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Rebekah Lee, Associate
Professor in African Studies



Welcome

From the President
Professor Helen Moore



In this New Year issue of the *Sundial*, the spotlight falls on fields of research that engage with the practicalities of industrial, economic and social lives as lived all around the globe, thereby helping current and future generations to understand – and hopefully enhance – our world and its human societies. Professor Michael Johnston, Fellow in Physics, explains how his work on the interactions of light and matter relates to the ubiquitous semiconductors that underpin everyday devices and looks ahead to the next generation of nanoscale semiconductors (p.5). On pp.4-5, Dr Lisa Hsin, Junior Research Fellow in Business and Human Rights, digs beneath the surface of statutory Modern Slavery Reporting, raising as she does so important questions about the methodology and functions of accountability in civil society. And in the latest instalment of our series of ‘Corpus Papers’, we are pleased to feature the work of Dr Elena Lolli, who outlines the significance of a unique document from the Corpus special collections – the earliest ledger of a Jewish pawnshop in Italy. Amongst the new arrivals who have joined Corpus we are delighted to welcome Professor Rebekah Lee as Fellow in African Studies; her work on health, gender and urbanisation in Africa both enhances historical understanding and raises important questions about modern policy and practice. Whilst it is the talent and innovation of our researchers that drives knowledge forward, they need the resources to be able to explore and address the fundamental questions that underpin topics such as these. Teaching at Corpus, like our research, is blended from a powerful mixture of passion, curiosity and knowledge – and it too relies upon the provision of appropriate and inspiring spaces in which exercise these traits. As

you will see from the update on pp.6-7, progress on the construction of the Spencer Building continues apace. The project now has its own dedicated website (www.thespencerbuilding.co.uk) which includes a virtual tour of the building. If you are in a position to help in our campaign to raise the final tranche of funds for this project, at whatever level, please do get in touch: we would love to hear from you. The Spencer Building is a long-term project focused on the needs of future generations of students and researchers. Our role as custodians of the College for our successors is always on our minds and so sustainability has been a key feature of our activities over the past months. As well as adopting Passivhaus principles in relation to insulation and energy use in the Spencer Building, we have appointed the College’s first Sustainability Officer, Peter Nitsche-Whitfield. The expansion of our team with this appointment has already yielded substantial progress, as detailed on pp.10-11. Corpus has long been committed to nurturing future generations of students and researchers through our Junior Research Fellowships and other means, and we are therefore delighted to provide an update on significant developments in the funding of graduate scholarships in the humanities. I would highlight in particular the new Academic Futures programme: we were delighted to welcome the first two Corpus holders of these scholarships last October (p.14). We are profoundly grateful to all those friends and partners who have so generously committed support to these new graduate scholarships. Everything we do at Corpus is undertaken with a sense of the urgency of the mission to enhance our world and society and to steward our resources with energy and imagination and in a spirit of commitment to the future. Being forward-looking is part of our DNA as a College and broader Corpus community, and we daily feel the privilege of that mission and of your co-engagement as old members with us in that task: thank you.

Sundial

Issue 17
February 2023



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©Corpus Christi College
Oxford, 2023
www.ccc.ox.ac.uk

Designed by
www.pelotondesign.co.uk

Printed by
Taylor Brothers Bristol Ltd

If you would prefer not to receive copies of this publication in future, please email development@ccc.ox.ac.uk

All details are correct at the time of going to press.

COVER: CCC MS 13, fol. 107r [detail]

CCC MS 13 is volume one of a two-volume luxury edition of the Gospels. The Latin versions of the Vulgate and of Erasmus are written in alternate lines, in black and red respectively.

The manuscript was copied by Peter Meghen (with illumination by an unknown Flemish artist) and dated c.1520. Meghen had copied the same text for John Colet (in 1506 and 1509) and for Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon (c. 1509); the original recipient of the copy now at Corpus is unknown.

It is not clear how it came to the college; the provenance on the manuscript itself (foot of fol. 1) reads ‘doctor Hille’ who is otherwise unknown. However, this title was listed in the 1589 CCC library catalogue, so must have reached the Library before then.

Profile

Professor Michael Johnston
Fellow and Tutor, Professor of Physics

Professor Michael Johnston is interested in the physics of charge dynamics in semiconductors and light-matter interactions.

I have been a tutorial fellow in Physics at Corpus since 2002. As an experimental condensed-matter physicist, I like to see advances in our fundamental understanding of physics lead to societal improvements. In my field there are potential tangible benefits in terms of clean energy generation and improved communications systems. I very much enjoy ‘small lab’ experimental physics, which enables me to design and build new experiments and device prototypes on timescales that allow fundamental questions to be answered and practical applications to be demonstrated.

So what is a ‘condensed-matter’ physicist? While a particle physicist studies subatomic particles and an atomic physicist studies isolated atoms, a condensed-matter physicist is concerned with the interactions between many atoms and their assembly into solids and liquids (i.e. condensed phases). There is a lot of beauty in how atoms assemble into periodic structures with particular symmetries, and how this affects their physical properties.

