

John Willinsky, *[The Intellectual Properties of Learning: A Prehistory from Saint Jerome to John Locke](#)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018).

## OPEN ACCESS FINAL DRAFT

### Chapter Eight Humanist Revival

The “final draft” of this chapter has been made open access through a special arrangement with the University of Chicago Press, reflecting their interest in exploring the access themes raised in the book.

Note that the final draft, which has benefited from rounds of peer review and revision before being accepted for publication by the press, differs at a great many points from the published text of the book. The book benefited from the press’ excellent copyediting, as well as my revisions and proofreading (with the help of colleagues) in that process. Those who are unable to obtain a copy of the published book from which to cite may wish to quote from and reference the final draft of this chapter as follows:

John Willinsky, *The Intellectual Properties of Learning: A Prehistory from Saint Jerome to John Locke* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), open access final draft, chapter 8, available from <https://intellectualproperties.stanford.edu>.

## Chapter 8

### Humanist Revival

During the fourteenth century, Francesco Petrarca, or Petrarch, as he is known in English, not only launched the sonnet cycle that bears his name, but set the learned side of the European Renaissance in motion. In addition to composing poetry in Italian, Petrarch devoted himself to restoring what he envisioned as Europe's intellectual birthright in the Greco-Roman legacy of antiquity and the Latin language. He was among the first humanist raiders of the lost ark (of classical manuscripts), journeying to remote abbey, priory, convent, and cathedral to scour the un-catalogued disarray of their decayed libraries. His example and enthusiasm drew many to this humanist interest in the past; it attracted wealthy patrons. These humanists – whether serving in the universities, church, or civic office; practicing medicine or law – shared a common project in recovering the Greco-Roman literature of antiquity that had been scattered, damaged, and lost during the Middle Ages. They pieced together what they found, fragment by fragment, and fitted it into the corpus of one author after another from that earlier era.

What they identified as the humanities (*studia humanitatis*) and what they cherished as noble and legitimate learning (*eruditio legitima et ingenua*) was the study of this ancient culture.<sup>1</sup> It was intellectual property work at every turn. Humanists studied the qualities that set the Roman histories of Livy apart from those of Sallust. They

---

<sup>1</sup> James Hankins: "The Italian humanists of the Renaissance created a new form of culture, inspired by Greco-Roman literature, which they referred to with names like the *studia humanitatis* (the humanities), *studia humaniora* (more humane studies), *studia honestarum artium* (the study of honorable arts), *bonae litterae* (good letters), *bonae artes* (the good arts), *eruditio legitima et ingenua* (noble and legitimate learning)"; "Humanism, Scholasticism, and Renaissance Philosophy," in *Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. James Hankins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 32.

prepared editions and translations that reestablished the body of work that defined the output of classical and late antiquity. Their patrons took hold of this work and assembled magnificent libraries that were multiplied across Europe by the fifteenth-century introduction of print.<sup>2</sup> And then there were the great many humanist academies that sprang up in communities large and small during this period (and are the subject of the next chapter).

There was also something larger going on with all of this book work. The humanists were putting in place what was, in effect, a Christianized version of classical antiquity that was eventually to be credited as forming the origins of Western Civilization and the definition of what it meant to possess a culture. The humanists furthered the alignment of Christian and classical texts, to which Augustine and Aquinas, among others, had contributed. In a more secular vein, the humanists introduced a grander civic mission to learning. They tied the West's destiny to the glory of Aristotle and Alexander the Great, Cicero and the Roman Empire. In this, the humanists brought forward a political mix of imperial ideology, republican Rome, and virtuous citizenship. Where the European ruling nobility once endowed monastic learning for its other-worldly spiritual order leading to heaven's gate, this time learning was offering an overarching historical narrative. Learning was treated as the source and standard of what Matthew Arnold identified, in the nineteenth century when efforts to secure and celebrate this origin myth reached their peak, as "the best which has been thought and said in the world."<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Ann Blair estimates that "personal libraries increased over tenfold in size from 1450 to 1650 as a result of the lower cost, greater availability, and increasing accumulation of printed books"; "Organizations of Knowledge," in *Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. James Hankins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 297.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy: An Essay in Political and Social Criticism* (London: Smith, Elder, 1869), viii. On the much contested making of this origin narrative, see Chapter 6, n125.

This chapter is devoted to two leading humanists, who form Renaissance bookends, born centuries apart. The first is Petrarch, the fourteenth-century father of humanism; the second is Erasmus of Rotterdam, the sixteenth-century prince of print. Their leadership was as much about the uncertain autonomy of humanism, as learning took another step into the court and marketplace of public life. Petrarch's life was torn between monastic inclinations and political pursuits; Erasmus has been identified as "a monk of convenience," who took vows only to walk away from the cloisters.<sup>4</sup> They were similarly associated with and pursued by various universities, only to reject academic posts in favor of the patronage of the powerful. Their place in this history of mine involves this equivocation over the right spot for learning in the world, given that their scholarship – and their open reflection on it – was combined for Petrarch with political engagement and for Erasmus with the commerce of print.

### *Francesco Petrarca*

Born in 1304 in Tuscan Italy, Petrarch credits his classicist interests to the inspiring walks that he took "through the remains of a broken city," as he refers to Rome in one of his many published letters, in which "the remnants of ruins lay before our eyes."<sup>5</sup> He was moved, as well, by the stirrings of a patriotic fervor: "For who can doubt," he wrote in that same letter, "that Rome would rise again instantly if she began to know herself."<sup>6</sup> He

---

<sup>4</sup> Bruce Mansfield refers to Erasmus as "a monk of convenience, living outside his monastery," who had then "to discover a personal vocation"; *Phoenix of his Age: Interpretations of Erasmus, c. 1550-1750* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), 3.

<sup>5</sup> Francesco Petrarch, "To Giovanni Colonna," in *Letters on Familiar Matters (Rerum Familiarium Libri) I-VIII*, vol. 1, trans. Aldo S. Bernardo (New York: Italica Press, 2005), 294.

<sup>6</sup> Petrarch to "Giovanni Colonna" in *Letters on Familiar Matters*, 1: 293. Hans Baron discusses how Petrarch's sympathies shift, over the course of his life, from republican to imperial Rome; *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance: Civic Humanism and Republican Liberty in the Age of Classicism and Tyranny* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), 119-120.

was intent on helping Rome know herself again; he came at this as poet, scholar, and finally, diplomat acting on behalf of the church in his version of a civic humanism with imperialist aspirations that inevitably narrowed the scope of learning.

Jacob Burckhardt, the nineteenth-century Swiss historian who helped make the name *Renaissance* synonymous with civilization, is critical of Petrarch's devotion to a "revival of antiquity" and his "one-sided worship of classical antiquity."<sup>7</sup> Burckhardt holds up, by way of contrast, the far more open-minded example of Pico della Mirandola, who was "the only man who loudly and vigorously defended the truth and science of all ages," for "he knew how to value not only Averroes and the Jewish investigators but also the scholastic writers of the Middle Ages."<sup>8</sup> In contrast, Petrarch was particularly dismissive of Islamic learning: "Keep your Arab authorities in banishment from any advice to me; I hate the entire race," Petrarch wrote to his physician, who had probably studied Latin medical texts translated from Arabic: "I shall scarcely be persuaded that anything good can come from Arabia."<sup>9</sup> And elsewhere, Petrarch refers to "that mad dog, Averroes," besmirching the friend of so many students of Aristotle.<sup>10</sup>

Petrarch's ethnocentric version of a Greco-Roman humanism ultimately triumphed over Pico's more inclusive version, which tended toward the occult at many points. For its part, the Islamic legacy was sustained across the universities in astronomy,

---

<sup>7</sup> Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, trans. S. G. C. Middlemore (London: Penguin, 1990), 135.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Francesco Petrarch, "To Giovanni Boccaccio da Certaldo," *Letters of Old Age (Rerum Senillium Libri)*, vol. 2, trans. Reta A. Bernardo (New York: Italica Press, 2005), 650. Petrarch continues on this theme: "You learned men, through some strange mental weakness, celebrate them with great, and unless I am mistaken, undeserved trumpeting"; *ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Petrarch, "To Luigi Marsili in Paris (ca 1370)," in *Letters of Old Age*, 1: 580. On the political front, Petrarch was troubled by the Ottoman Turks who, having ended Latin rule in Constantinople, entered the Balkans and appeared poised to make advances on Europe.

mathematics, and medicine.<sup>11</sup> But then, Petrarch was no less critical of the universities, particularly for their scholasticism. For Petrarch, scholasticism was mired in empty dialectic and endless disputation, be it over the nature of God or the number of angels who can dance on Aristotle's head. In a letter, this time to a friend from his student days at Bologna, Petrarch allowed only that "dialectic can be part of the journey; but it is certainly not the goal," before slipping in the sting, that "there is nothing more deformed than an old dialectician."<sup>12</sup> Scholasticism was part of the failure of the Middle Ages, so called as the era between the glory of Rome and the birth of the Renaissance. He was no kinder with monasticism, which had clearly fumbled its responsibilities for preserving the classical past: "Although they had nothing of their own to hand down to those who were to come after, they robbed posterity of its ancestral heritage."<sup>13</sup> Petrarch sought to right all of that, and not just through bombastic assertion but by careful scholarly inquiry into, as well as reconstruction and interpretation of that past.

