Teaching and Learning in Jacobean New College: The Foundation of the Lake Lectureships

How and what did students learn in New College four hundred years ago? First, we must remember that no undergraduate subject specialisation as yet existed. All students studied the same general degree of 'Arts', taking first the BA, then the MA, requiring on average four and three years of study respectively. Only then might a student start postgraduate work in one of the three higher degrees, namely law, medicine, or theology. Granted, there were some complications—in some colleges students might start out immediately as lawyers, for instance, although in New College that switch could only take place in the third year—but in general all undergraduates followed fairly similar paths, in New College as in other colleges. This had been the situation since foundation.¹

This lack of specialisation meant that the teaching structure of the collegiate university in the medieval and early modern periods did not resemble the modern system, where dozens of tutors in separate subjects coexist in often depressing intellectual isolation from one another. In contrast, an early modern don had usually come through almost exactly the same education, at least at undergraduate level, as any other early modern don, and in New College this typically went right back to Winchester College, where most of the New College fellows had been to school, together. This is at once an explanation of the unusually strong social cohesion between these academical 'Wykehamists', and also their failure, in this period, to produce more than a handful of truly noteworthy thinkers; William of Wykeham's production line worked a little too well. This was put most memorably by the antiquary Anthony Wood in the late seventeenth century in his crushing verdict on the Wykehamist academic trajectory: 'Golden Scholars, silver Bachelors, leaden Masters, wooden Doctors'.

Is this picture entirely fair? The purpose of this Note is to explain how, in the midst of what I am portraying as a generalist degree, tending in New College to dullness, some more interesting specialist instruction came to arise. A handful of the unusually large fellowship of the college (seventy at any one time) took on the role of tutor to small groups of students, quite like the modern system, except that each tutor was doing quite a similar job. But, as we shall see, they were gradually assisted by a number of college *lectores* or readers, academics paid to offer more specialist teaching, and if we wanted to seek the origin of the modern subject tutor in the early modern university, the rise of these college *lectores* is the development to track.

In terms of the statutory requirements of the university, we can define the period I am going to address as roughly that falling between the granting to Oxford of the Nova Statuta of 1564-65, and the replacement of these statutes by the Laudian Code of 1634. These seven decades overlapped with a major shift in how teaching happened in the wider university too. First, the medieval system whereby recent graduates offered instruction to students in the 'schools'—what we might think of as parallel to the modern departmental lecture—was on the decline. Secondly, more 'professors', i.e. a handful of senior academics appointed to specialist chairs, were now giving central instruction in the higher disciplines. And finally, the colleges themselves were starting to take much more interest in providing internal instruction via the fellows appointed as special lecturers. In time, these three developments would come to define how the collegiate university delivered its teaching. It is therefore completely mistaken to claim, as it often is, that the rise of a recognisably specialist system was the result of the Victorian reforms, notably the University of Oxford and Cambridge Acts of 1859 and 1877.

¹ The classic description of how the university operated educationally in this period, at least by statute, is by Andrew Clark, in C. W. Boase and Andrew Clark, eds., *Register of the University of Oxford*, 5 vols. (Oxford: Oxford Historical Society, 1885-89), vol. 2, part 1.

In the medieval period, the bulk of teaching in the university was done by recent MAs ('regents'), for one of the conditions of their degree was that they provide the *lectiones ordinariae* ('ordinary lectures') in the various faculties. Then, when Henry VIII established regius chairs in the higher disciplines of theology, law, and medicine, the need for regents in these faculties ceased. At the same time, the number of Arts graduates was increasing, and so a system developed whereby the Proctors nominated, for a small stipend paid by the other graduates, a handful of regent masters to cover the central lectures in the various subjects of the arts degree. These subjects were, strictly speaking, grammar, rhetoric, logic, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, music, natural philosophy, moral philosophy, metaphysics, with perhaps three lecturers to each subject.

This system of what we might describe as undergraduate lectures did not work very well. Some brilliant names can be found among the lecturers—Thomas Bodley did a stint in an unspecified art, Henry Savile lectured on astronomy in 1570-71, and after taking his MA in 1577 Richard Hakluyt became the first man in the university to offer lectures on geography—but many lecturers were just stirring the barrel for a few shillings. Attendance was in theory compulsory, but in practice poor; many students just paid their fine and stayed in their beds. The intrepid sometimes turned up to find no lecturer there at all.