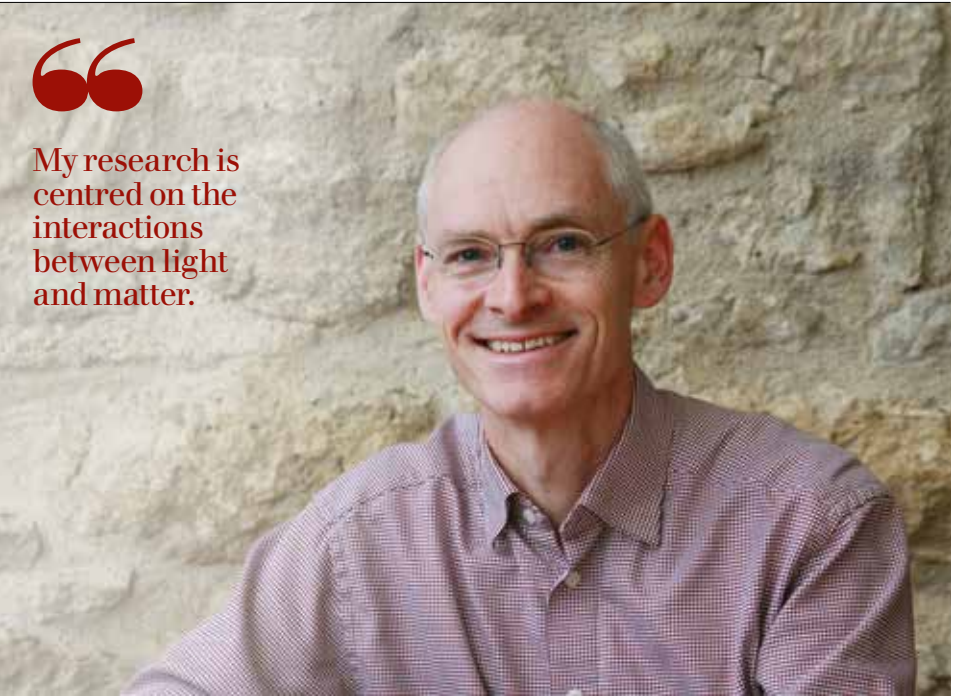
My research is centred on the interactions between light and matter. Specifically, I am most interested in how visible, infrared and terahertz-frequency photons interact with semiconductors. This may sound fundamental and a bit esoteric, however it is an area that is becoming increasingly important in everyday life. Indeed, internet communications and solar cells are just some of the practical and world-changing applications that are based on understanding the physics of light interacting with semiconductors.

Semiconductors are materials that can act as metals under some conditions and insulators under others. This ability to switch from electrically conductive to insulating without any mechanical movement has made semiconductors ubiquitous in modern life, for example through the miniaturisation of computer logic. Remarkably the ‘A16’ silicon chip in the latest iPhone contains 16 billion electrically controlled switches (i.e. transistors) with a feature size of just 5nm – that is two transistors for every person on earth in each chip! However, this type of chip does not exploit interactions with light.

A focus of my recent research has been to understand the electrical



My research is centred on the interactions between light and matter.



properties of nanoscale semiconductors, in particular semiconductor nanowires. Nanowires are single-crystal semiconductors that are typically a thousand times thinner than a human hair and have the potential to be building blocks of advanced multifunctional semiconductor devices. My research group and I use very low energy photons from the terahertz frequency range of the electromagnetic spectrum to monitor the dynamics of electrons inside these semiconductor nanostructures. Together, we have developed models so that our measurements can be used to elucidate the specific materials, properties and parameters needed to design electronic and optoelectronic devices. Recently we have used this knowledge to realise new nanowire devices including light-activated polarisers of terahertz radiation, and a polarisation-resolving detector of terahertz photons. Both these device types have potential application in high-speed data communication.

Another area of research is the development of thin-film solar cells via vacuum deposition. Here we are most interested in harvesting visible and near-infrared photons from the Sun and turning their energy into electricity. While silicon solar cells are already excellent, we are most interested in classes of semiconductor that can be made much thinner and better tuned to absorb specific colours of light. By using highly absorptive (‘direct bandgap’) semiconductors we can make the solar

cells much thinner and hence lighter and more flexible. This for example facilitates coating curved surfaces with solar cells and can dramatically reduce the energy cost of their manufacture. By choosing a materials system in which the colour of light absorbed can be changed, it is possible to harness energy from the Sun’s photons more effectively by stacking different cells on top of one another. These so-called ‘tandem’ or ‘multi-junction’ solar cells can thus more efficiently convert the Sun’s energy to electrical energy.

One of the great things about Corpus is the academic exchange that takes place between academics of widely different disciplines. Following discussion in the SCR with the Vice-President Professor Hans Kraus some years ago, we started academic collaborations on advanced instrumentation – each providing input from our different areas of physics research. This has been highly productive with our joint custom-built instrumentation, capable of integrated real-time data quality monitoring and analysis, now running most of my laboratory experiments. The ability to design and build our key experiments within my lab in the Clarendon Laboratory has allowed us great flexibility in experimental designs and the creation of unique apparatus. Even after twenty years here there is still remarkable thrill in devising and designing new experiments to solve real-world problems.

Lisa Hsin
Junior Research Fellow, Business and Human Rights

Dr Lisa Hsin is the Helsby-Kroll Post-doctoral Fellow in Business and Human Rights at the Bonaverro Institute of Human Rights. She joined Corpus in 2022 as a Junior Research Fellow. Her research critically examines Business and Human Rights scholarship including initiatives calling for mandatory Human Rights Due Diligence. She is currently exploring corporate social responsibility regulations in Asia and advising the UN OHCHR on regulating the technology sector.



What is the Point of Modern Slavery Reporting?

Since 2016, thousands of ‘modern slavery statements’ have been published, and yet little is known about their impact on preventing modern slavery. S 54 of the Modern Slavery Act in 2015 (‘MSA’) (‘s 54’) requires large companies to disclose information on their supply chains (‘MSA statements’). There are at least 16,000 statements published in the first five years of the MSA.¹ According to the government’s modern slavery registry, established in March 2021, there are an additional 6,000 statements, which have been *voluntarily* submitted from more than 20,000 organisations.² This article explores the background to s 54, and outlines the initial findings of a small study of 294 statements, and sets out the task going forward for researchers and consumers. What is revealed is that over the past six years, MSA statements have become more complex, yet more opaque; they are increasingly uniform within sectors and industries but still very difficult to compare.

The problem: modern slavery in supply chains

‘Modern slavery’ is estimated to affect 40.3 million people worldwide, including an estimated 16 million who work in private sector supply chains.³ Morally, the exploitation of human beings is unacceptable. Economically, such activities undermine the mainstream market because they are unreported and untaxed. It is, therefore, in the economic interest of state governments to tackle the problem. The obscurity of supply chains provides fertile ground for exploitation. According to Steve New, an expert in supply chain management, modern slavery exists in global supply chains in large part due to ruthless negotiations that drive down prices for faster and cheaper goods.⁴ This means that supply chains are obscure, complex and lacking in visibility, and that modern slavery is driven by the current business practices of companies. Later in this article, it becomes clear that neither of these problems is addressed by the case study MSA statements.