Among Petrarch's literary discoveries, for which he prepared annotated editions, was a copy, in 1333, of Cicero's defense oration (*Pro Archia Poeta*) on behalf of the poet Archias. In Paris, he turned up the love poems of Propertius from the first century BCE. He found a manuscript of Livy in the library at Chartres that helped him reconstruct this historian's work on Rome.<sup>14</sup> Drawing on copies of fragments from a variety of European libraries, he was able to assemble, collate and correct the first ten books of Livy, as well

---

<sup>11</sup> See for example, F. J. Ragep, "Copernicus and his Islamic Predecessors: Some Historical Remarks," *History of Science* 45, no. 1 (2007): 65-81.

<sup>12</sup> Petrarch, "To Tommaso da Messina," in *Letters on Familiar Matters*, 39, 40.

<sup>13</sup> Cited by James Harvey Robinson, *Petrarch: The First Modern Scholar and Man of Letters* (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1907), 25-26. In Petrarch's disdain for matters medieval, Robinson notes, he "disliked dialectics, the most esteemed branch of study in medieval schools; he utterly disregarded Scotus and Aquinas"; *ibid.*, 37.

<sup>14</sup> Andrew Pettegree, *The Book in the Renaissance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 10. James Turner, *Philology: The Forgotten Origins of the Modern Humanities* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 34.

as books 21-40 of his history (with some books still missing to this day), adding annotations and supplements to create a magnificent edition.<sup>15</sup> This was Petrarch's rebuilding of Rome, one intellectual property at a time.

Petrarch's biggest discovery, however, came in 1345 when he found a manuscript in the cathedral library in Verona that he realized contained Cicero's letters to Atticus, as well as to his brother, Quintus, and Brutus. Composed in the first century BCE, the letters are full of reflections on the arts of writing and statecraft in the Roman Republic. Petrarch copied out the letters himself and prepared his own letter to Cicero (as he was to do to Homer, Virgil, and others) by way of announcing his find. He told Cicero that he was shocked by how "many quarrels and utterly useless feuds" occupied a man who claimed to have distanced himself from the world; Petrarch wrote that he was "filled with shame and distress at your shortcomings" as he learned to "now recognize the kind of guide you were for yourself."<sup>16</sup> Cicero's letters, along with those of Seneca, ended up giving shape to Petrarch's own writing project. The poet composed his letters as personal essays on public matters with the intent of publishing them. Petrarch credited Cicero with inspiring his *civic* humanism. Cicero had declared that, as an orator "his duty too it is to arouse a listless nation, and to curb its unbridled impetuosity" and this is what Petrarch most fervently sought to do over the years.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> A dozen pages of this edition can be viewed online, courtesy of the British Library (Harley MS 2493, Digitized Manuscripts), with the scribe identified as "Francesco Petrarca and other 14<sup>th</sup> century hands." Rens Bods: "Petrarch was not the first person to try this [reconstruction], but he was by far the best in over a thousand years"; *New History of the Humanities*, 144.

<sup>16</sup> Petrarch, "To Marcus Tullius Cicero," in *Letters on Familiar Matters*, 3: 317. David Wootton: "The Renaissance begins, for our purposes, with Francesco Petrarch's discovery in 1345 of a copy of Cicero's letters to Atticus"; *Modern Political Thought: Readings from Machiavelli to Nietzsche* (Cambridge: Hackett, 2008), 1. Anthony Grafton sees in Petrarch's life of Cicero "the beginnings of a critical history of philosophy"; "Availability of Ancient Works," in *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, 771.

<sup>17</sup> Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De oratore, Books I-II*, trans. E. W. Sutton and H. Rackham (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1942), 223. On civic versus stylistic interests in humanism, see Baron, *Crisis of the Early*

Petrarch initially supported his life of learning and poetry by accepting the clerical preferments and benefices provided by the patronage of the Colonna family in Rome.<sup>18</sup> His devotion to learning was such in those days that he refused to pursue administrative positions with the church: “I would never approve any conditions,” Petrarch wrote to his friend, the poet, Boccaccio, “that would distract me even for a short while from my freedom and from my studies. Therefore, when everyone sought the palace, I either sought the forest or rested in my room among my books.”<sup>19</sup> Later in life, however, he played the part of court intellectual for the King of Naples, the Dukes of Milan, the Doge of Venice, and the pope.<sup>20</sup> He found the grand life to his liking and accepted the political patronage offered by Italian despots, such as Giovanni Visconti, Archbishop of Milan, in whose service he remained for eight years as diplomat and orator-on-demand.

Petrarch did, however, express regrets over the demands of such patronage: “Even in fetters, if fortune condemns me to them, I continue thinking of liberty, and amidst the cities I continue thinking of the country.”<sup>21</sup> Earlier, he had not been ready to take a university chair, declining the Florentines’ invitation to occupy one at their newly founded university in 1350.<sup>22</sup> He had attended university at Montpellier and then Bologna, where he reluctantly studied civil law at his father’s urging: “I saw Bologna and

---

*Italian Renaissance* and Jerrold E. Siegel, “Civic Humanism' or Ciceronian Rhetoric?” *Past and Present* 34 (1966): 3-48.

<sup>18</sup> Petrarch writes in 1370: “I remained many years with his brother John, the Cardinal Colonna, not, as it were, under a patron, but under a father – nay, not even that, say rather a most affectionate brother, with whom I lived as at home and in my own house”; “Epistle to Posterity,” in Henry Reeve, *Petrarch* (Edinburgh: Blackwood and Sons, 1878), 21-22.

<sup>19</sup> Petrarch, “To Giovanni Boccaccio da Certaldo,” *Letters of Old Age*, 2: 650.

<sup>20</sup> Reeve, *Petrarch*, 129.

<sup>21</sup> Petrarch, “To Giovanni,” in *Familiar Matters*, vol. 3, 35. William J. Kennedy: “Petrarch disclosed a troubled sensibility about accepting certain kinds of patronage throughout his career, and his disclosure affected poets in his wake”; “Versions of a Career: Petrarch and His Renaissance Commentators,” in *European Literary Careers: The Author from Antiquity to the Renaissance*, eds. Patrick Cheney and Frederick Alfred de Armas (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 156.

<sup>22</sup> Robinson, *Petrarch*, 115.



I did not cleave to it,” as he later reflected in a letter to a professor there, as “nature begot me a lover of solitude and not of the marketplace.”<sup>23</sup> Still, in 1341, the lover of solitude arranged to have himself crowned Poet Laureate in Rome and extended his stay in Milan, the largest city and marketplace in Italy at the time.<sup>24</sup>

Petrarch had a similarly mixed response to the monastic life of learning. His brother Gerard had become a Carthusian lay brother in the monastery at Montrieux, and this rigorously ascetic monastic order was a decided influence on Petrarch’s life, just as a number of monasteries proved to be centers of humanist study.<sup>25</sup> Yet it was the life of writing, rather than that of monastic piety and the pursuit of salvation, that provided him with the solace that he sought: “While I write I become eagerly engaged with our greatest writers in whatever way I can and willingly forget those among whom my unlucky star destined me to live; and to flee from these I concentrate all my strength following the ancients instead.”<sup>26</sup> And Petrarch, for all his devoutness – “But Thou, my God, ‘Lord of

---

<sup>23</sup> Petrarch, “To a Certain Famous Man,” in *Familiar Matters*, 1: 223.

<sup>24</sup> Boccaccio wrote in honor of his friend’s crowning, in a metaphor paralleling Locke’s description of his scholarly task, which I cite in my first chapter, that Petrarch “removed the thornbushes and undergrowth with which man’s negligence had encumbered the road... and so opened the way for himself as well as for those who wished to ascend after him”; cited by Baron, *Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance*, 262. The coronation echoed the honoring of literary greats by Roman emperors; Thomas G. Bergin, *Petrarch* (New York: Twayne, 1970), 54.

<sup>25</sup> Demetrio S. Yocum, *Petrarch’s Humanist Writing and Carthusian Monasticism: The Secret Language of the Self* (Leiden: Brepols, 2013), 6, 19. Yocum: “The Carthusians welcoming in their fold many disillusioned academics”; *ibid.*, 18. Brian Stock: “It was in medieval monastic writings that Petrarch found a model for placing these beliefs within a consistent literary program”; “Reading, Writing, and the Self: Petrarch and His Forerunners,” *New Literary History* 26, no. 4 (1995), 727. Some abbeys formed networks of pious readers among the laity, especially within women’s religious communities, which they supported by acquiring and loaning books; Mary C. Erler, *Women, Reading, and Piety in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 27ff. David N. Bell: “In 1336, Pope Benedict XII had issued the bull *Summa magistri*, which demanded, among other things, that each Benedictine Monastery must provide within its walls instruction in ‘primitive sciences,’ grammar, logic, and philosophy”; “The Libraries of Religious Houses in the Late Middle Ages,” in *To 1640*, vol. 1, eds. Elisabeth Leedham-Green and Teresa Webber in *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 129.