A partial solution lay within the colleges. Every student had a tutor assigned to them when they joined their college. This fellow in theory led them through their entire first degree, or at least the opening three or four years of it. In New College these were the magistri informatores, who received by statute five shillings a year per pupil, and were not to exceed 100s in total, per annum (see rubric 28), meaning that there could only be four or five tutors at any one time. But in practice this was a serious burden for one don, especially if it meant not just instruction in, say, classical literature and history in the easier Latin, with a bit of moral philosophy on the side, but also the harder Greek, logic, and natural philosophy. The solution was to find funds to create lectureships inside the colleges, and, as we shall see, these lectureships in New College had long included civil law too, expanding in the early seventeenth century to include mathematics, Hebrew, and even, for a term or two, Arabic. So on the one hand the colleges kept control of basic instruction, as they still do. On the other the central university moved towards professorial teaching, and in less than two decades between 1619 and 1636, new chairs were established in geometry and astronomy (Savile, 1619), moral philosophy (White, 1621), natural philosophy (Sedley, 1621), ancient history (Camden, 1622), anatomy (Tomlins, 1624), music (Heather, 1626), and Arabic (Laud, 1636), to supplement the various regius chairs of the sixteenth century.

In the middle, colleges throughout the sixteenth century created an internal equivalent to the ailing regency system. Fortunately, most of the information concerning these creations was marshalled by Mordechai Feingold in his *The Mathematicians' Apprenticeship* (Cambridge, 1984), and then James McConica for the third volume of *The History of the University of Oxford* (Oxford, 1986). McConica in particular showed that in fact every college developed some kind of intramural lecturing system in the period. Corpus right from its foundation in 1517 had readers in Greek, theology, and humanity, whereas modest Trinity, founded exactly forty years later, could only manage two, in logic and humanity. Christ Church, another new foundation in the sixteenth century (1546), built such a system into its statutes, whereby five of the canons covered college lectures in logic, rhetoric, natural philosophy, mathematics, and moral philosophy. When the statutes of Exeter College were overhauled in 1566, Sir William Petre established a *lector* whose job was to teach a Latin or Greek author in term, but then to offer lectures on arithmetic, geometry, and cosmography in the vacations. Ancient Balliol founded lectures in 1571 in Greek, logic, and rhetoric, all three to be paid for from the revenues of the rectory of

Fillingham, Lincolnshire. In All Souls, in addition to a 'rector' in theology and a lecturer in natural philosophy, in 1559-60 we find a lecturer in law, and in 1567-8 and 1573 there are payments for a Greek lecturer. By 1572, Brasenose had generated four lectureships in natural philosophy, humanity, Greek, and a 'hall' or 'public' lecture. Around the same time, Queen's and the new St John's (1555) supported three lectureships, University and Lincoln Colleges four. Magdalen had public readers in theology, natural, and moral philosophy, but a Greek lecture was added in 1539, followed by Hebrew and rhetoric in 1565. Merton had perhaps the most intellectually varied internal teaching diet, with records of intramural instruction in grammar, Greek, rhetoric, medicine, Hebrew, even some Italian and Spanish.²

What is most noticeable in this list is the omnipresence of Greek. Was this just because the university had of its own lights embraced fully the new learning? Perhaps not. In 1535 there was a royal visitation of the university, and what the Visitors most keenly pressed was the issue of lectureships, specifically the dearth of them. So Magdalen, All Souls, and New College were each ordered, as the richer colleges, to fund lectureships in, specifically, Greek. (Interestingly, both All Souls and New College were further ordered to found parallel Latin lectureships, directions they appear to have ignored.)³ Several of these lectures, moreover, were to be 'public', i.e. open to the whole university, and here we can see the collegiate lectureships now not just complementing but structurally replacing the older regency system.

So, how did the system of lectureships work in New College? We will find the answer to this question by looking, as in other colleges, at the accounts, as this is where payments for such *lectores* are recorded. The college accounts take two forms: 'long books' (what bibliographers call 'holster manuscripts'), and 'rolls'. Every year, the two bursars entered income and expenditure in one of these long books, arranged into the four terms of the academic year (the fourth is what we would call the Long Vacation), as transactions arose. Then at the end of the year they copied their paper accounts, sometimes in somewhat reduced form, into a parchment roll, as the official end-of-year reckoning. Neither series survives in its entirety, but luckily where there is a gap we can usually supplement one series with the other.