Recent events have forced us to take notice of supply chains. COVID-19 ‘panic buying’, the shortage of medical equipment and lorry drivers and the war in Ukraine have posed threats to

our comfortable way of life. In the modern world, where few of us grow our food, forage, or hunt, supply chains are vital arteries in our social structures. Supply chains are formed by a complex web of legal and non-legal instruments and, from carefully negotiated contracts and partnership agreements, to oral contracts and customary dealing. In practice, subcontracted work is often further subcontracted to smaller companies, to the extent that large multinational corporations end up not knowing where their products originated. This phenomenon has been described by anthropologists as an ‘ethic of detachment’ where companies lose sight of who they are interacting with and the ethical and moral obligations they would otherwise have for other people.⁵

The fix: new legislation

To address these issues, the UK government introduced the MSA. The UK was the first country in the world to introduce such a requirement, and the first to use the phrase ‘modern slavery’ in law. Many other countries have since enacted similar legislation, including Australia.

S 54 of the MSA requires any commercial organisation operating in the UK with an annual turnover of £36 million or more to publish an annual ‘slavery and human trafficking statement’ (‘MSA statement’). In this statement, the organisation must disclose the steps it has taken to prevent modern slavery in its supply chains, wherever located, or state that it has not taken steps in this regard. S 54 is ‘light-touch’ in two respects: (1) it is non-prescriptive and open-ended as to what steps companies should take to report and address modern slavery, (2) it is not monitored or enforced by the state.

Some commentators suggest that the provision is ‘toothless’ and ‘weak’.⁶ Some referred to it as no better than a ‘repackaging of voluntary corporate social responsibility’ for its reliance on corporate self-regulation.⁷ But the government’s proposal to introduce the MSA received widespread support from businesses,⁸ investors⁹ and NGOs.¹⁰ Many large companies, especially retailers, agreed that a legally binding provision on

supply chain activities would bring about positive change.¹¹ Many argued that it would ‘level the playing field’ between companies and by regulating large businesses, the changes would ‘trickle down’ to increase standards across industries.¹²

What is in a MSA statement?

To conduct this research, I relied on data compiled by the Modern Slavery Statement Registry, a civil society monitoring platform set up and managed by the Business and Human Rights Resource Centre. The website is no longer being updated, owing to lack of funding and the Home Office’s decision to launch its own modern slavery statement registry.¹³ A government-run registry may seem like a good idea, but if it is not monitored by public authorities, it cannot be enforced. So far, the repercussions have been reputational, thanks to the work of journalists, academics, NGOs and consumers. In reality, however, no business has faced penalties for failing to meet their obligations under s 54.

I compared MSA statements from three industries: financial service providers, pharmaceutical companies and retail businesses. I began by looking at what they contained, then compared them to other forms of legal disclosure, such as annual reports and prospectuses for potential investors. I found that most MSA statements strove to convey competence. Most companies are not just writing for consumers. Their goal is to reassure and encourage investors and shareholders. Words are carefully selected to disguise areas of uncertainty but concrete enough to demonstrate that they have systems in place to detect forced labour, but just shy of holding themselves out to have perfect knowledge or perfect control to minimise legal responsibility.

Within each of the three industries, there are clear similarities, but there is no way to verify the information disclosed. For an average reader, it would be reasonable to assume that the company had conducted checks and taken action where required. However, it is extremely difficult to make sense of the context in which they are operating. Civil society and individuals would have to conduct independent assessments of industries, companies and their extensive supply networks. Contrary to common belief, the more professional and comprehensive a MSA statement appears, the more opaque it typically is. The complexity of these statements leaves most consumers feeling apprehensive. Most prefer the reassurance given by a recognised stamp of approval, like a FairTrade logo. In reality, supply chain exploitation is insidious, hidden and far from certain.

A case study: AstraZeneca

AstraZeneca’s statement is an excellent illustration of a company taking the legislation seriously, so much so that it has built a fortress of modern slavery documentation as a bastion against liability and negative press. In their first three MSA statements, each one is slightly longer than the previous years’. The first impression is that they contain a maze of links to external policies and websites. The policy also states that AstraZeneca is a member of the Pharmaceutical Supply Chain Initiative (PSCI) and supports the PSCI’s Principles for Responsible Supply Chain Management. Another link goes to the PSCI website. The PCSI website then refers to an ‘Implementation Guidance’, which



provides further clarification of the principles in each of the five areas, providing a framework for improvement and examples for how to meet expectations. But the PCSI is an industry body. It calls itself a non-profit business membership organization legally established in 2006 in the United States. In other words, the companies in the PCSI have taken to self-regulate, they voluntarily adhere to self-made measures, rely on industry-level pressure and are subject only to peer scrutiny. How reliable can this be?

Most MSA statements published by pharmaceutical companies were roughly three to four pages long. Most of the statements roughly corresponded to the six suggested reporting categories. For instance, AstraZeneca starts with ‘Our Commitment’ and refers to its global ‘Code of Conduct’, which states that they are committed to delivering ‘sustainable benefit for our stakeholders, our business and society...’ Similarly, AbbVie Ltd also commits to ‘ensuring that slavery and human trafficking do not enter our product supply chains or any part of our business.’ Both companies then refer to the PCSI. MSA statements from the same industry look as though they are based on the same templates. Effective but not at all meaningful or thoughtful.

Where to from here?

