Learning Arabic in Early Modern England*

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On 24 March 1608 William Eyres, fellow of Emmanuel College and one of the translators of the King James Bible, wrote a long letter to James Ussher, in which he sketched the contours of a projected learned defence of the Masoretic version of Scriptures and the antiquity of Hebrew vowel points. In this attempt to vindicate ‘the purity and integrity of the sources from the carelessness of copyists and conjectures of some critics’, Eyres came to consider necessary the acquisition of Arabic. In the absence of teachers, however, Eyres followed a practice common among many contemporaries: he sought to learn the language by resorting to Agostino Giustiniani’s polyglot Psalter, decrypting the Arabic by comparing it to parallel texts in Hebrew and Greek. Alas, Eyres grumbled, even with the assistance of Guillaume Postel’s Arabic grammar – lent to him by Ussher – he failed to overcome the difficulties inherent in the Psalter. Nor did he deem additional labor worth the effort. Giustiniani’s Arabic version appeared to him to be based either on the Septuagint or the Vulgate translations, but not on ‘Hebrew truth’.

A decade earlier, Eyres commiserated, there had existed an opportunity to institute the study of Arabic at Cambridge, but it had been dashed by the departure of the Jew [Philipus Ferdinandus], with whom he had intended to study. Not that he cared to become an ‘Arabomaniac [*ἀραβικομανής*] (as Clenardus once was)’, Eyres hastened to add; only to ‘taste Arabic studies with the edge of [his] lips, so that [he] could judge more correctly on some other matters’. Hence his delight upon receiving from Ambrose Ussher, James’s brother, a transcription of a few Qur’anic passages which, he hoped, would assist him in compiling a serviceable Arabic grammar. After describing his projected treatise, Eyres concluded despondently: ‘I have not yet been able to do anything in Arabic which would be worthy of a work; perhaps if I could use our mutual master Christmann, or Bedwell in London, or rather your Ambrose in Dublin, as a teacher face to face. But I cannot.’¹

* I wish to thank Alastair Hamilton, Carol Magun, and Gerald Toomer for their helpful comments

1 J. Ussher, *The Correspondence of James Ussher 1600–1656*, ed. E. Boran, 3 vols, Dublin, 2015, vol. 1, pp. 24, 34.

Eyres's letter encapsulates some of the most salient features of the pursuit of Arabic during the early modern period: its subservience to the interests of theology, made worse by the scarcity of teachers and books, thus rendering the difficulty of the language even more debilitating. Not that hardship *per se* was a deterrent. The pedagogical principles informing early modern humanist erudition actually glorified the symbiotic relationship between hard work and proficiency. As Richard Hooker stressed in the *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, the 'search of knowledge is a thing painful and the painfulness of knowledge is that which maketh the will so hardly inclinable thereunto'. Isaac Barrow concurred: 'if to get a competent knowledge about a few things, or to be reasonably skilful in any sort of learning, be difficult, how much industry doth it require to be well seen in many, or to have waded through the vast compass of learning'? Such a quest would exercise and strain all our faculties in painful study, and necessarily so. For knowledge is not innate and 'the gods sell all things, that is for pains; without which, the best wit and greatest capacity may not render a man learned'.²

Making virtue of necessity, therefore, commentators made the hardship inherent in the study of Arabic its selling point. Edward Kellet cited approvingly Daniel Heinsius's commendation of the Oriental languages which, he added, 'are of infinite worth, most necessarie to be studied, exacting as much labour and pains before they be gained, as they afford delight and profit spirituall when they are obtained'.³ In fact, well-wishers constructed a mythology about those who had attained mastery *proprio Marte* – by their own industry and without assistance – expressly to inspire younger scholars. Pride of place was given to Nicholas Clenardus, whose heroic efforts to master Arabic – in order to better understand Hebrew – were described in some detail in his *Peregrinationum, ac de rebus Machometicis Epistolae elegantissimae*. Or consider Thomas Erpenius's 1620 oration 'on the Value of the Arabic Language', wherein he enthused over Clenardus and Etienne Hubert, for both of whom it 'was not too much trouble [...] to undertake lengthy, dangerous and costly journeys' for the sake of Arabic. Those 'whose circumstances did not permit them to make such long and dangerous journeys' – Joseph Scaliger and Isaac

2 R. Hooker, *The Folger Library Edition of the Works of Richard Hooker*, ed. W. Speed Hill, 7 vols in 8 vols, Cambridge, Mass. and Binghampton, NY, 1977–1998, vol. 1, p. 81; I. Barrow, *Theological Works*, ed. Alexander Napier, 9 vols., Cambridge, 1859, vol. 3, pp. 433–4.