<sup>26</sup> Petrarch, “To an Unknown Correspondent,” in *Familiar Matters* 1:314-15. Brian Stock on Petrarch: “For the first time since late antiquity, it is the secular library and not the monastic cell that is the image of this

Learning’ ... Thou Whom I must and will prefer to Aristotle” – followed the life of the pen rather than prayer.<sup>27</sup>

Petrarch also went on to propose what might be thought of as the natural law of literary use without ownership in a vision of an ecological intellectual commons that is improved through communal use: “We must write just as the bees make honey,” he writes in a letter to Boccaccio, “not gathering flowers but turning them into honeycombs, thereby blending them into a oneness that is unlike them all, and better.”<sup>28</sup>

Out of this interest in fruitful engagement with books and their properties, Petrarch managed to assemble one of the largest private libraries of the day, claiming, only partly in jest that “the number of my books is incalculable.”<sup>29</sup> Understanding his library to be a privately assembled public good, in 1362 he proposed donating his “daughter,” as he referred to it, to the Republic of Venice on his death, in exchange for a house in advance, “not large but respectable,” to live out his days.<sup>30</sup> The bequeathal of his library was, he stated, “for the encouragement and convenience of scholars and gentlemen.”<sup>31</sup> The *encouragement of learning* is a repeated theme in this book, as you may recall from my first-chapter reference to the title of the Statute of Anne (1710), and as you will hear from Milton and Defoe in the final chapter. Although Petrarch moved

---

solitude”; *After Augustine: The Meditative Reader and the Text* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 80.

<sup>27</sup> Francesco Petrarca, “On His Own Ignorance and that of Others,” trans. Hans Nachod, in *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, ed. Ernst Cassirer, Paul Oskar Kristeller, and John Herman Randall, Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), 63. With “Lord of Learning,” Petrarch is citing 1 Sam 2: 3.

<sup>28</sup> Petrarch, “The Young Humanist of Ravenna,” *Letters on Familiar Matters*, 3: 302.

<sup>29</sup> Petrarch, “On the Abundance of Books,” in *Four Dialogues for Scholars*, trans. Conrad H. Rawski (Cleveland: Case Western University Press, 1967), 32.

<sup>30</sup> Cited by Robinson, *Petrarch*, 30. Petrarch continued that “he did not wish this because his books are very numerous or very valuable, but is impelled by the hope that hereafter that glorious city may, from time to time, add other works at the public expense, and that private individuals, nobles, or other citizens who love their country, or even strangers, may follow his example, and leave a part of their books, by their last will, to the said church”; cited by *ibid.* Rudolf Pfeiffer cites the “daughter” reference; *History of Classical Scholarship 1300-1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 13.

<sup>31</sup> Cited by *ibid.*, 29.

into the Venetian house he requested, his books did not go to the city on his death. They were acquired by his final patron, Francesco da Carrara, Lord of Padua, who ended up selling some and forfeiting the rest as the spoils of a war that he lost.<sup>32</sup> He thus managed to set off another humanist treasure hunt on his death, this time for his own heavily annotated volumes dispersed across Western Europe in private and public collections.<sup>33</sup> In this, too, Petrarch has much to teach us about the political economy of learning and the instabilities of personal patronage, although often enough learning's properties of access and communality were posthumously honored by the great book collectors of the Renaissance.<sup>34</sup>

#### *Desiderius Erasmus*

In 1500 while Erasmus of Rotterdam was living in Paris at the age of thirty-four or so (as uncertainty surrounds the date of his illegitimate birth), he arranged for John Philippi of Kreuznach to print his rather hastily assembled collection of 818 proverbs. Erasmus had gathered the proverbs from Latin and Greek sources, and accompanied each with a few lines of explanation. He appears to have published the *Collection of Old Adages* (*Collectanea adagiorum veterum*) himself, rather than the more common practice of selling the text to the printer, with copies of the book taken in payment. Erasmus dedicated the work to William Blount, Lord Mountjoy, who had graduated from

---

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 32. Robinson refers to Francesco da Carrara, as “Petrarch’s last tyrant-patron”; *ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Pfeiffer, *Classical Scholarship*, 13.

<sup>34</sup> For example, the humanist Niccolò Niccoli spent his large inheritance assembling a magnificent library that, on his death, was destined to be distributed among his creditors, had not the great patron Cosimo de’ Medici purchased it to stock the monastery library of San Marco in Florence, which opened its doors in 1444, becoming a model for other public libraries, as well as a further bridge between medieval and humanist learning; Pettegree, *Book in the Renaissance*, 10, 15.

Erasmus' pupil to patron, allowing him to retain ownership of the book.<sup>35</sup> Four years later, Erasmus can be found writing from Paris to John Colet, a priest at Salisbury Cathedral, whom he had befriended on his earlier trip to England, asking him about "the hundred copies of the *Adagia* sent to England at my own expense, and three years ago at that"; he is confident that "all the books have been sold and the purchase price paid to someone."<sup>36</sup> This is the accounts-receivable language of the emerging printing industry. Then there is Erasmus' common complaint about the book: "It is so full of printers' errors that it looks as if it has been deliberately spoiled," he wrote to Colet.<sup>37</sup>

In 1508, while in Turin studying for the Doctor of Divinity degree, Erasmus became all the more involved in this business by working with the printer, Aldus Manutius, on an expanded and revised edition of this proverb collection, to be entitled, *Thousands of Adages (Adagiorum chiliades)*. Aldus had set up his printing shop in Venice in 1490. The city, along with Florence, was blossoming as a publishing center for works in Latin and the vernacular Tuscan.<sup>38</sup> Aldus presented a new humanist aesthetic, in the layout of the page and the design of fonts, with his Aldine press. By the turn of the century, both the Venetian Senate and the pope awarded him, on his request but in recognition of his contribution, various ten- and twenty-year Privileges, against print

---

<sup>35</sup> James D. Tracy, *Erasmus of the Low Countries* (University of California Press, 1997), 28. Elizabeth L. Eisenstein reports on Erasmus using the printers' complimentary copies of his books "to fool hundreds of patrons into thinking of themselves as dedicatees and (hopefully) providing hundreds of pensions in return"; *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 401.

<sup>36</sup> Desiderius Erasmus, "181 / To John Colet, Paris, [about December] 1504," in *The Correspondence of Erasmus, Letters 142 to 297, 1501 to 1514*, vol. 2, trans. R. A. B. Mynors and D. F. S. Thomson, annotator Wallace K. Ferguson, *The Collected Works of Erasmus* (University of Toronto Press, 1975), 88.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Brian Richardson, *Print Culture in Renaissance Italy: The Editor and the Vernacular Text, 1470 – 1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 28-30.

counterfeiters, for both his Greek works and italic type.<sup>39</sup> He was making the book a more readable, portable, and attractive object. The Aldine press reached its peak in 1502, the year it proudly released sixteen fine editions, only to have to close its doors in 1506 for want of sales, especially among the Greek titles.<sup>40</sup> It did reopen little more than a year later, under Erasmus' encouragement, operating out of Aldus' father-in-law's house in Venice.<sup>41</sup> The faltering of the Aldine press reflects the struggle of making a business of learned books, despite the privileges and patrons behind such work.

Aldus had made it his business to open his print shop to scholars such as Erasmus, which greatly helped him raise the quality of his Latin and Greek editions.<sup>42</sup> This was definitely the case with *Adages*: "Erasmus sat in one corner of the printing-room, writing the *Adagia* from memory," according to an account reconstructed by the University of Warwick historian Martin Lowry, "and handing the text sheet by sheet to the compositors, too busy, by his own account, to scratch his ears," while "in another corner sat Aldus, quietly reading over the proofs."<sup>43</sup> Any attempt at interruption of Aldus was met, according to Erasmus, by the printer shouting back, "I'm learning!" (*studio*).<sup>44</sup> Erasmus spent nine months helping in the production of the adages book, working in

---

<sup>39</sup> Henry George Fletcher, *New Aldine Studies: Documentary Essays on the Life and Works of Aldus Manutius* (San Francisco: Bernard M. Rosenthal, 1988), 137-156.

<sup>40</sup> M. J. C. Lowry, "The 'New Academy' of Aldus Manutius: A Renaissance Dream," *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library* 58, no. 2 (1976), 397, 399ff.

<sup>41</sup> Fletcher, *New Aldine Studies*, 9.

<sup>42</sup> Jennifer Summit: "Aldine books were printed without the marginal commentary or textual apparatus that made scholastic texts so visually offensive to humanist readers... Aldine books... would attract a new kind of reader, whose literacy was not circumscribed by the monastery or university"; *Memory's Library: Medieval Books in Early Modern England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 73.

<sup>43</sup> Martin Lowry, *The World of Aldus Manutius: Business and Scholarship in Renaissance Venice* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), 94. Peter G. Bietenholz: "Throughout his life not more than eight printers managed to form a relationship with him that was more than casual"; "Ethics and Early Printing: Erasmus' Rules for the Proper Conduct of Authors," *Humanities Association Review* 26 (1975), 182. See also S. Diane Shaw, "Study of the Collaboration Between Erasmus of Rotterdam and his Printer Johann Froben at Basl During the Years 1514 to 1527," *Erasmus of Rotterdam Society Yearbook* 6, no. 1 (1986), 35ff.

<sup>44</sup> Cited by Henry George Fletcher, *New Aldine Studies: Documentary Essays on the Life and Works of Aldus Manutius* (San Francisco: Bernard M Rosenthal, 1988), 12.

what was, by Lowry's account, "a now almost incredible mixture of the sweatshop, the boarding-house and the research institute."<sup>45</sup>

The result was a compilation of 3,260 adages, accompanied by Erasmus' well-documented commentaries, some amounting to essays. The book's success transformed Erasmus into an internationally recognized scholar among humanists.<sup>46</sup> The fine press work of Aldus, combined with Erasmus' accessible manner of writing, meant an expansion of the humanist audience, at least among that narrow company of affluent male and female readers of Latin.<sup>47</sup> Erasmus continued to add adages and extend his commentaries on them, seeing through a further twenty-seven editions until, in 1535, the collection exceeded four thousand adages and a thousand pages. And he continued to correct the text: "I publish in a hurry, and in the nature of things am sometimes obliged to refurbish the whole thing from top to toe," Erasmus had earlier written to John Botzheim in 1523.<sup>48</sup> The book was printed and marketed in various formats, most of them greatly abridged. It fell within the medieval tradition of *florilegia* or compilation, and proved among the most popular and profitable of Erasmus' titles.<sup>49</sup> It was designed to be read and used: "He equipped [the adages] with sophisticated information retrieval tools," notes

---

<sup>45</sup> Lowry, *Aldus Manutius*, 94.