The nature of the legislation is to harness the power of civil society, effectively outsourcing the job of monitoring and enforcement to NGOs and consumers. Year on year, the number of MSA statements has grown. Even public authorities such as local councils have started to publish MSA statements. So, is it possible to compare annual MSA statements? Can readers get a snapshot of the companies doing well? The government’s registry says no, it is not capable of that sort of assessment. How can civil society continue to hold corporations accountable, when they are overwhelmed by the sheer volume of data? Accumulation of MSA statements can become increasingly meaningless, until and unless we start to look carefully at what companies disclose. For researchers, we urgently need to collaborate across disciplines: data scientists and lawyers must collaborate, funding must be available to carry out this work, and a research agenda that contains a clear industry-specific assessment methodology is urgently needed.

There is a lot of work to be done, we better get started.

¹ Business and Human Rights Resource Centre, Historical database of Modern Slavery Statements <[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1026088/Modern_Slavery_HO_Statement.pdf](https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/from-us/modern-slavery-statements/#:~:text=The%20Registry%20has%20provided%20an,slavery%20statements%20side%20by%20side.>>
² Home Office, Home Office Modern Slavery Statement 1 April 2020-31 March 2021, <
³ International Labour Organisation, ‘Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage’ (*International Labour Organisation*, 2017) < https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcommn/documents/publication/wcms_575479.pdf> accessed 21 August 2022.
⁴ Stephen John New, ‘Modern Slavery and the Supply Chain: The Limits of Corporate Social Responsibility’ (2015) 20(6) *Supply Chain Management* 697, 703.

⁵ Jamie Cross, ‘Detachment as a Corporate Ethic: Materializing CSR in the Diamond Supply Chain’ (2011) 60 *Focaal—Journal of Global and Historical Anthropology*, 34.
⁶ William Boddy, ‘The Modern Slavery Act is Toothless’ (*The Sunday Times*, 15 November 2018), <<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/the-modern-slavery-act-is-toothless-c99sdl22p>> accessed 21 August 2022.
⁷ Interview with NGO director on 12 June 2019.
⁸ Home Office, *Modern Slavery and Supply Chains Consultation: Consultation on the transparency in supply chains clause in the Modern Slavery Bill* (Home Office, 2015).
⁹ Paul Verney, ‘Modern slavery in the spotlight: UN to back new blueprint, UK investors call for mandatory rules and Swiss firms face pressure’ (*Responsible Investor*, 13 September 2019) <<https://www.responsible-investor.com/investors-urge-support-ms/>> accessed 21 August 2022.
¹⁰ House of Lords and House of Commons Joint Committee on the Draft Modern Slavery Bill, *Report on the Draft Modern Slavery Bill* (2013-14, HL 166, HC 1019).

¹¹ Home Office, ‘Modern Slavery and Supply Chains Government Response – Summary of consultation responses and next steps’ (Home Office, 2015).
¹² Marc Scott, ‘EU corporate Disclosure Law will Enhance Supply Chain Efficiency’, Supply Chain Management [website], <<https://www.cips.org/supply-management/opinion/2015/august/eu-corporate-disclosure-law-will-enhance-supply-chain-efficiency>> accessed on 28 November 2016.
¹³ Home Office, ‘Government launches modern slavery statement registry’ (*Home Office*, 11 May 2021) <<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-launches-modern-slavery-statement-registry>> accessed 28 August 2022.

Fundraising

➡ **To learn more** about The Spencer Building and to take a virtual tour, please visit our dedicated website www.thespencerbuilding.co.uk.

Update

The Spencer Building

Architects Sandy Wright and Kirsty Shankland describe how the project to extend and redevelop the Corpus Library is progressing.

Ground has been broken and construction work begun on The Spencer Building, comprising a new Special Collections Centre and Library extension, which is being delivered to rigorous Passivhaus standards of construction, energy use and environmental control. The College aims to deliver a pioneering and highly sustainable building emblematic of its future development. The design adopts Passivhaus principles of high levels of insulation, airtightness and efficient heat recovery. The appointed contractor Kingierlee Ltd is expected to undertake rigorous construction auditing systems to ensure that sustainability targets are delivered.

The proposal to redevelop the modern Staircase 6 building adjacent to the Old Library derives from a long-standing ambition to provide additional study space for students and Fellows, as well as to create a new and expanded fit-for-purpose specialist archival store and reading room. The redevelopment will also give full disabled access to all parts of the Library, including the historic Old Library, which is currently inaccessible to those requiring a passenger lift. The aim was to develop a design that sensitively integrates the existing historic spaces with the need for modern facilities.

An intricate demolition procedure was implemented to ensure the careful dismantling of the Staircase 6 building both to protect the adjacent structures and to interfere minimally with College life. The team continues to work closely with the Conservation Officer and local planning department as things are uncovered on site and decisions on material selection are made.

Though the new elements of the scheme explore a contemporary architectural language, they take their cues from the existing historic buildings, and the elemental qualities of stone. Moderating daylight and manipulating light and shadow are ways in which thoughtfully designed masonry buildings can create definition on both a civic and human scale. Sandy Wright says, “Our use of materials reflects an understanding of their inherent characteristics which informs the structure, function and meaning of our buildings. We look at what materials can do and we also embrace a culture of craft and making”.

External walls are predominantly ashlar stone cladding to match a large, triple glazed window on the north elevation. The new flat roof will be made of lead, but also inset with photovoltaic panels. The roof that pitches towards the Garden Quad will be clad in slates to match the historic Old Library. Internally, a palette of materials such as oak and brass will give pleasure to both eye and hand. Mock ups of key joinery items, such as a sample bookcase and desk, have been provided to allow the College to finalise the internal finishes.

The building is due for completion in 2024.



ABOVE: Visualisation of the Second Floor Reading Room, a pair of desks in the foreground

Recognising our benefactors

We are grateful for the support of our benefactors and endeavour to express our appreciation in a variety of ways. Everyone who gives a donation to the building, of whatever size, will be offered the opportunity to have their name included in a Benefactors' Book. Entry level for inclusion on the Donor Board in the ground floor foyer of The Spencer Building is £25,000. We may also offer naming opportunities for major philanthropic donations. We also look forward to thanking our generous donors in person at the annual Benefactors' Garden Party.

Seeking your support



The generosity of our alumni greatly assists the College in fulfilling an ambitious project such as this.