3 E. Kellet, *Miscellanies of Divinitie Divided into Three Books*, Cambridge, 1633, p. 48 (second pagination).

Casaubon, for example – nevertheless ‘managed with great effort and application and by taking any opportunity that presented itself at home, to make progress as far as they were able in acquiring a most serviceable knowledge of Arabic’. How fortunate, therefore, were the Leiden students to have Erpenius as their teacher: ‘You have an opportunity such as they never had [...] You need not undertake dangerous journeys to the Orient or torment yourselves night and day over one or two pieces of paper at home without a guide and – worst of all, according to [Clenardus] – with only yourselves as teachers. Thanks to the most noble governors of the university, you may make more progress every day than they did in a month!’⁴

Subsequent Arabists often availed themselves of Erpenius’s rhetorical flourish. In 1626 Matthias Pasor waxed eloquent over the heroic efforts of Clenardus to satiate his desire to acquire Arabic, before assuring his auditors at Oxford that owing to his lectures they would have no need to follow his extreme measures. Two decades later, following the institution of Christian Ravius as lecturer in the Oriental Languages in London, Thomas Smith thanked Samuel Hartlib for enabling such a lectureship: ‘we need no longer travaile with Clenard to Arabia, nor with others to other forreigne parts to learne the language’.⁵ Even more revealing is the case of Thomas Cawton, Sr., who, in 1658, sent his son ‘to learn the *Hebrew*, *Syriack*, and *Arabick* tongues’ with Robert Sheringham in Rotterdam. To motivate his son, Cawton furnished him with a copy of Clenardus’s *Epistolae* which, he hoped, would ‘stir up [his] zeal towards the *Arabick* tongue’ – presumably as much as it had his own some quarter of a century earlier, when he had perused the book upon the recommendation of Abraham Wheelock when embarking on the study of Arabic.⁶

Unfortunately, enthusiasm often failed to suffice. When in the early 1650s Isaac Barrow and Samuel Sprint approached Abraham Wheelock for instruction, the ailing and impoverished professor did his best to dissuade them. Hence, ‘upon hearing how great Difficulties they were to encounter, and how few Books were in that Language, and the little Advantage that could be got by it, they laid aside their Designe’. Barrow’s friend and biographer, Abraham Hill, commented on Barrow’s zeal and diligence: how ‘in all his studies his way was

4 R. Jones, ‘Thomas Erpenius (1584–1624) on the Value of the Arabic Language’, *Manuscripts of the Middle East*, 1, 1986, pp. 15–25, p. 22.

5 M. Pasor, *Oratio Pro Linguae Arabicae*, Oxford, 1627, sig. B1^v–B3; Sheffield, University Library, Hartlib Papers, 15/6/27.

6 T. Cawton, *The Life and Death Of... Thomas Cawton*, London, 1662, pp. 67–8, 75; Hartlib Papers, 15/6/27A.

not to leave off his design till he brought it to effect' – except in Arabic, where 'he made an essay for a little while, and then deserted it.'⁷ Some who were thus frustrated, sought to exculpate their failure by blaming the difficulty of the language, as well as its irrelevance to the grand scheme of humanist learning. Case in point is John Hacket, Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, who conceded that 'he could never fix upon *Arabian* learning', finding it '*siticulosa regio, a dry and barren land where no water is*' – and having further been discouraged, as a young man, by such as had plodded most in it'. Small wonder, then, upon hearing his friend Claude Salmasius proclaim that 'he accounted no man solidly learned without skill in *Arabick*, and other *Eastern Languages*', Hacket retorted by lamenting the sight of many talented men who 'prosecuted the *Eastern Languages* so much as to neglect the *Western* learning' – and often their discretion as well!⁸