<sup>46</sup> Margaret Mann Phillips calls *Adages* "a front-line work for the New Learning"; Desiderius Erasmus, *Erasmus on his Time: A Shortened Version of the 'Adages' of Erasmus*, ed. Margaret Mann Phillips (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), viii.

<sup>47</sup> Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine: "The accomplishments of the educated woman (the 'learned lady') is an end in itself, like fine needlepoint... It is not viewed as training for anything, perhaps not even virtue"; *From Humanism to the Humanities: Education and the Liberal Arts in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Europe* (London: Duckworth, 1986), 56. Jean-François Cottier points out how the paraphrases "were intended to instruct (*docere*) but equally to move and please (*movere* and *placere*)"; "Erasmus's Paraphrases: A 'New Kind of Commentary'?", in *The Unfolding of Words: Commentary in the Age of Erasmus*, ed. Judith Rice Henderson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 34.

<sup>48</sup> Desiderius Erasmus, "1341A / To John Botzheim, Basel 30 January 1523," in *The Correspondence of Erasmus, Letters 1252 to 1355, 1522 to 1523*, vol. 9, trans. R. A. B. Mynors, annotator James M. Estes, *The Collected Works of Erasmus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 294, 293.

<sup>49</sup> Brian Cummings, "Encyclopaedic Erasmus," *Renaissance Studies*, 28, no. 2 (2014), 192. Cummings: "At times, Adagia seems like a parody of academic study, a pedantic chain of references without limit. At others, it appears like the pure literary pleasure of a mind full of quotation"; *ibid.*, 196.

Anthony Grafton, Henry Putnam University Professor at Princeton University, who concludes, “from the first full edition, the adages were preceded by elaborate indexes that not only listed their topics in alphabetical order, but also rearranged them into categories to indicate the contexts in which to cite them.”<sup>50</sup> In the sixteenth century, it inspired the keeping of commonplace books in which people recorded passages worthy of citing or modeling in their own work.

Today, as the end of the print era is upon us, these original print-shop collaborations between printer and scholar take on a certain poignancy. What is called for, however, is not nostalgia, but some reflection on aspects of these earlier associations that should be preserved and further realized as learning moves into the digital era. An indication of what Erasmus and others valued about learning and printing is found in his treatment of two of his many collected adages – *between friends all is common* and *make haste slowly* – which I want to give some consideration to here.

Starting with the 1508 edition printed by Aldus, Erasmus opens the book with the adage: “Between friends all is common” (*amicorum communia omnia*).<sup>51</sup> Much has been made of this proposition by Kathy Eden, Mark Van Doren Professor of Humanities at Columbia University, who finds it a key to Erasmus’ “cultural program for cooperation,” as she put it.<sup>52</sup> In support, Eden cites the humanist’s friend and biographer, Beatus Rhenanus, who notes that when “he was about to publish *Adagia*, certain scholars said to him, ‘Erasmus, you are divulging our secrets.’ But he was desirous that these be

---

<sup>50</sup> Anthony Grafton, *The Culture of Correction in Renaissance Europe* (London: British Library, 2011), 158.

<sup>51</sup> Desiderius Erasmus, *Adages Ii1 to Iv100*, trans. Margaret Mann Phillips, *Collected Works of Erasmus*, vol. 31 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 29. This adage had been number 96 in the original edition of 1500.

<sup>52</sup> Kathy Eden, *Friends Hold All Things in Common: Tradition, Intellectual Property and the Adages of Erasmus* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 10. I remain indebted to Eden for seeing so clearly the intellectual property implications of the adages, especially the two that I focus on in this section.

accessible to all so that they may attain complete scholarship.”<sup>53</sup> And while this adage may seem to root this openness in a closed circle “between friends,” Erasmus’ commentary makes it clear, as do his letters and other books, that he sees learning itself as common to all, extending beyond the bounds of friendship.

“There is nothing more wholesome or more generally accepted than this proverb,” Erasmus writes in his commentary on “between friends all is common.” He supports this by citing those who have used it, noting the differences in their use: Socrates “deduced” from it that “all things belong to all good men, just as they do to the gods”; Martial “pokes fun” at others’ hypocritical use of it; Diogenes Laertius and Timaeus both “report” on its origins in Pythagoras, as does Aulus Gellius, who “in his *Attic Nights*, book 1 chapter 9, bears witness that not only was Pythagoras the author of this saying, but he also instituted a sharing of life and property in this way, the very thing Christ wants to happen among Christians.”<sup>54</sup> In tying together the pre-Socratic Pythagoras with Christ, Erasmus bridges humanism’s potential classicism-Christian gap with this common interest in a communal life.

Erasmus also takes care over how these writers differ in their sense of “possession and legal ownership.”<sup>55</sup> In particular, he sets Plato apart from Aristotle, but not by very much: “In the *Laws*, book 5,” Erasmus writes, “Plato is trying to show how the happiest

---

<sup>53</sup> Beatus Rheanus, “The Life of Erasmus,” in Desiderius Erasmus, *Christian Humanism and the Reformation: Selected Writings of Erasmus*, ed. John C. Olin, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Fordham University Press, 1987), 60.

<sup>54</sup> Erasmus, *Adages*, 29-30. The *Adages*’ editor, William Watson Barker, corrects in the notes the misattribution to Socrates which should have been to Diogenes; *ibid.*, 29. Erasmus also states: “It is extraordinary that Christians dislike this common ownership of Plato’s, how in fact they cast stones at it, although nothing was ever said by a pagan philosopher which comes closer to the mind of Christ”; *ibid.*, 30.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 4, 30.



condition of a society consists in the community of all possessions.”<sup>56</sup> He then turns to Aristotle, who “in book 2 of the *Politics* moderates the opinion of Plato by saying that possession and legal ownership should be vested in certain definite persons, but otherwise all should be in common according to the proverb, for the sake of convenience, virtuous living and social harmony.”<sup>57</sup> Ownership is what ensures, as Aristotle has it, responsible care and use.

Yet in a section of the *Politics* that Erasmus does not cite, the philosopher makes a claim for individual ownership that scholarship appears to contradict: “The greater the number of owners, the less respect for common property.”<sup>58</sup> As the number of humanists, and scholars in general, grows, their work on improving the commons, edition by translation, compilation by commentary, increases the respect (and utility) of the whole, as does their exposing misattributions and plagiarism, as well as the harshly critical reviews of those who attempt to exploit the commons through poor editions (with more below). The *tragedy of the commons*, referring to the temptation of herders to irresponsibly over-graze the village green with extra sheep, takes a different turn with learning.<sup>59</sup> Still, if Erasmus more fully aligns himself and Christ with Plato in his commentary on the adage, he finds in Aristotle a certain flexibility around what is private

---

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 29. Grafton attributes Erasmus’ sense of the “proper way to read” (as reflected in *Adages*: “read and find the deep and rich sense of the simple”) to Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, who delivered the “Oration on the Dignity of Man” in 1486, called by some the Renaissance Manifesto; *Commerce with the Classics: Ancient Books and Renaissance Readers* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 110.

<sup>57</sup> Erasmus, *Adages*, 30.

<sup>58</sup> Aristotle, *The Politics*, trans. T. A. Sinclair and Trevor J. Saunders (London: Penguin, 1981), 2.3 108. Jean Bodin comes back to this theme in 1558, with how “they deceive themselves who think that persons and property possessed in common will be much cared for,” as “those things which are public property are habitually neglected”; *Six Books of the Commonwealth*, trans. M. J. Tooley (Oxford: Blackwell, 1955), 9. Bodin suggests the need for “some private advantage from looking after” the common, which might be taken to be the scholar’s building of a reputation through such care; *ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> The oft-cited contemporary statement to this effect is found in Garrett Hardin, “The Tragedy of the Commons,” *Science* 162, no. 3859 (1968); but compare Elinor Ostrom, “Revisiting the Commons: Local Lessons, Global Challenges” in *Science* 284, no. 5412 (1999).

and common, which, I go on to show, proves closer to the pattern of Erasmus' own life as a scholar in the book business.

Erasmus added the other adage that I consider in this chapter – “make haste slowly” (*festina lente*) – to the 1508 edition, identifying it as a paradoxical proverb. “It carries with it a pretty riddle,” he writes, “particularly as it consists of contradictory terms.”<sup>60</sup> In his extended commentary on this adage, he discusses Aldus' printer's mark of a dolphin entwining an anchor, which the press had been using since 1501, borrowing image (and adage) from an old Roman coin.<sup>61</sup> Nothing is more nimble than the dolphin, Erasmus notes, and yet such haste needs to be anchored in accurate sources, careful correction, and thoughtful commentary. The symbol of the dolphin-and-anchor has been, he notes, “sent out beyond the bounds of Christendom [in] all kinds of books in both languages, recognized, owned and praised by all to whom liberal studies are holy.”<sup>62</sup>

While Erasmus praises this divine printing program for increasing access to learning, the principle is not, he observes, universally accepted among the learned: “How many good MSS are hidden away, either pushed out of sight by carelessness, or kept secret owing to the ambition of some people who have only one thing at heart – to seem to have the monopoly on learning?”<sup>63</sup> This other tendency of actively fostering a secretive regard for the cultivation of knowledge – closely associated with alchemy and the esoteric arts, as well as the craft guilds – was actively opposed in the early modern era by Erasmus, among others. This celebrated public quality of learning served both the

---

<sup>60</sup> Phillips, *Erasmus on his Times*, 3.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 9, 15. Aldus first published the motto “Festina lente” in a dedication to *Astronomici veteres* in 1499, and with a variation on the adage and a prototype of the dolphin and anchor later that year in *Hypnerotomachia Poliphilia*; Fletcher, *New Aldine Studies*, 43-44. Fletcher holds that Aldus' first prominent use of the mark was in a 1503 warning directed against Lyonese counterfeiters of his publications; *ibid.*, 51-52.