These accounts demonstrate that New College founded its Greek lecture in the academic year of 1537/38, for under the category for *informatores* we find Masters Knights and Man paid a total of £6 'pro lect*ione* grecarum litterarum'. Man was one of the two John Mans in the college at this time, probably the future diplomat and dean of Gloucester (1514/15-1569); Knight is Thomas Knight, who became a secretary of Henry VIII and clerk of parliament—two rather illustrious names to commence the college's Greek lecture. The Greek lectureship was joined by lectures in logic and civil law in 1542/43, and then by (probably natural) philosophy in 1552/53. By the following year the lectureships in Greek and civil law had expanded from one to two each. Finally, in 1580, a 'Catechist' or theologian was appointed to lecture termly too.⁴

When we look at the accounts for the first decade of the seventeenth century, we see that the college was by that date employing a fairly stable corps of eight lecturers. There were senior and junior lecturers in civil law, as before, but now with the senior and junior lecturers in Greek too, likewise the two lecturers in logic, still one lecturer in (natural)

² James McConica, ed., *The History of the University of Oxford* [HUO], vol. 3 (Oxford, 1986), pp. 20, 44 (Corpus and Trinity); p. 34 (Christ Church); p. 58 (Exeter); pp. 57, 562 (Balliol); p. 63 (All Souls); pp. 14-15 (Brasenose); pp. 46, 59-60 (Queen's, St John's, University, Lincoln); pp. 55-6 (Magdalen); pp. 60-1 (Merton). See also *A History of the County of Oxford: Volume 3, the University of Oxford*, ed. H. E. Salter and Mary D. Lobel (Victoria Country History [VCH]), under 'New College' (pp. 144-62); Mordechai Feingold, *The Mathematicians' Apprenticeship* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 36-41.

³ HUO, vol. 3, p. 342.

⁴ VCH; *HUO*, vol. 3, p. 55.

philosophy, and, intermittently at first but stabilizing by the second decade, one in theology, the 'Catechist'.⁵ This is a fairly impressive team of specialists for one college, but then New College had a lot of students to teach.

The next major modification of this system came in 1617, when Warden Lake, who had been consecrated as Bishop of Bath and Wells in late 1616, finally left the college. Lake was a serious scholar, and had been one of the translators of the King James Bible. He was a patron of Hebrew and Arabic studies in Oxford, and when he took leave of his college, he gave to it a major part of his own library—around 500 volumes—with a luxurious Benefactors' Register into which these gifts were to be entered, in the hope that such a register would inspire future benefactors to imitation. Lake also settled an income on the college of $\pounds 10$ a year to pay for three lectureships, in logic, Hebrew, and mathematics.⁶ Certainly the mathematical lecture took place in the college library, as that was where the globes and maps (and other instruments?) necessary for such instruction were kept, and there is a bill that shows that the Hebrew lecturer used the library too.⁷

As we have seen, there had long been a lectureship, indeed two, in logic, and so Lake was here underwriting an institution that already existed. But his lectureships in Hebrew and mathematics were new to the college, and raised the total number of lectureships active throughout the academic year to nine (not ten, because the Lake money seems to have been used as an excuse to cut the logic lectureships to one). So, to take as an example the first year in which Lake's money can be seen doing its work, in 1617 the lawyers Richard Zouch and Warner South were the senior and junior lecturers in civil law (on 20*s* and 10*s* a term respectively), John Richards and 'Harwood' (probably Thomas Harward) in Greek (on 13*s* 4*d* and 10*s* respectively), Thomas (possibly John) Grent in philosophy (on 20*s*), Robert Polden was catechist (who received the highest equal termly payment, of £1 13*s* 4*d*), John Cooth was on arithmetic (16*s* 8*d*), William Oldys in logic (25*s*), and John Harris, Subwarden and a future regius professor of Greek, covered Hebrew (the other top salary, again £1 13*s* 4*d*).⁸ All these men were already fellows of the college.