Hacket was emboldened to belittle the value of Arabic after both John Selden and Robert Creighton had purportedly assured him 'that they should often read ten Pages [of Arabic] for one line of sense, and one word of moment', further averring that 'there was no learning like to what Scholars may find in *Greek Authors*, as *Plato, Plutarch*, etc'. Similar expressions abound. Several months before his death on 21 March 1656, James Ussher told John Evelyn: 'how greate the losse of time was to study much the Eastern languages, that excepting *Hebrew*, there was little fruite to be gatherd of exceeding labour; that besides some *Mathematical* bookes, the *Arabic* itselfe had little considerable'. Several years later, upon receiving a request to recommend texts for the study of Oriental languages, John Worthington lamented the paucity of such books, without which 'the pains and time spent upon grammar will not receive a due recompence'. His own pursuit of such languages, Worthington added, had been 'cooled by that very consideration'; that there existed no printed books, only manuscripts, and those 'are kept close, and are not for common use'. Nor did Worthington care to trouble himself further 'about the keys when there was no treasure of things to be come at'.⁹ For his part, in 1691 Humphrey Prideaux turned down an offer to succeed Edward Pocock as Laudian Professor of Arabic, partly because he 'nauseate[d] that learning, and [had] resolved to

7 E. Calamy, *An Abridgment of Mr. Baxter's History of His Life and Times*, 2nd edn, 2 vols, London, 1713, vol. 2, p. 340; Barrow, *Theological Works*, vol. 1, p. xlii.

8 J. Hacket, *A Century of Sermons Upon Several Remarkable Subjects*, ed. Thomas Plume, London, 1675, p. li.

9 J. Evelyn, *Diary*, ed. E.S. De Beer, 6 vols, Oxford, 1955, vol. 3, p. 156; J. Worthington, *The Diary and Correspondence of Dr. John Worthington*, eds J. Crossley and R.C. Christie, 2 vols in 3 vols, Manchester, 1847–1886, vol. 2/1, p. 26.

loose noe more time upon it'. As late as 1722 Prideaux reiterated Worthington's observation, insisting that the study of Arabic 'cannot, without long and sedulous application, be attained unto; and it adds to the difficulty, that most of the books, to be made use of in this matter, lie in manuscript, which cannot be easily come at, or easily read'.¹⁰

Such a mixture of enthusiasm and gloom was common among early modern commentators, reflecting the peculiar position of Arabic in the republic of English letters. Before the late sixteenth century, the study of Arabic lay outside the humanist conception of the encyclopaedia of learning that informed higher education. Only from the 1590s, owing primarily to the reputation of Joseph Scaliger, did it gather momentum, reaching its apogee by the mid-seventeenth century. Such a late entry into the universities necessarily relegated Arabic to an ancillary position. Not only did Arabic become the fourth learned language that students were now asked to acquire, but it shared nothing of the infrastructure that facilitated the acquisition of Latin and Greek, or even of Hebrew. Thus, by the early seventeenth century a growing number of students arrived at Oxford and Cambridge well versed in Latin and Greek, in addition to a certain competence in Hebrew. While there, they continued studying the three languages in tandem – under the supervision of tutors and in college lectures. In contrast, few English grammar schools offered instruction in Arabic. Nor were Arabic lectureships in colleges ever established or most university tutors capable of instructing their charges in Arabic.

Would-be Arabists, therefore, were at a considerable disadvantage compared with aspiring Grecians and Hebraists. Likewise, the absence of early-learning opportunities constrained significantly professors of Arabic at both Oxford and Cambridge. University professors, it should be remembered, were expected not to inculcate elementary instruction in their respective disciplines, but to offer more specialized lectures that went beyond college teachings and tutorials. Latham Waineright articulated just such a philosophy in 1815, while defending the Cambridge curriculum:

It is sometimes asked, what useful purpose is promoted by the Professorships of Hebrew and Arabic established in both Universities, when no lectures are delivered on the subject? To this we reply, that though lectures are in fact occasionally read on these topics (as is at present the case with the Arabic professor at Cambridge), yet the design of these institutions is

10 H. Prideaux, *Letters of Humphrey Prideaux ... To John Ellis*, ed. E.M. Thompson, Westminster, 1875, p. 150; H. Prideaux, *The Life of the Reverend Humphrey Prideaux*, London, 1748, pp. 277–8.