<sup>62</sup> Phillips, *Erasmus on his Times*, 15.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 9-10.

epistemological principles of science and the interests of the printing trade, which found a great market in publishing the “book of secrets” that shared the recipes, methods, and techniques of legitimate sciences and trades, as well as questionable arts.<sup>64</sup>

In his commentary on this adage, Erasmus praises Aldus as “the man who sets fallen learning on its feet (and this is almost more difficult than to originate it in the first place) is building up a sacred and immortal thing, and serving not one province alone but all peoples and all generations.”<sup>65</sup> The scholarly editor works “slowly” among the ruins, restoring the coherence and integrity of ancient texts that otherwise represent the tragedy of the (learning) commons, not from overgrazing but from neglect. Erasmus celebrates the reach of the Aldines by contrasting print with the legendary library of Alexandria, which had its origins in the third century BCE. He refers to “the greatest glory of Ptolemy,” without naming the library directly, which “was between the narrow walls of its own house.”<sup>66</sup> By striking contrast, “Aldus is building up a library which has no other limits than the world itself.”<sup>67</sup> The ideal of universal access is something of a constant within the commonwealth of learning, and no less so today, within the commonwealth and among related ventures as varied as Google and Wikipedia.<sup>68</sup>

Having praised Aldus, he then begins to “air his grievance” against the “rascally printers,” who are taking advantage of Aldus’ good name – in what should not seem the

---

<sup>64</sup> William Eamon, *Science and the Secrets of Nature: Books of Secrets in Medieval and Early Modern Culture*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 250-52. Pamela O. Long traces the continuing legacy of esoteric knowledge within Neoplatonism, as well as the mechanical arts, during the age of print, pointing out that “print was entirely neutral in one sense: it widely disseminated both the values of secrecy and the values of openness”; *Openness, Secrecy, Authorship: Technical Arts and the Culture of Knowledge from Antiquity to the Renaissance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 246.

<sup>65</sup> Phillips, *Erasmus on his Times*, 10.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> “Google’s mission is to organize the world’s information and make it universally accessible and useful”; About, Google Company, online. Robert Darnton states that “the World Wide Web can accommodate a worldwide library” when describing the scope of the Digital Public Library of America; “A World Digital Library Is Coming True!” *New York Review of Books* 61, no. 9 (2014), 11.

least bit strange to our ears and emails – to set up shop in Venice and offer “shamelessly incorrect” Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian, “to say nothing of the Holy Scriptures.”<sup>69</sup> In exposing the tragedy of commerce, he condemns those printers “who would rather let a good book get choked up with six thousand mistakes than spend a few coins on paying someone to supervise the proof-reading.”<sup>70</sup> Erasmus even speculates about the need for some form of legal recourse to protect the quality of learning: “And if a man imposes books like these on so many thousand readers, he is free to enjoy his profits or rather his robbery?”<sup>71</sup> He judges that “here the laws are nodding”; after all, the law was ready to prevent “selling cloth dyed in Britain as cloth dyed in Venice.”<sup>72</sup> He also decries “these swarms of new books,” for he judges “the very multitude of them is harmful to scholarship” and “instrumental in provoking profiteering wars between us.”<sup>73</sup> By way of “remedy,” Erasmus asks that princes and magistrates “expel (as far as possible) those [prolific] idlers,” while those “who strive to achieve what is in the public interest but have not the means, are helped by grants from the princes, or from the Bishops and abbots, or from public funds.”<sup>74</sup> He holds out little hope of support in this regard from

---

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 10-11.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 11. Erasmus compares these printers to “the thief, the impostor and the pimp” who set out “to rob them [authors] in the daylight of their good fame,” while insisting that it is “less vicious to use one’s own body or other people’s for gain than to attack the life of another, and what is dearer than life his reputation”; *ibid.*, 13.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. 11.

<sup>72</sup> Phillips, *Erasmus on his Times*, 11. Erasmus betrays much prejudice in this rant against how “people employed for such a sacred trust tended to be obscure and inexperienced monks, nay, even women, employed without selection”; *ibid.* This was not his only outburst against women, as he complains in a letter about a share of Froben’s business being inherited by the daughters of a former partner: “I do not like that petticoat government in your household. How can a dancer of hornpipes pull his weight in the boat?”; Desiderius Erasmus, “885 / To Johann Froben, Louvain 22 October [1518],” in *The Correspondence of Erasmus, Letters, 842 to 992, 1518 to 1519*, vol. 6, trans. R.A.B. Mynors and D.F.S. Thomson, annotator Peter G. Bietenholz, *The Collected Works of Erasmus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 158.

<sup>73</sup> Phillips, *Erasmus on his Times*, 11, 13.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 13.

“the merchant class, who have mostly dedicated themselves to the worship of Mammon.”<sup>75</sup>

What sets Erasmus apart from the others that I discuss in this book is the degree to which he lived and thrived in this new zone, where learning worked side-by-side with commerce “in the public interest.” He is thought to have been the first writer to make a living by the book trade, and there may have been a million copies of his books printed during his lifetime.<sup>76</sup> His success was facilitated by the new distribution channels established for printed books, led by the twice-yearly Frankfurt Book Fair that began around 1475 and proved a major point of sales and access for scholarly books.<sup>77</sup> Yet his work with printers also involved promoting the scholarship of others, such as Lorenzo Valla’s innovative work on the use of evidence in philology and Thomas More’s *Utopia*.<sup>78</sup> But of course, in the contentiousness of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, Erasmus’ satirical pen was hardly going to please everyone. His work was condemned by the masters of the University of Paris in his own lifetime and more than one of his titles was placed on the Index of prohibited books by Pope Paul IV a couple of decades after his death.<sup>79</sup>

---

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. Anthony J. P. Kenney: “The thirteenth and fourteenth centuries saw the secularization of the copying of texts, with the decline of the monastic scriptorium and the rise of the professional scribe; and of course the advent of what we may call the scholar”; “The Character of Humanist Philology,” in *Classical Influences on European Culture A.D. 500-1500*, ed. R. R. Bolgar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 122. For the *pecia* system used in medieval universities to distribute and speed up copying, see Robert Steele, “The Pecia,” *Library* 4, no. 2 (1930).

<sup>76</sup> Pettegree, *Book in the Renaissance* 82, 85.

<sup>77</sup> Pettegree: “The business model of scholarly books depended on the publishers being able to dispose of a large proportion at the first fair following publication”; *ibid.*, 80-81.

<sup>78</sup> In 1508, Erasmus saw to the first printing of Lorenzo Valla’s *Novum Testamentum annotationes*, completed in 1444, which formed a model for his own translation of the New Testament; he saw to the publication of *Utopia* and *Epigrammata* by his friend Thomas More (through Froben and other printers).

<sup>79</sup> In 1526 the Sorbonne’s theology faculty censured his *Colloquies*, pronouncing its satiric dialogues heretical in ninety-six passages and its author a pagan; Craig R. Thompson, “Introduction,” in Erasmus, *Ten Colloquies* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1957), xxvi-xxvii. See also Hilmar B. Pabel: “The Index of Pope Paul IV (1559) singled out Erasmus for censure more than any other heterodox author. It banned all his

In his commentary on “make haste slowly,” Erasmus also considers how the economy of learning is distinguished by an “openness of mind... among the Italians, at any rate in the matter of literature.” He bases this on his work with *Adages* at the Aldine press, where he was struck by the generosity of the scholarly community: “When I, a Dutchman, was supervising the publication of my book of proverbs in Italy, every one of the scholars who were there offered me, without being asked, copies of authors which had never been printed.”<sup>80</sup> His emphasis is on how it should be, when learning is held in common, even among strangers. Continuing on this theme, Erasmus offers the contrasting story of a “northern friend of mine” who refused to share when Erasmus asked to borrow a book with a collection of proverbs inscribed in the margins.<sup>81</sup> The friend did not honor the request, reluctantly explaining, “as if it were dragged out of him by torture,” how “up to now learned men had enjoyed the admiration of the public for possessing such things as these, and now they were becoming public property.”<sup>82</sup>

It was Erasmus’ mission to make this learning among scholars into public properties, aided by the circulation that print could achieve. It was Aldus’ art and craft to collaborate with such scholars and printers to create a wider public for humanist learning by making the text more readable and thus more accessible. The learning that emerged from scholar and printer was to be shared through the farthest reaching means of the day. Thus, this early, close association between the trades of learning and printing. Erasmus

---

writings, explicitly identifying a series of genres, including annotations and *scholia*, whether or not his publications opposed religion or had anything to do with religion”; “Sixteenth-Century Catholic Criticism of Erasmus’ Edition of St Jerome,” *Reformation and Renaissance Review* 6, no. 2 (2004), 245. But then Erasmus had a (self-interested) hand in censorship when he recommended to Basle’s town council in 1524 and 1525 that those handling anonymously published books face legal penalties; Shaw, “Collaboration Between Erasmus and Froben,” 120.