A transformational lead gift from Lord Michael Spencer (Physics, 1973) has made the establishment of The Spencer Building possible, and we are now seeking additional philanthropy. Old Members and friends have already generously pledged £9.04m towards the project. With a further £3.05m to raise, matched pound for pound from

the College's endowment funds, we will be able to complete this landmark project. With your support we can write this exciting new chapter in the College's history.

To visualise the location of the opportunities below please visit: thespencerbuilding.co.uk/tour. If you are interested in learning more about major philanthropic donations, starting from £25,000, please email Liz Lyle, the Development Director at elizabeth.lyle@ccc.ox.ac.uk.

Gift Amount	Naming Opportunity
£10,000 each	First and Second Floor Bookcase Bays
£7,500 each	Third Floor Group Collaborative Working Desks [four readers], one of which is DDA [Disability Discrimination Act] compliant
£5,000 each	First and Second Floor Reading Rooms Pair of Desks [photo to the left]
£2,500 each	Third Floor Reading Room Single Desk Spaces [long desk area on the video]
£2,000 each	Third Floor Singular Bookcases [behind the long desk area on the video]

The Big Picture

Gaudies

Taking place roughly once a decade, Gaudies are joyous occasions, giving old friends the chance to reunite and remember their student days.

In March 2022 the 1986 to 1990 cohort returned to Corpus. The afternoon began with tea, followed by fascinating lectures from Professor Peter Hore, Fellow and Tutor in Chemistry, and Professor Stephen Harrison, Professor of Latin Literature, both of whom were teaching at Corpus in the late 1980s. The after dinner speech, given by former JCR President the Rt Hon Ed Miliband (1989), was hugely entertaining. In June it was the turn of the 1997 to 2003 cohort to enjoy a reunion. On a beautiful summer's day, they were treated to a historical tour of the College with Emeritus Fellow Professor Thomas Charles-Edwards (1962) and a lecture on environmental law and judicial activism from Professor Liz Fisher, Professor of Environmental Law. After dinner, and a superb speech by Clare Chater (1997), everyone moved to the Rainolds Room for coffee or the Beer Cellar to rekindle memories. The evening was a huge success.

We hope to see as many Old Members as possible at forthcoming Gaudies. The list below should help with planning, but please note the dates are subject to change. Save-the-date emails will be sent six months in advance, followed by invitations three months later.

RIGHT: Gaudy for 2000 to 2003, 25 June 2022

Future Gaudy and Decade Dinner Dates	
Friday 24 March 2023	1991-1996 Gaudy
Friday 23 June 2023	2009-2012 Gaudy
Friday 29 September 2023	1970s Decade Dinner
Friday 15 March 2024	1961-1968 Gaudy
Friday 21 June 2024	1939-1960 Gaudy
Friday 21 March 2025	2004-2008 Gaudy
Friday 27 June 2025	2013-2016 Gaudy
Friday 26 September 2025	1980s Decade Dinner
Friday 20 March 2026	1969-1974 Gaudy
Friday 26 June 2026	1975-1979 Gaudy
Friday 19 March 2027	2017-2019 Gaudy
Friday 25 June 2027	1980-1985 Gaudy



College Faces

➤ **The College has a Sustainability Sub-Committee**, consisting of the Bursar, Domestic Bursar, Fellows, Sustainability Coordinator and representatives from the MCR and JCR. It meets once a term to oversee and report on all aspects relating to the College’s environmental impact.



MAKING CORPUS *MORE* SUSTAINABLE

Peter Nitsche-Whitfield joined Corpus at the beginning of September as its first Sustainability Coordinator, a post shared with Lincoln and Exeter. This is the first time that any Oxford college has created a post solely dedicated to sustainability. He talked to us about the role and what he hopes to achieve.

What is your background and what brings you to Corpus?
I am returning to Oxford after having completed my undergraduate degree in PPE at St Benet’s Hall in 2019. After leaving Oxford, I worked for GermanZero, an NGO which campaigns for Germany to become climate-neutral by 2035. During my time working for GermanZero as Research and Policy Advisor I co-authored a climate action plan with academics and leading climate scientists, giving me an insight into the policies needed to implement an ecological transition in sectors from transport to energy. Following this, I completed a master’s in economics, focusing on sustainable development and the ecological transition in Vienna, Paris and Brussels. I am now looking forward to working with colleagues at Corpus on its journey towards sustainability.

What are your sustainability priorities?
I believe it is vital to address sustainability by tackling all aspects of our ecological crises from the climate emergency, biodiversity collapse, land and resource use, to waste and pollution. Reducing the ecological impacts of Corpus’ operations will thus be my main field of work. This will mean addressing Corpus’ energy use and building stock, travel patterns, food procurement and waste as well as land use and biodiversity. A key priority this winter is to reduce energy use to bring down emissions. This will have the additional welcome effect of reducing the College’s expenditure at a time when a range of global factors have led to exceptionally high energy prices. Lastly, I believe that Corpus should use its standing as a college in a world-renowned university to promote research on sustainability and integrate this into the education of future decision makers.

What will be the most challenging sustainability measure to implement?
The most challenging measures to implement are also the most immediate: reducing consumption of meat and encouraging everyone to dress appropriately for the season – and thus the climate – instead of turning up the heating. To this I would add the longer term goal of decarbonising buildings.

What are you most excited about in this new role?
Engaging with the students is enormously enjoyable, as is working across three colleges, all of which are putting sustainability at the forefront of their operations. I am delighted to be able to build on initiatives at Corpus, such as the biodiversity-friendly garden and thermal efficiency upgrades of buildings.



From our Environment and Ethics Officers

Anna Cladingbowl (Classics) outgoing writes:
“The JCR Environment and Ethics Officer role – working closely with colleagues in other colleges – focuses on helping the College to improve sustainability and promote ethical choices for the good of the world environment. The aim is to achieve this by listening to, suggesting, and acting on ideas about sustainability. During my year in office, I have concentrated on ways to reduce wasted food and petitioned for food waste bins to be installed in all College accommodation. I am excited to pass the torch on to Courtenay, my successor.”