not regularly to teach the elements of the language in question, which is best effected by private tuition, but to afford encouragement to the pursuit of an object which presents but few attractions, and to the critical examination of those Oriental dialects which would otherwise, perhaps, be speedily neglected, if not utterly lost.¹¹

Waineright may have been an apologist, but he expounded a commonplace. As John Postletwaite, High Master of St. Paul's School, noted in 1697 in regard to Hebrew, 'such Persons as have attain'd to any excellency in it, have been very little owing to any body but themselves, and to their Books in it'.¹² The principle held true in different contexts as well. Those who had contributed most to the advancement of the mathematical sciences, Thomas Hobbes wrote, 'attained their knowledge by other means than that of public lectures, where few auditors, and those of unequal proficiency, cannot make benefit by one and the same lesson'. Indeed, 'the true use of public professors, especially in the mathematics, being to resolve the doubts, and problems, as far as they can, of such as come unto them with desire to be informed'.¹³ The statutes of the Laudian Professorship of Arabic confirm this. They enjoin the incumbent to lecture for an hour on some approved text, 'in which the proprieties of the language and the elegance of expression are remarkable'. And while the professor was expected to 'give a clear explanation of the words and grammatical meaning of the author, and point out all that has a reference to the grammar and peculiarities of the language', the language of the statute indicates an expectation of prior knowledge on the part of auditors. Even more important than the provision of a weekly lecture are two additional requirements: First, that the professor 'remain for a while in the school' after the lecture, in order to respond to 'any questions on points mentioned in the course of his lecture'. Second, that he shall return to the School for three hours in the afternoon, purposely to teach those 'who choose to attend him for the sake of instruction'. He must also 'at other times show himself easy of access in teaching those who ask his opinion at seasonable times'.¹⁴

In practice, therefore, both before and after the institution of Arabic lectureships, private instruction and solitary study remained central for the

11 L. Waineright, *The Literary and Scientific Pursuits Which Are Encouraged and Enforced in the University of Cambridge*, London, 1815, p. 76n.

12 Bodl. Oxf., MS Ballard 34, fol. 86.

13 T. Hobbes, *The English Works*, ed. W. Molesworth, 11 vols, London, 1839–1845, vol. 7, p. 346.

14 G.R.M. Ward, *Oxford University Statutes*, 2 vols, London, 1845, vol. 1, pp. 295–6.

acquisition of the language. In this regard, the example of John Bainbridge, Savilian Professor of Astronomy at Oxford, is instructive. He had recently acquired an Arabic astronomical book, Bainbridge informed James Ussher on 3 October 1626. And while he could perfectly understand the tables in it, the appended rules explaining their use proved more difficult. Such difficulty did

so much the more incite me to find out that particular meaning, which is not possible without knowledge in the Arabic; wherefore I have made entrance into the Rudiments thereof, and hope (*labore et constantia*), at length to be able to translate any Arabic Book of Mathematicks. It is a difficult thing which I undertake, but the great hopes I have in that happy *Arabia* to find most precious Stones for the adorning and enriching my συντάξις μαθηματικῇ, do overcome all difficulties, besides the great Satisfaction to see with mine own Eyes... and not to be led hoodwinkt by others, who though they may be expert in that Tongue, yet without special skill in these particular Sciences, cannot truly translate the Arabick; besides that every one hath a special purpose in his study of that Language, taking no delight to follow another's course; *stultum est ducere invitos canes ad venandum*.

Bainbridge was not a person to proceed piecemeal. Having decided to undertake the study of Arabic, he demonstrated full appreciation of the best course to pursue: he entreated Ussher to supply him with a good copy of the Qur'an – 'the only Book whereby that Language is attained'.¹⁵

The case of Bainbridge, I believe, illustrates the manner in which most English scholars pursued Arabic: independently – though in conjunction with other enthusiasts, and with the occasional recourse to native or visiting experts – and through extremely hard work. Thomas Cawton Sr., for example, 'took much delight in the *Chaldee*, *Syriack* and *Arabick*, and to gain more and more skill in them, got acquaintance with the famous *Wheelock*'. Notwithstanding such assistance, Cawton 'got the skill he had in languages most by his own industry, having little or no assistance or encouragement but his love to tongues'.¹⁶ Glimpses of the sort of difficulties encountered by would-be Orientalists in contemporary literature abound. As late as 1698, for example, an educational projector, who proposed to simplify the acquisition of Latin, likened what he considered to be an obsolete method of teaching Latin to that informing the acquisition of Arabic: If one were to embark on the

¹⁵ Ussher, *Correspondence*, vol. 1, pp. 374–5.