<sup>80</sup> Phillips, *Erasmus on his Times*, 14.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 15.

and Aldus were intent on pushing this relatively new realm of print to better serve forms of learning, in which all is common (if not common to all) and in which making haste slowly, was the way to prepare and distribute such learning. After observing that Aldus achieved warranted fame and riches (while omitting mention of Aldine's 1506 bankruptcy), Erasmus brings to an end his homage to printing within his commentary on "make haste slowly." He transitions with "but enough of digressions," and returns "to the discussion of the proverb."<sup>83</sup> At some level, the desire shared by Erasmus and Aldus "to achieve what is in the public interest" through their books is no digression at all but every part the equal of their proverbial concern to set "fallen learning on its feet." It was not to be Erasmus' final word on the value of printing to learning.

In 1527, Erasmus composed a eulogy for his friend and business partner, the recently departed printer, Johann Froben of Basle, Switzerland. He had formed a close working and personal relationship with Froben over the previous thirteen years. Froben had first come to Erasmus' attention when the printer produced a handsome but pirated edition of *Adages* in 1513, replete with Froben's own emendations improving the text and a lovely woodcut border that Froben had added to the title page. There could be no better means of catching the eye of a man who lived to correct his own and others' work.

Erasmus was soon making his way along the Rhine to Froben's Swiss printing shop. This trip was not about challenging the pirate-printer. Rather, the prince of humanism sought an alliance with the prince of printing. Erasmus came to Basle to see the printing of Christian and humanist works through Froben's press. This again meant moving into the printing shop, working each day with the printer and his employees, as they both supervised the printing of the works that Erasmus had written, edited and

---

<sup>83</sup> Phillips, *Erasmus on his Times*, 15.

otherwise prepared.<sup>84</sup> Together they established Froben's print shop – well-placed in Basle, with its university and relatively central European location – as a center of Christian humanist scholarship during the early decades of the sixteenth century. In his tribute to Froben, Erasmus describes how he was well served by a man who put learning first:

I loved him more for the sake of liberal studies, for the enhancement and progress of which he seemed called by divine destiny, than for his predilection for me or for his blameless life.... He seemed born to give honor, distinction, and advancement to [literary studies] and spared no toil, no vigils, thinking it reward enough if a good author could be put into men's hands in a fitting manner.... Whenever he showed me and other good friends the first pages of some great author, how filled with joy he was... you would say that he... expected no other recompense.<sup>85</sup>

As Erasmus expressed in another of his published letters, he was delighted by this opportunity to work in such a superb printing shop: "I seem to myself to be living in some delightful precinct of the Muses, to say nothing of so many good scholars, and scholars of no ordinary kind. They all know Latin, they all know Greek, most of them

---

<sup>84</sup> Over the course of his life, Erasmus edited, translated, and saw into publication, works by Cicero, Euripides, Galen, Lucian, Pliny, Plutarch, Seneca, and Suetonius, as well as the church fathers, Ambrose, Arnobius, Athanasius, Basil, Chrysostom, Cyprian, Jerome, Hilary, Irenaeus, Origen, and Prudentius; Shaw, "Collaboration Between Erasmus and Froben," 93ff, 103.

<sup>85</sup> Desiderius Erasmus, "1900 / To Jan of Heemstede, [Basel, ? November 1527]" in *The Correspondence of Erasmus, Letters 1802 to 1925, March-December 1527*, vol. 13, trans. Charles Fantazzi, annotator James K. Farge, *The Collected Works of Erasmus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 421-23. For the epitaph in Greek (in addition to Latin and Hebrew), Erasmus wrote: "So here the printer Johann Froben sleeps. / To no one letters owes a greater debt. / Mourn not his death: his deathless soul lives on. / His fame lies in the legacy of books"; *ibid.*, 426.



know Hebrew too; one is an expert historian, another an experienced theologian; one is skilled in mathematics, one a keen antiquary, another a jurist.”<sup>86</sup> He also applauds “how well they get on together! You would say that they had only one soul.”<sup>87</sup> He worked hard among them in the printing workshop, and in the miraculous year 1516 was able to see two of his most significant works of scholarly editing printed: The New Testament and the works of St. Jerome.

The New Testament, published as *Novum instrumentum*, consisted of a much revised and annotated updating of Jerome’s Vulgate, the late fourth-century Latin edition of the New Testament. This new instrument was the first print edition published with Greek and Latin side by side, supported by annotations both philological and theological: “I have revised the whole of the New Testament from a collation of Greek manuscripts and ancient manuscripts,” Erasmus writes in a letter to his friend and fellow monk, Servatius Roger, prior to the work’s publication, “and have annotated over a thousand places with some benefit to theologians.”<sup>88</sup> As a master philologist – as Froben identified him as *Erasmus Rotterdamus, philologis omnibus* in the front matter of some books – he consulted a variety of Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, on which he based his revisions and corrections.<sup>89</sup> While he may have overlooked older available editions of the Greek text (thereby breaking a cardinal philological rule), others raised the more forceful

---

<sup>86</sup> Desiderius Erasmus, “391A / To John Witz, Basel, [second half of February 1516]” in *The Correspondence of Erasmus, Letters 298 to 445, 1514 to 1516*, vol. 3, trans. R. A. B. Mynors and D. F. S. Thomson, annotator James K. McConica, *The Collected Works of Erasmus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), 243-44.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 244. Such humanist-printer partnerships were not uncommon, with Grafton pointing out how the sixteenth-century Italian humanist Piero Vettori and French scholar-printer Henri Estienne “working together, solved the basic editorial problems in a way that still commands assent”; “Renaissance Readers and Ancient Texts: Comments on Some Commentaries,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 38, no. 4 (1985): 622.

<sup>88</sup> Erasmus, “296 / To Servatius Rogerus, Hammes castle, 8 July 1514,” in *Correspondence*, vol. 2, 300.

<sup>89</sup> Mark Vessey: “Erasmus’ achievements [in collating the manuscripts] are nowadays reckoned fairly modest”; “Erasmus’ Jerome: The Publishing of a Christian Author,” *Erasmus of Rotterdam Society Yearbook* 14 (1994), 79.

criticism of his presumption in correcting the Bible. Even before it was printed, the humanist theologian, Maarten van Dorp, university rector of Louvain, tried to dissuade him from it. “You think it wrong,” Erasmus paraphrased Dorp’s critique in writing back to him in 1515, “to weaken in any way the hold of something accepted by the agreement of so many centuries and so many synods.”<sup>90</sup>

Erasmus stood by the evidence that he had found of the corruption, errors, and fabrication that had crept into the New Testament since Jerome’s own imperfect rendering: “Which man encourages falsehood more, he who corrects and restores these passages, or he who would rather see an error added than removed?”<sup>91</sup> Even when the author was thought to be God, Erasmus was demonstrating the right and obligation to approach the text with an eye to restoring what he was treating as the original intellectual property. He cast himself as a judge facing conflicting and untrustworthy claimants: “Just as it sometimes happens that an experienced and attentive judge pieces together what really took place from the statements of many witnesses, none of whom is telling the truth, so I conjectured the true reading on the basis of their differing mistakes.”<sup>92</sup>

The most controversial of Erasmus’ New Testament corrections is known as the *Comma Johanne*. It involves a short passage (hence *comma*) in 1 John 5:7-8 which had stood for some time as the biblical basis for a belief in the Trinity.<sup>93</sup> Finding this passage

---

<sup>90</sup> Erasmus, “337 / To Maarten van Dorp, Antwerp [end of May] 1515,” in *Correspondence*, vol. 3, 133.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

<sup>92</sup> Erasmus, “325 / To Thomas Ruthall, Basel, 7 March 1515,” in *Correspondence*, vol. 3, 65. See Seth Lerer on Erasmus and his fellow-humanists in this regard: “textual correction is a moral and, to some degree, a legal action”; *Error and the Academic Self: The Scholarly Imagination, Medieval to Modern* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 39. He cites Budé writing to Erasmus that “it is normal to let a man off these if he owns up” to the errors he made in the text, as he seeks “remittance, forgiveness in the court of Erasmian philological law”; *ibid.*, 39, 40.

<sup>93</sup> 1 John 5:7-8: “For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the

missing from the Greek manuscripts, Erasmus concluded that the two verses were a later Latin interpolation, and did not include them in his 1516 edition of the New Testament. Pulling the rug out from under the Trinity (within a year or so of Martin Luther posting his ninety-five theses on the church door at Wittenberg) was judged heretical by the church. Ever the scholar, Erasmus allowed that he would reinsert the passage should it be found in a Greek manuscript that he had overlooked, and sure enough, such a Greek copy was soon brought to his attention, leading him to include the verses in the third edition published in 1522, along with a note on his reasonable doubts about this newfound source.<sup>94</sup>

The second significant Erasmus-Froben publication of 1516 was both a complement to his upgrade of Jerome's Vulgate translation, and a considerable scholarly achievement on its own: A nine-volume edition of Saint Jerome's works (*Opera Hieronymi*). "I had worked myself to death that Jerome might live again," Erasmus quipped in a letter to Cardinal Raffaele Riario in 1515.<sup>95</sup> While others in Froben's shop contributed to this task, he took on the editing of Jerome's letters in four volumes, as well as his *spuria* (works misattributed to Jerome), "but none the less worth reading," as he told another correspondent.<sup>96</sup> The first volume opens with a dedicatory letter to Erasmus' patron, William Warham, Archbishop of Canterbury and Chancellor of the University of

---

blood: and these three agree in one." See Levine, "Problem of the Johannine Comma," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 58, no. 4 (1997), 581 ff.