Courtenay Crow (History) incoming writes:
“My plans as Environment and Ethics Officer are focused on increasing student participation so that we can work together to address our pressing sustainability challenges systematically. I would like to set up fortnightly meetings and a Facebook group with our fellow colleges Lincoln and Exeter for people passionate about sustainability so that we can share ideas, best practice and sustainability news from the wider University. I will also disseminate information about Corpus’ sustainability goals and commitments, and monitor whether we are close to achieving them. Related to this, I will be involved in creating a detailed Net Zero plan for Corpus, in order to provide a useful benchmarking guide for future E&E Officers. Beyond these overarching aims, I have some specific practical goals. For example, I think it would be a good idea to weigh Corpus’ food waste one day a week, and to post the figures outside the Buttery. Finally, I would like to thank Anna for doing such an amazing job last year.”

Key initiatives

- The seriousness of the changes to our climate and ecosystems and exponential acceleration of impacts has served as an urgent call to action for the College. This is a collaborative enterprise in which Junior Members, Fellows and staff all have a role to play. So what are we doing?**
- We are rolling out networked heating controls across the College in areas where we have gas heating. We believe that this will reduce gas consumption by 20% on a comparable basis.
 - The programme of upgrading old sash windows has improved the thermal efficiency of our heritage buildings.
 - Progress continues on The Spencer Building, which we hope will be the first Passivhaus building to be linked to a sixteenth-century Grade 1 listed range of buildings.
 - We will be carrying out a full thermo-efficiency survey of operational buildings as the first stage in identifying where our energy performance is poor. This will inform our programme of works over the next decade.
 - Corpus has been accredited with one of the highest recycling rates across the University, with over 60% of waste recycled.
 - We are in the process of negotiating a sustainable energy project of national importance which will be used to deliver green power to UK research infrastructure in Oxfordshire.
 - We continue, through dialogue and an annual audit process, to encourage our Endowment managers to invest sustainably.
 - We are in the process of auditing the entire rural estate of the college to establish a baseline for future biodiversity and natural capital opportunities.

BELOW: A redundant farm building on Netherhale Farm, one of the College’s Kent farms



The Corpus

Papers

17

HEBREW MANUSCRIPTS IN THE DECONSTRUCTION
OF RACIAL NARRATIVES: THE EARLIEST LEDGER
OF A JEWISH PAWNSHOP IN ITALY

Dr Elena Lolli, Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture Fellow, Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture, New York; Postdoctoral Research Associate, Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, University of Oxford; Research Fellow, Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies.

For thousands of years, anti-Semitic images, notions and biases have led to racial stereotypes connected to money, spurring hatred and the persecution of the Jewish people. The same repertoire of prejudices, i.e., greedy Jews engaged in usurer activities and as rapacious hoarders of wealth, has been employed differently depending on the ideological context of the times.

These stories have spread largely due to an invented mythology (*mythopoeia*), which revolves around a specious view of the economic role of European Jews in the Middle Ages, when the stereotype of Jewish cupidity started to take shape. The idea that Jews have been predominant in the financial sectors especially after the Black Death (when the Church prohibited usury) has become assimilated into the narrative about Jews and money, which has been transmitted by teachers at all levels. Jews have been depicted as wealthy, greedy and menacing at different times in history as well as today.

It is now established that these fallacious assumptions were not properly assessed by historians, so that such tropes have again come to the forefront as a subject of public debate. Similar to Shakespeare’s depiction of Shylock, the imagery of the devious Jewish moneylender, instead of being dismantled by scholars, was in fact, albeit at times involuntarily, consolidated. New defamations and images involving Jews and money are continuously generated, while old ones are recycled in new forms.

Stereotypes and misconceptions existed for a variety of reasons, but primarily because for a long time the research has focused mainly on the analysis of external sources, while Hebrew ones were forgotten. The study of original Hebrew sources is, however, extremely important for the reconstruction of the economic history, communal organisation, and daily life of Jewish communities, as it reveals new facts and data seen from an internal perspective. In fact, it is worth noting that Christian sources, in which Jews usually appear as stock characters playing a default role depending on the needs of the author, are unable to provide reliable information about medieval Jewish life in Europe as a whole. Documentary evidence produced by Jews is essential to an accurate reconstruction of events through giving a necessary point of view, different from that of the majority society, which is partial and cannot be the only point of reference. In particular, as regards Italy, to which my research refers, most of the extant Christian documentation on Jews in the peninsula is constituted by the condotte, the bilateral agreements that regulated the relations between local authorities and Jewish lenders.

The purpose of my research is to analyse a corpus of newly-discovered Hebrew account books of Italian origin, in order to reshape inquiry into the history of the Jews and their role within Christian financial networks during the Long Renaissance – a period in which the business of pawnbroking reached its maximum expression and the stereotypical image of Jews as usurers was cemented.

During my stay at Corpus, I had the privilege to study the earliest ledger of a Jewish pawnshop in Italy, which is currently preserved at the college library (MS. Oxford, Corpus Christi College Library 469).

This document, which is written in Hebrew and Judeo-Italian, sheds new



ABOVE TOP: Bartolomeo Nazari, *Isaac Treves e i suoi capitani*, detail. 1731-34. Venezia, private collection

ABOVE BOTTOM: Two moneylenders counting their money and keeping their accounts, one wearing spectacles. Stipple engraving by T. Cheesman, 1791, after Q. Matsys. London, Wellcome collection



ABOVE TOP: MS Oxford, Corpus Christi College Library, 469. Incipit

ABOVE BOTTOM: 4. Corpus Christi College Library

light on the economic history of the Jews, credit issues in north Italy, Jewish-Christian economic relations and material culture through references to pawned objects, as well as the history of accounting practices.