New College was not being original here. As we have seen, both Magdalen and Merton had created Hebrew lectureships in the sixteenth century, and other colleges followed in the next century. Again, bespoke college lectureships in mathematics went back to even the fifteenth century in both Oxford and Cambridge, and by the time of Lake, mathematical lectures might be heard in Oxford in Magdalen, Corpus, St John's, Wadham, Trinity, Exeter, and possibly Merton and St Edmund Hall.⁹ But one of the peculiarities of most of these lectures was that they were to take place in what we now call the Long Vacation. So New College was unusual here in insisting on the availability of such instruction throughout the academic year, and in term time.

From the notes to the appendix below it will be clear that the majority of Lake lecturers comprised fellows of the college between their BA and their MA qualifications, and in effect the college was using its young men—we might say 'postgraduates', although that would strictly apply only to the MAs in this period—to do its internal lecturing. (This would gladden the heart of many a modern pro-vice-chancellor.) We do find the odd memorable name among the lecturers, including future wardens and regius professors of

⁵ E.g. NCA 7590, for 1600-1601, roll. Occasionally the logic tuition dropped to one tutor in this period.

⁶ William Poole, 'Early Oxford Hebraism and the King James Translators (1586-1617): The View from New College', *The King James Bible: Scholarly Contexts*, ed. Mordechai Feingold (Leiden: Brill, 2018), pp. 59-81, esp. pp. 75-9.

⁷ For instance we find in 1627 a payment of 2s to the local goldsmith for repairing the mathematical lecturer's globe, specifically in the library, and also 2s 'to the painter for painting the table for the Hebrew Reader'.

⁸ NCA 4193. It is signalled that Cooth undertook his duties for part of his stipend. Elsewhere in a manner too complex to indicate thoroughly here, we also find some substitutions, where one fellow evidently paid another to offer cover.

⁹ Feingold, Mathematicians' Apprenticeship, pp. 36-8.

Greek, but this all lay ahead of these men in the years when they lectured for their college. Rather, the Lake lectureships (and this is broadly true of the other lectureships too, with the frequent exception of the very well paid catechist, and sometimes the Hebrew lecturer too) provided welcome additional income for fairly junior academics.

One remarkable name among the lecturers, however, is that of Pasor (called 'Passar' in the accounts). For, as the accounts specify, this man was employed by the college to teach not just Hebrew but also Arabic.¹⁰ This is Mathias Pasor, a German in Oxford, one of the many wandering refugee scholars displaced by the Thirty Years War. He spent a brief period in Oxford in 1624, where he made a living teaching Hebrew and mathematics privately, before departing to Paris where he pursued his studies in Arabic and Syriac. Returning to Oxford in 1625 he found lodgings in Exeter College, in this period the great refuge for foreign intellectuals in Oxford, and broadened his teaching portfolio to include his new languages. The diarist of Queen's College, Thomas Crosfield, recalled attending Pasor's private classes, and one of Pasor's other students was Edward Pococke, who would in time be appointed the first Laudian Professor of Arabic. Another was Thomas Lydiat of New College, the famous astronomer and chronologer, who posited non-circular orbits independently of Kepler, and who also prepared an edition of the famous Greek chronological record, the Parian Marble, an antiquity still on prominent display in the Ashmolean today. It seems plausible that it was Lydiat who persuaded the college to employ Pasor, at least for the first two terms of the academic year of 1628-29. Pasor himself recalls this phase in his autobiography:

Anno MDCXXVIII. In *Collegio Maria*, vulgò Novo dicto, demandarunt mihi *pralectionem Hebraam*, quam post præfationem habitam 16. Oct. orsus sum explicatione Grammaticæ, tum Haggæi Prophetæ. Fundavit illam prælectionem D. *Lake*, Episcopus Bathonensis & Willensis, Custos quondam illius Collegii.¹¹

[In the year 1628 in the College of St Mary, commonly known as New, they commissioned a Hebrew lecture from me, which after an introductory address held on the 16 of October I began with an explanation of grammar, and then of the prophet Haggai. Lake, Bishop of Bath and Wells, and sometime Warden of that college, founded that lecture.]