<sup>94</sup> Erasmus had written to Colet many years before, in 1504, that "it is one thing to guess, another to judge; one thing to trust your own eyes, and another again to trust those of others"; Erasmus, "To John Colet, 1504," 88-89. Others have noted the limits of this empiricism, as Erasmus, on finding only one Greek manuscript with Revelations and that one missing the final verses, he translated the Latin verses into Greek to include in his bilingual edition of the New Testament; Levine, "Johannine Comma," 580.

<sup>95</sup> Erasmus, "To Raffaele Riario, Cardinal of San Giorgio" in *Correspondence*, vol. 3, 90.

<sup>96</sup> Erasmus, "308 / To Gregory Reisch, [Basel, September 1514]," in *ibid.*, 37. Vessey: "Although much early Christian literature had been lost, too, authors of the stature of Jerome or Augustine were more liable to damage by over-cultivation than by neglect"; "Erasmus' Jerome," 79.

Oxford.<sup>97</sup> In it, Erasmus sets out what amounts to an early fifteenth-century intellectual property manifesto on behalf of learning. He seeks to explain why this work by Jerome is actually his to dedicate to Warham, as he has “borrowed from Jerome the wherewithal to repay you [Warham].”<sup>98</sup> It is as if Erasmus raised wheat on Jerome’s abandoned field to repay Warham’s investment in the land. But then Erasmus takes such care of the land in the process that it benefits the many others who will turn to it in the future.

In this, Erasmus demonstrates the scholar’s right and responsibility to use and improve upon other’s work. This was Jerome’s own intellectual property principle for scholarly editing: “In this line of business,” Erasmus writes, “Jerome himself has laid down a principle for me in his preface to the books of Kings, repeatedly calling that work his, because anything we have made our own by correcting, reading, constant devotion, we can fairly claim is ours.”<sup>99</sup> Erasmus claims as much with Jerome’s texts: “On this principle why should not I myself claim a proprietary right in the works of Jerome?”<sup>100</sup> Erasmus offers a further justification: “For centuries they [Jerome’s letters] had been treated as abandoned goods; I entered upon them as something ownerless, and by incalculable efforts reclaimed them for all devotees of the true theology.”<sup>101</sup> Erasmus is

---

<sup>97</sup> M. Heather Lewis reports that when Erasmus was about to meet Warham in 1506, he quickly dedicated his translation of Euripides’ *Hecuba* to the Archbishop (later putting it into print) for which Warham presented him a “handsome present” on the spot; cited in “William Warham, Patron of Erasmus,” PhD diss., McGill University, 1997, 35. Warham offered Erasmus a goodly sum to reside in England, Lewis explains, likely influencing his decision to return, which was duly rewarded; although Erasmus did not stay, he did finally receive a benefice from Warham, as Rector of Aldington in Kent, which he resigned within the year, in exchange for a lifetime pension from his benefactor; *ibid.*, 54-56, 59-60.

<sup>98</sup> Erasmus, “396 / To William Warham, Basel, 1 April 1516,” in *Correspondence*, vol. 3, 265.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.* Eden on this passages: “In putting rhetorical questions to Warham [on whether it is ‘something borrowed rather than my own’] in such boldly legal terms, Erasmus predicts the collision between the two kinds of profit: one is the kind heirs of an intellectual tradition like the one stored in the *Adages* have expected for centuries from their investment in the works of the past; the other is the kind that comes increasingly to be expected of purveyors of literary property”; *Friends Hold All Things*, 173.

<sup>100</sup> Erasmus, “396 / To William Warham, Basel, 1 April 1516,” in *Correspondence*, vol. 3, 265.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.* Erasmus writes further on his efforts: “I believe that the writing of his books cost Jerome less effort than I spent in the restoring of them”; “396 / To William Warham, Basel, 1 April 1516,” in *Correspondence*,

offering what is, in effect, a natural law of intellectual property rights. He sees that the editorial labor invested in a work, otherwise held in common but abandoned, earns that editor a property in the work and a credit for the service to the commons. It is rightly identified as Erasmus' edition of Jerome and sold as such. Erasmus does not infringe. Rather, he honors Jerome's rights as author.<sup>102</sup>

In light of his own investment in this edition of Jerome, Froben took the additional step of purchasing, at no small expense, Privileges (*Privilegia*) from the pope and the Holy Roman Emperor that called on their authority to ward off pirated editions.<sup>103</sup> In Erasmus' 1516 edition of Jerome, the terms of the Privileges appear on the back of the title page, much as the copyright notice does today, of the first volume. At the bottom of the page was Froben printer's mark, made up of two snakes entwining Hermes' staff, with a dove on top, and the catchy corporate identification "Jo. Fro." divided on either side of the staff (and later "Fro. Ben."). The page proclaims that these privileges had been granted by both Pope Leo X and Maximilian I, Holy Roman Emperor, forbidding others from printing this work for a period of five years.

---

vol. 3, 262. In another letter on Jerome, he writes, "I have slain with daggers the spurious or interpolated passages, while I have elucidated the obscure parts in my notes"; "296 / To Servatius Rogerus," 300.

<sup>102</sup> Earlier, in this editorial process in 1514, Erasmus wrote to the Carthusian monk Gregory Reisch, to explain that he was doing this because, "in my judgment Jerome is almost the only author who deserves to be universally read by everybody, at least among the Theologians who wrote in Latin"; Erasmus, "To Gregory Reisch, [Basel, September 1514]," in *Correspondence*, vol. 3, 37. The property question is further complicated by Erasmus' intense identification with Jerome as the Christian author he seeks to be, as if Erasmus were *possessed* by Jerome's authorship, which is explored by Lisa Jardine: "The merging of Erasmus with Jerome is achieved so brilliantly, with such consummate cultural skill, that it is little wonder that that image has endured so convincingly down to the present day"; *Erasmus, Man of Letters: The Construction of Charisma in Print* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 5.

<sup>103</sup> Elizabeth Armstrong reports that Froben's agent in Rome, Michael Hummelberg, reported to the printer that originally the price was thirty gold pieces (which begs comparison with Judas' thirty pieces of silver) but that, by working through intermediaries he brought the price down six ducats or gold pieces, with how many bribes we do not know; *Before Copyright: The Book-Privilege System 1498-1526* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 13. Maximilian's privilege was expensive and in the area of twenty gold pieces; *ibid.*, 15. The Privileges page in Jerome is online at the University of Rochester Department of Rare Books, Special Collections and Preservation under the title, *St. Jerome Omnium Operum*.

This was an early form of intellectual property protection of the sort that Erasmus alluded to in reference to Venetian dyed cloth, cited above.<sup>104</sup> In 1469, the Republic of Venice granted perhaps the first printing privilege, at the request of Johannes de Speyer, a printer from Mainz. It was a sweeping five-year monopoly by which he alone had the right to print in the city. The state councilors cited in their proclamation that Speyer's books had already been published "to universal acclaim" and "in the largest type and with the most beautiful letter-forms"; the councilors were pleased that he "chose our city over all the others" to establish this new engine of humanist learning.<sup>105</sup> Speyer died the following year, unfortunately, and the Venetian councilors were wise enough never again to grant such a far-reaching trade monopoly. Subsequent privileges were restricted to certain titles, works, typefaces, and printing techniques, such as those used for musical scores.<sup>106</sup> The trade in printed books had begun amid the granting of privileges and protections.

Of course, Froben's purchased privileges did not prevent others from pirating parts of Jerome's works. Bruno Amerbach, another editor on the Jerome edition, wrote to Erasmus about how he had succeeded in taking the printer Eucharius Cerviconus of Cologne to court in Frankfurt "for neglecting and indeed despising privileges from the highest authorities" by printing some Jerome letters.<sup>107</sup> Amerbach went on to warn Erasmus that "Jean Petit the Paris printer is a new menace; he threatens to counterfeit the

---

<sup>104</sup> Angela Nuovo, *The Book Trade in the Italian Renaissance*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 196-199.

<sup>105</sup> "Johannes of Speyer's Printing Monopoly, Venice (1469)," *Primary Sources on Copyright* (1450-1900), eds. L. Bently and M. Kretschmer, [www.copyrighthistory.org](http://www.copyrighthistory.org).

<sup>106</sup> Nuovo, *Book Trade*, 202.