Its paper leaves were dismembered and reused to bind a different book of Italian origin. As with thousands of other fragments found in bindings across Europe, the recycling of codices paradoxically assured their survival. The sheets of the ledger were discovered, detached and conserved when the manuscript was restored at the end of the nineteenth century. In particular, the paper manuscript, whose transactions cover the years 1407-1411, was detached from its host volume at the behest of the college librarian of that time, Robert Proctor (1868-1903), who later became a bibliographer and book collector, and an expert on incunabula and early typography. Together with J.G. Milne, Proctor used to recover manuscript and printed binding waste from volumes kept at the library, usually in order to reconstitute previously scattered texts. In 1891 he obtained permission to dismember the boards of the volume that housed the ledger, whose quires were eventually assembled together in a modern binding only at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The fragmented codex in question consists of 54 paper leaves and is written in Hebrew and Judeo-Italian – an ancient language in danger of extinction, which features a non-Jewish base language using a Hebrew writing system. The language adopted is Italian of the time or vernacular (i.e. Emilian dialect), inserted into the Hebrew text and written in Hebrew characters.

The loan register was an ante litteram database compiled by creditors in order to keep track of their pool of aged loans. The ledger is confined to debtor’s account and combines the functions of borrowers’ ledger and loans register. The account for each loan is headed with details of the borrower’s name, amount advanced, witnesses and sometimes also guarantors are recorded, followed by particulars of the items left in pledge as well as of repayment by the borrower or someone on his behalf.

Thanks to these original sources it will be possible to demonstrate that moneylending was not a specifically Jewish profession in medieval and Renaissance Europe: Jews were never the only moneylenders, nor were they predominant. Surprisingly, Medieval people were never absolutely clear about what they wanted to do in the matter of usury, including many clergymen who benefited from the services of lenders (despite the condemnation of the Church). Moreover, in some cases Jewish activities were not limited to making small loans on pledge, but also involved the so-called ‘investment credit’ that made possible the economic development of medieval Italy.

Italy’s experience with Jewish financial networks – as depicted in the Hebrew original sources under investigation – acts as a case in point of Europe’s general economic situation in the early modern period and presents numerous questions whose answers are central to advancing our understanding of both Jewish-Italian and European history beyond stereotypes.

➤ **The Tutor for Graduates** is an officer of the College, who sits on a number of the committees by which Corpus performs its academic and administrative functions, and whose role is to advocate for the interests and concerns of Corpus’ large and diverse body of graduate students.

Fundraising

FUNDING FOR GRADUATES

Tutor for Graduates Professor David Russell discusses the importance of financial support provided to graduate students.



Graduate students are a vital part of the Corpus community, and their work in the sciences and the arts is central to the mission of the College and University. Financial support for graduate students, however, is diminishing, with a particular crisis reached in the humanities: those autonomous areas of thinking and research about what it means to be human, and about the values, responsibilities, and pleasures of cultural life, are in a parlous state.

Against this rather depressing backdrop, I am pleased to say that we offer a number of fully and partially-funded scholarships – thanks, in a large part, to the generosity of Old Members and friends of the College. Corpus often works with established sources of graduate funding, such as the Clarendon Fund; by matching our funding to theirs, and making use of their expert processes of selection, we are able to secure and support the applications of the most promising students. We currently support seven Clarendon Scholars and I am delighted to report that we have introduced two new scholarships, associated with the Clarendon Fund, for the academic year 2023-4. The **Watts-Clarendon and Harrison-Clarendon Scholarships**, in

History and Classics respectively, are named for our eminent fellows in these subjects, in honour of their dedication to teaching and research at Corpus.

To academic excellence, we have joined the funding priority of diversity and inclusion. Corpus is a founding funding partner of the University’s **Black Academic Futures Scholarships**. The scholarships are open to all academic subjects and of the thirty scholars this year, two are Corpus postgraduates. Alisha Odoi-Smith (DPhil, History) is studying the global Black Power Movement, examining how it contributed to and developed different forms of Black identities throughout the Black Atlantic. Isabelle Giles is pursuing a Masters of Studies in English, 1830-1914. Her Black Academic Futures Scholarship is supported by The Zochonis Charitable Trust.

We have also recently established new scholarships in particular subject specialisms. **The Dubuque Graduate Scholarship in Existential Phenomenology** was established by John Dubuque to enable work in Post-Kantian European Philosophy. Jonathan Krude (DPhil, Philosophy) is grateful for this

unique opportunity to pursue his research. His project focuses on Martin Heidegger’s philosophy of technology. **The Lorne Thyssen Scholarship** was set up to support graduate study in the field of Classics. This year it fully funds two DPhil students. Constance Everett-Pite (DPhil, Classical Languages and Literature) is researching the reception of Ancient Greek choruses in twentieth and twenty-first century Anglophone poetry. Fiona Phillips (DPhil, Ancient History) is working to re-evaluate the ancient Carian alphabets, in the light of new understandings about other early alphabetic writing systems.

The Wolf Studentship in Economics was established by Jonathan Wolf (1993) in 2015 in honour of his father, the well-known journalist and commentator on economics, Martin Wolf (1965). The current holder of the studentship, Jean-Guillaume Magré (DPhil, Economics) says: “My research interests revolve around inflation expectations (primarily from market participants and firms), the policy responses to inflation, and financial stability. I am a long-time reader of the *Financial Times*, in particular of Martin’s pieces, which always bring out the most salient points of the economic debates. This generous graduate funding opportunity provides me with the ideal conditions for my research journey.”

In addition to these fully funded scholarships, the College also offers partial scholarships, such as the very successful **Cowley Scholarship Programme** in the humanities, established by Cris Conde and Kamaryn Tanner, and a development scholarship for students from the Developing World. The recipients of this funding, as well as the College, are immensely grateful for the support of Old Members, Junior Members and friends in making more research journeys possible – and in helping to keep learning alive.



LEFT: Professor David Russell
ABOVE: The College’s Dubuque Scholar, two Lorne Thyssen Scholars and Wolf Scholar

New Arrivals

➤ **We are seeking support** for three MSc Scholarships in African Studies. Please email development@ccc.ox.ac.uk for more information.