The college accounts supplement Pasor's memory however. To 'Magistro Passar' (i.e. Pasor), 'Lectori Arabi', 'ex gratia domini Custodis et seniorum' was paid £1 for Arabic classes, and an additional £1 10s for Hebrew instruction, 'de exhibitione Arth: Lakes', in both terms. So Lake's endowment covered the costs for Hebrew, as it ought, but so keen were the fellows to secure Pasor's skills in Arabic that the Warden and the senior fellows agreed upon an extraordinary payment for these services.

We also know from Pasor's autobiography what he taught in his Oxford Arabic lectures: grammar, of course (probably from the 1613 textbook *Grammatica Arabica* of the Dutchman Erpenius), and the Arabic proverbs edited by the same scholar and published in 1614.¹² Pasor's grasp of Arabic has been suspected—'a case of the one-eyed leading the blind'—but it was at least a start, and we cannot today boast even parity with this situation.

¹⁰ For some remarks on Arabic in the college at this time, see Poole, 'Hebraism', pp. 69, 71, 76, 79-80.

¹¹ Pasor, Vita, appended to Abdias Widmarius, Parentalia in piam memoriam . . . d. Matthiæ Pasoris . . . Vita Matthiæ Pasoris ab hoc ipsomet consignata (Groningen, 1658), p. 44.

¹² Both editions may be found in the college library in BT3.19.12. Additionally, BT3.273.6 is Raphelengius's *Lexicon Arabicum* (Leiden, 1613), with Erpenius's appended 'Observationes'; BT3.61.9 is Erpenius's Arabic New Testament (Leiden, 1616); and the college holds a further four Erpenius publications. Most of these were presented by Wardens Lake and then Stringer.

But then in 1629 Pasor accepted a chair in moral philosophy in Groningen, and that was the last of him in Oxford.¹³

What happened to the Lake lectureships in the long term is beyond the scope of this Note. But a few spot-checks in the accounts do suggest some surprising trends. First, the college lectureships survived the Civil Wars: the accounts for 1658/59, 1659/60, and 1660/61 show payments for two catechists, lecturers in law and Greek, as well as Lake's trio of maths, Hebrew, and logic. At the turn of the century, and then again in 1750, we find the same. But by 1800 these have all disappeared, leaving behind only two: the 'Classical Lecture' and the 'Hebrew Lecture', the lecturer for the former on $\pounds 2 \ 10s$ a term and the latter on $\pounds 1 \ 5s$, perhaps an indication of their relative perceived importance. But by 1830 something very new is happening: starting in the second term 'Young' and 'Hill' are being paid for a 'Chymical Lecture', and 'Cox' and 'Sewell' for Moral Philosophy. Astoundingly, in the third term, the lectures are on geology, and in the fourth term, anatomy. This deserves further research.

The Lake lectureships, I have shown, were in some senses not new. They augmented what the college already did; and in one case, logic, Lake's money merely underwrote a lectureship already in existence. But they also mark the culmination of a process that had been going on for roughly a century, whereby colleges had started to take responsibility for specialist undergraduate instruction, often opening—or being forced to open—their doors to students from other colleges without such lectureships. Intramural lectureships also offered dons with particular talents an opportunity to exercise and develop them. There is evidence, for instance, that the college's mathematical lecturer Thomas Miller assisted scholars by providing transcripts of manuscripts in the library.¹⁴ We also often encounter in the publications of dons of the period a level of facility with, say, Hebrew or mathematics that seems difficult to explain if we consider merely the old tutorial system on the one hand, and the remains of the regency system on the other. Once we introduce, however, the ever-expanding system of collegiate lectureships, we begin to appreciate that both early modern Oxford and early modern New College within it were not in fact as wooden as their critics, ancient and modern, would have us believe.

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¹³ For Pasor see Feingold, *Mathematicians' Apprenticeship*, pp. 65, 83, 139, 152, and especially G. J. Toomer, *Eastern Wisedome and Learning: The Study of Arabic in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 98-101, whom I quote. Pasor's inaugural lecture in the university was published in Oxford in 1626: see Madan, *Oxford Books*, vol. 2, no. 590.

¹⁴ Feingold, *Mathematicians' Apprenticeship*, p. 38, citing the letter of Thomas Lydiat to the college librarian, Thomas Man, of 12 May 1625 (printed from MS Bodl. 313 in J. O. Halliwell, ed., *A Collection of Letters Illustrative of the Progress of Science in England* (London, 1841), pp. 50-3). Miller had transcribed some of a Latin paraphrase of Ptolemy for Thomas Lydiat, from context evidently New College MS 281, being the twelfthcentury Gerard of Cremona's translation of the Almagest from Arabic into Latin.