<sup>107</sup> Erasmus, "802 / From Bruno Amerbach, Frankfurt, [second half of March 1518]" in *Correspondence of Erasmus: Letters 594-841, 1517-1518*, ed. P. G. Bietenholz, vol. 5, *The Collected Works of Erasmus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), 352.

whole work. His efforts can be suppressed by one note from you.”<sup>108</sup> Erasmus wrote to Josse Bade in Paris to speak to Petit, warning that if he proceeded to “print Jerome’s works, despising the papal privilege and flouting, what is worse, the canons of decent behavior,” then “he will bring harm on himself” with “his plans to damage other people,” although to what effect, we do not know.<sup>109</sup>

Seven years later in 1523, Erasmus successfully petitioned the Holy Roman Emperor for a two-year privilege covering all of Froben’s publications, with his agent reporting back that it had been granted “gratis and without payment, which is very rare with us.”<sup>110</sup> Erasmus’s program of support for learned publishing also included promoting book sales. He can be found gently browbeating John Botzheim, in a 1523 letter cited earlier, into buying another edition of *Adages*, after the man complained that he was, in Erasmus’ words, “forced to buy the same book twice.” Erasmus counters that, “if the first edition gave something of value, worth a moderate sum, and the second does the same, you have gained twice.”<sup>111</sup>

Erasmus was never far from the business of books, even if he regarded it as a service of learning. He expressed his praise for those printers who “have a natural love of good literature and are happy to consider these studies of ours and not your own coffers,” as he put it in a preface to the printer Matthias Schöler’s 1514 edition of his rhetoric textbook, *Copia: Foundations of the Abundant Style (De duplici copia verborum ac rerum)*.<sup>112</sup> As we saw earlier, he called on the commonwealth of learning to help him

---

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Erasmus, “815 / To Josse Bade, Louvain, 17 April [1518]” in *Correspondence*, vol. 5, 388.

<sup>110</sup> Cited by Armstrong, *Before Copyright*, 15. Shaw reports the price of privileges was more typically twenty gold pieces, and that it was granted free out of respect for Erasmus and Froben; “Collaboration Between Erasmus and Froben,” 115.

<sup>111</sup> Phillips, *Erasmus on his Times*, xvii.

<sup>112</sup> Erasmus, “311 / To Matthias Schöler, Basel, 15 October 1514,” in *Correspondence*, vol. 3, 43.

locate the needed sources for his publishing ventures: “In the sacred name of literature, dear Latimer, kindest of men, I beg you for help with the New Testament,” as he put it in not an entirely mocking manner.<sup>113</sup> And he promised others that borrowed manuscripts “shall be returned to you intact and spotless.”<sup>114</sup>

To those who complained that he was enriching himself through publishing, he protested that he accepted no more than “one third” of what Froben offered him, even as he did much to promote the idea among scholars that their learning was, as if among friends, common to all.<sup>115</sup> He wrote in *Adages* of how “the value of learning to the public is more important to me than the matter of my own reputation.”<sup>116</sup> He repaid the favors and friendships by doing much to help other scholars to publish with Froben. He supported the implementation of a liberal arts curriculum in the schools and universities by equipping teachers with a panoply of humanist textbooks, including his *Copia*, and translations of the classics, bolstering the humanist agenda against the reigning scholastic hegemony in the universities.<sup>117</sup> *Learning before earning* might have been Erasmus’ proverbial motto, except that he did not invent his own adages, but drew them from the common stock.

---

<sup>113</sup> Erasmus, “417 / To William Latimer, [Saint Omer], 5 June [1516],” *ibid.*, 299.

<sup>114</sup> Erasmus, “300 / To Johann Reuchlin, [Basel, August 1514],” *ibid.*, 8.

<sup>115</sup> When accused of being in it for the money, Erasmus wrote in a letter in 1530/31 that, “I received something from Froben... but I scarcely took one third of the things he offered; and it seems to you that Erasmus is insatiable for money”; cited by Shaw, *Collaboration between Erasmus and Froben*, 72. When he died in 1536, Erasmus left “a large number of gold vessels and ornaments given him by distinguished persons, as well as a good outfit of furniture, clothes and household utensils,” according to biographer Preserved Smith, attesting to how patrons, whom he names in his will, were the source of wealth rather than the printings of his books: “He got nothing for most of them,” Smith surmises; *Erasmus: A Study of his Life, Ideals, and Place in History* (New York: Dover, 1923), 262, 258.

<sup>116</sup> Erasmus, *Adages*, 35.

<sup>117</sup> Grafton and Jardine commend “the remarkable success of Erasmus’ program of education in the liberal arts in educational institutions, from the *gymnasia* and the grammar school to the Royal Colleges at Oxford and Cambridge”; *From Humanism*, 140. They then cite a sixteenth-century list of a student’s thirty-odd books, of which ten are by Erasmus and four likely edited by him; *ibid.*, 140-141.



In his final years, and following the scholarly tradition of Augustine's *Retractationum* and Bede's *Retraction*, Erasmus prepared *corrigenda*, if more closely aligned with his editorial concerns than his theological position. It consisted of twenty-six folio pages of corrections, as he systematically addressed the errors that he continued to find in his earlier works: "As an honest Christian, I should repair my earlier carelessness... I am doing the best I can to reach that place if with no valuable assets, at least with the lightest possible burden of error."<sup>118</sup>

From Petrarch to Erasmus, from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century, humanists recovered, restored, and reconstructed a body of classical Greco-Roman and Christian texts, while introducing a particular set of disciplinary concerns with the rhetorical, intellectual, and literary properties of the works that constituted classical antiquity.<sup>119</sup> They authenticated texts on philological evidence and attended to the sources and contexts in a way that no one had before. The humanists treated the discovery, correction, and publication of these properly accredited works a right and responsibility. The new editions, translations, and commentaries circulated that much more widely through the humanist collaboration with printers and the book trade. The humanist object of study

---

<sup>118</sup> Erasmus, "2095 / To the Reader, Basel, February 1529," in *The Correspondence of Erasmus, Letters 2082 to 2203, 1529*, trans. Alexander Dalzell, annotator James M. Estes, vol. 15, *The Collected Works of Erasmus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 78. Some of his overlooked errors have stuck, including his mistranslation, from the Greek, of *Pandora's Jar* as *Pandora's Box* in *Adages*, while rendering *to call a skiff a skiff* as *to call a spade a spade*; William Barker, "Editor's Introduction," *The Adages of Erasmus*, ed. William Barker (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2001), xxxix. Grafton on Pandora's box: "His mistake became a proverb in every European language except Italian"; *Culture of Correction*, 159. Elsewhere, Grafton notes how the astronomer Kepler absorbed humanist habits of glossing and reflecting on methods of study to identify, toward the end of his life, "the sources and weaknesses of his data, explained his assumptions, and corrected his own slips and error"; "Kepler as Reader," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 53, no. 4 (1992), 572.

<sup>119</sup> "By learning I do not mean that confused and vulgar sort such as is possessed by those who nowadays profess theology," wrote the humanist Leonardo Bruni, in his educational treatise for women, circa 1424, "but a legitimate and liberal kind which joins literary skill with factual knowledge"; "The Study of Literature" in *Humanist Educational Treatises*, trans. Craig W. Kallendorf (Harvard University Press, 2008), 48.

and the measure of learning was found in the intellectual properties of these works, rather than, say, the natural properties of the world, which was the object of the Greco-Arabic sciences.<sup>120</sup>

The humanist study of texts also reinforced the image of a once and future golden age of empire, with its suggestion that, though such learning, “Rome would rise again instantly if she began know herself,” as I cited Petrarch at the outset of this chapter.<sup>121</sup> For Petrarch, such study thrived under the patronage of tyrants. This was not the case with other humanists, such as Leonardo Bruni, who sought the political freedom of Periclean Athens, or Machiavelli, who exposed the workings of power.<sup>122</sup> What is clear is that humanism brought learning further into the world, opening new possibilities for civic engagement, however much this compromised, some have felt, its desire and ability to speak truth to power.<sup>123</sup>

By the sixteenth century, Erasmus had introduced another part of the world into this humanist learning. He promoted, through wit and satire, counsel and wisdom, an education in the humanities for sons and daughters, men and women.<sup>124</sup> He was no less engaged in the scholarly exercise of use rights with others’ texts, but this time it was in

---

<sup>120</sup> Ann Blair writes of the fifteenth-century Angelo Poliziano and the “new range of humanist scholarship” that “his overarching argument was also typical of humanist disciplinary priorities, in that he hailed the *grammaticus*, rather than the philosopher, as the omniscient scholar capable of studying all texts”; “Organizations of Knowledge,” in *Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Philosophy*, 290.

<sup>121</sup> Petrarch to “Giovanni Colonna” in *Letters on Familiar Matters*, 1: 293.

<sup>122</sup> James Hankins, “Humanism and Modern Political Thought,” in *Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism*, ed. Jill Kraye (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) 131.

<sup>123</sup> Grafton and Jardine: “It stamped the more prominent members of the new élite with an indelible cultural seal of superiority, it equipped lesser members with fluency and the learned habit of attention to textual detail and it offered everyone a model of true culture as something given, absolute, to be mastered, not questioned – and thus fostered in its initiates a properly docile attitude towards authority”; *From Humanism*, xiii–xiv.

<sup>124</sup> Erasmus advises families that “they would do even better to have [their daughters] instructed in the humanities”; “The Institution of Marriage,” in *Erasmus on Women*, ed. Erika Rummel (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1996), 85. Erika Rummel judges him liberal for his time on this matter before concluding that “Erasmus was no feminist”; *ibid.*, 9.

the company of printers, whose shops housed and fed him. He established new standards of propriety and fair use in the printing of books, warranted by what was held in common by the friends of learning. He sought privileges from church, state, and patron to protect a scholarly book trade for the greater distribution of learned properties.

This trade introduced new risks to learning. Shoddy editions were hustled, choked with errors, while Erasmus' friend Aldus went bankrupt over his beautiful unsold Greek editions. In the economic mix of this new age, the learned had to make their way between the patron's library and the book stall. The two worlds of learning and commerce vied for rights and privileges, sometimes working beautifully together as with Erasmus and Froben, but not always. The age of print was full of truth and consequence for scholarly academies, societies, and universities (to be covered in the chapters that follow).