Professor Rebekah Lee
Associate Professor in African Studies



Rebekah Lee joined Corpus in Hilary Term 2022 as a Fellow and Associate Professor in African Studies, School of Global and Area Studies.

“Rebekah is thrilled to have returned to Oxford and to have joined the Corpus community, one which immediately impressed itself on her as warm, collegial, supportive and open-minded.”

Rebekah was previously Senior Lecturer in History at Goldsmiths, University of London. She is an alumna of Oxford, receiving her DPhil and MPhil in Economic and Social History. She completed her BA in History and Literature at Harvard University. Rebekah is thrilled to have returned to Oxford and to have joined the Corpus community, one which immediately impressed itself on her as warm, collegial, supportive and open-minded. She is honoured to be the first Fellow in College representing the School of Global and Area Studies, and looks forward to welcoming graduate students in African Studies into the Corpus MCR from October 2024.

Rebekah’s research concerns the social and cultural history of modern South Africa, and latterly the history of health and medicine in sub-Saharan Africa. Her work centrally incorporates oral history and ethnographic approaches, and she has written widely on gender, migration, health, urbanisation and religion in the South African and African context. Her most recent publication is the book, *Health, Healing and Illness in African History*; an introduction to the diverse and wide-ranging history of African health and healing from the pre-colonial period to the present day. This book provides a much-needed

historical perspective on the most significant public health dilemmas facing Africa in the twenty-first century, including HIV/AIDS and malaria. Rebekah is currently completing the manuscript for her third book, *Death and Memory in Modern South Africa*, which will be the culmination of more than fifteen years of research on the meaning and management of death in transitional and post-apartheid South Africa. She is also developing a major collaborative project on road safety and road danger in sub-Saharan Africa.

Rebekah is a Council member of the Royal Historical Society and is currently supporting the Society’s wider equalities work within the discipline and history profession in the UK. She is appreciative of the opportunity to work alongside her history colleagues at Corpus, including Professor John Watts and Professor Katherine Paugh, and to be part of the College’s strong intellectual tradition in history and historically attuned scholarship.

Listing

➔ Did you know that we regularly send out College news and invitations to events by email? Please email development@ccc.ox.ac.uk if your contact details have changed and you would like to keep in touch. More information about the Development Office can be found on the College website www.ccc.ox.ac.uk/alumni.

Corpus Christi College

Alumni events 2023

For more information on all these events please go to: www.ccc.ox.ac.uk/alumni/events-and-reunions

March 2023

Wednesday 22 March Toronto Reunion

Lecture, Drinks and Dinner. All welcome. This is a free event.

Friday 24 March Gaudy for 1991-1996

A very special night is assured.

April 2023

Friday 21 April Frederick Pollock Law Society Dinner

For all who studied or are working in Law.

May 2023

Friday 5 May Frost Society Lunch

Open to our legacy society members.

Friday 5 May Philosophy Society Event

For all who are interested in Philosophy.

Saturday 27 May Eights Week Lunch

Booking to open in February.

June 2023

Friday 23 June Gaudy for 2009-2012

Invitations will be sent in March.

Thursday 29 June Rhodes Scholars' Reunion

More information to follow.

September 2023

Friday 29 September 1970s Decade Dinner

Invitations will be sent in the summer.

Art

My summer as the College Art Intern

Phillip Olney (English, 2018) spent last summer at Corpus as the College's first Art Intern. He describes his work.

Since graduating from Corpus with a BA in English, I have been studying for an MA in Fine Art at Chelsea College of Art and a Level 2 Bench Joinery at the Building Crafts College, Stratford.

As Art Intern, my remit was to review and update the catalogue for the College's Art Collection, identifying restoration needs and checking the current catalogue against the 2015 and 2012 versions. My current practice investigates the role of manual work and

the aesthetics of labour across various locales. My role at Corpus allowed me to return to my old College and re-establish a deep, thorough and meaningful connection with the history of its art pieces. Indeed, at last count, it was deemed that there were over 300 pieces in the Collection, most of which have now been more accurately documented.

Having reviewed the Collection, I was invited to recommend a plan for the redistribution of existing artwork. This included organising a display of the artwork currently stored offsite to be viewed by the Art & Likenesses Committee, the Fellows and staff. During

this 'showing' Fellows were able to choose additional items for their offices or to swap existing pieces.

Over the summer I also worked with the architects for The Spencer Building and the Keeper of the Pictures Liz Lyle to identify art spaces within the new building. I hope our proposals will bring artistic inspiration to future generations of students. I am grateful to everyone at Corpus for their support during my interesting and engaging work this summer. I have now returned to London to complete my studies, alongside a new Chef de Partie role at Big Jo in Finsbury Park. If you're in the area, I would love to see you.

Library

Library supports Ukrainian scholar

The Library is pleased to report on the digitisation of an early printed Eastern liturgical work (*Euchologion*), which we supplied *gratis* to a Ukrainian scholar. Printed in Vilnius in 1618, the work is a key source for the Kyivan liturgical tradition. The scholar has limited funding, and has been unable to travel due to the present conflict in Ukraine, so he was very grateful for the images supplied and the support shown by the College. Due to time constraints, this work was funded in part by the College Archives, and with a generous discount from the photographer, Colin Dunn. The book in question is one of three acquired in Moscow by Richard James (CCC 1608), when on a diplomatic mission there.

RIGHT: Title page of the Eastern Orthodox *Euchologion*, Молитвенникъ (Vilnius: Leon Mamonič, 1618), shelfmark: Δ.16.10



Legacy

Leaving a gift in your will

Through the centuries, legacies and bequests have played a vital part in Corpus' success. Legacies have enabled us to endow Fellowships, establish bursaries and scholarships, renovate buildings and create new teaching spaces.

Your support makes a real difference. Whether large or small, every gift is valued and appreciated. And if you make a legacy, you are entitled to join the Frost Society. For more details please contact Begina Cox at beginna.cox@ccc.ox.ac.uk.