michael Moriarty in The Independent, 15 May 2013; John O'Brien in The Times, 20 June 2013, and in the Bulletin de Liaison: Société Française d'Étude du Seizième Siècle, 77 (May 2013), 27–8. A forthcoming issue of the Clare Association Annual (Cambridge) will include three pieces devoted to Philip Ford, two of them jointly authored by Simon Franklin and Alison Sinclair (an obituary; an address read out at the funeral) and the other a trilingual elegy (Greek, English, Latin) by Stephen Fennell. A memorial volume of essays is in progress: Sodalitas litteratorum: la sodalité dans la littérature néo-latine et française de la Renaissance et de l'époque moderne (1500–1675) / 'Sodality' in Early Modern French and Neo-Latin Literature (1500–1675). Études à la mémoire de Philip Ford / Studies in Memory of Philip Ford (1949–2013), ed. Ingrid De Smet and Paul White.

⁷⁵Muskett, pers. comm. (Dec. 2013).