1617-18	<i>Mathematics</i> Cooth ¹⁵	<i>Hebrew</i> Harris ¹⁶ /Madgwick ¹⁷	<i>Logic</i> Oldys ¹⁸
 1620-21	Cooth/Stringer ¹⁹	Friers ²⁰	Moore ²¹
1621-22	Stringer/Miller ²²	Friers	Moore
1622-23	Miller	Friers	Moore/Chalkhill ²³
1623-24	Miller	Delamott ²⁴	Biggs ²⁵
1624-25	Chalkhill	Delamott	Biggs
1625-26	Chalkhill/Good ²⁶	Delamott	Biggs
1626-27	Good	Delamott	Biggs
1627-28	Barker ²⁷	Delamott	Miller
1628-29	Barker	Pasor/Miller	Miller
1629-30	Woodward ²⁸	Miller	Miller
1630-31	Woodward	Miller	Burt ²⁹
1632-33	Hyde ³⁰	Miller/Parsons ³¹	Barker
1637-38	Richards ³²	Miller	Beezley ³³
1638-39	Coles ³⁴	Miller	Beezley/Lamphire ³⁵
1639-40	Coles	Miller	Lamphire
1640-41	Coles	Miller/Parsons ³⁶	Lamphire

Appendix: The Lake Lecturers to 1640/1.

¹⁵ John Cooth (BA 1616, MA 1620) donated in 1621 various mathematical and astronomical works to the college library (Benefactors' Register, p. 65).

¹⁶ John Harris (BA 1608, MA 1612, BD 1619, DD 1622, regius professor of Greek 1619-22. etc.; at this point he was subwarden).

¹⁷ Henry Madgewick (BCL 1616).

¹⁸ William Oldys or Oldis (BA 1614, MA 1618, BD 1626, DD 1643). He was the vicar of Adderbury from 1627, and was killed by parliamentary soldiers in 1645.

¹⁹ Henry Stringer, a future warden (BA 1618, MA 1621, BD 1632, DD 1642). In addition to his degrees he was appointed regius professor of Greek in 1625, and had interests in Arabic too (see above).

²⁰ Samuel Friers (BA 1607, MA 1611, DD 1618).

²¹ John Moore (BA 1616, MA 1620, BD 1631); Thomas Moore (BA 1620, MA 1624) seems just too young. ²² For Thomas Miller (BA 1619, MA 1623, BD 1632), who copied manuscripts for Thomas Lydiat, see the discussion above.

²³ John Chalkehill (BA 1620, MA 1624).

²⁴ Probably Matthew Delamott, matr. 1620, but he does seem rather young; a man of the same name took his BA in 1633, but it would be odd if they were the same person.

²⁵ Richard Biggs (BA 1621, MA 1625).

²⁶ John Good (BA 1624, MA 1628, BD 1638).

²⁷ William Barker (BA 1625, MA 1629, BD 1637, DD 1661).

²⁸ Michael Woodward, future warden and organiser of the college archives (BA 1625, MA 1629, BD 1637, DD 1660).

²⁹ William Burt (BA 1629, MA 1631, DD 1658). He was master of the Free School at Thame from 1631 to 1647, etc.

³⁰ Probably Thomas Hyde (BA 1631, etc.).

³¹ Probably Richard Parsons (BA 1622, MA 1626, BD 1636) rather than William Parsons (BCL 1629, DCL 1660).

³² John Richards (BA 1635, MA 1639, BD 1661).

³³ John Beeslie (BA 1635, MA 1639).

³⁴ Either Edmund Coles (BA 1638, MA 1642), or Gilbert Coles (BA 1639, MA 1643, DD 1667); they both seem rather junior for the role.

³⁵ John Lamphire (BA 1638, MA 1642, MD 1660), a notable scholar, serving as Camden professor of ancient history from 1660 to 1688, and principal of New Inn Hall and subsequently Hart Hall.

³⁶ Probably Richard Parsons (BA 1622, MA 1626, BD 1636.