¹⁶ Cawton, *Life and Death*, pp. 6–7.

study of Arabic, he wrote, armed with ‘an *earnest desire*, a *firm resolution*, and the *Terms of Art*’, would he not become discouraged if his teacher instructed him to ‘get *Erpenius’s Grammar* perfectly without book, and afterwards fix in [his] *Memory* two or three thousand words out of an *Arabian Lexicon*’? Half a century earlier Thomas Fuller had singled out a key impediment to the acquisition of Hebrew, which applied equally, if not more so, to Arabic. ‘More pains then quicknesse of wit is required to get it, and with daily exercise’ to continue it. Worse still, he added, Apostacy herein is usuall, to fall totally from the language, by a little neglect.’¹⁷

With such a background in mind, we can attempt to reconstruct the formation of the English School of Arabic. It probably owed its genesis to Lancelot Andrewes, who entered Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, in 1571, already in possession of some fluency in Hebrew, which he had acquired while studying under Richard Mulcaster at Merchant Taylor’s School in London. According to his biographer, after he graduated BA in 1575, Andrewes spent a month in London every Easter vacation, during which time his father hired local teachers to improve him in arts and languages. One such teacher was John Hopkinson, whom a later student described as ‘an obscure and simple man for worldly affayres, but expert in all the lefthand tongs’ – and who ‘had at that time [1588] great lerned men that consulted him in those languages, and especially’ Lancelot Andrewes. We may safely assume that Andrewes had improved himself in the Oriental languages, including Arabic, by the time he graduated MA in 1578, for in June 1579 he subscribed his name to a petition urging Sir Francis Walsingham to permit Hopkinson’s return to England, after he had ‘been induced by papists and seminaries to go abroad without license’.¹⁸

Andrewes, therefore, may well have been the inspiration behind the determination of his senior colleague at Pembroke, Lancelot Browne, to learn Arabic as he embarked on a study of Avicenna. More importantly, Andrewes launched William Bedwell’s career as an Arabist, serving first as his fellow traveler, and later as Bedwell’s chief patron. Andrewes also handed over to Bedwell a massive project he had begun: a compilation of an Arabic lexicon. As Bedwell commented years later, the project’s inherent difficulty, exacerbated by other

17 R. Ainsworth, *The Most Natural and Easie Way of Institution Containing Proposals for Making a Domestic Education Less Chargeable to Parents and More Easie and Beneficial to Children*, London, 1698, p. 13; T. Fuller, *The Holy and Profane State*, ed. J. Nichols, London, 1841, p. 67.

18 H. Isaacson, *The Life and Death of Lancelot Andrewes*, ed. S. Isaacson, London, 1829, pp. 27–8; J. Whitelocke, *Liber Famelicus*, ed. J. Bruce, London, 1858, p. 13; TNA, SP 12/131/34. I thank Glyn Parry for furnishing me with a copy of the petition. For Hopkinson, see M. Feingold, ‘John Hopkinson of Grub Street: An Elizabethan Orientalist’, *Notes and Queries*, 62, 2015, pp. 545–9.

employments, had prevented Andrewes from progressing far in the project, and it instead became Bedwell's life-long ambition. We need not presume, of course, that Andrewes's knowledge of Arabic was 'perfect and absolute, both for grammar and profound knowledge'. Regardless, his continued interest in Arabic, and unwavering support of Oriental learning, proved instrumental for the emergence of the English community of Arabists.¹⁹

Bedwell graduated MA from Trinity College in 1588, and though never a fellow, he spent considerable time at Cambridge in subsequent years. Thus, we may hazard to assume that already then Bedwell introduced certain of his colleagues to the study of Arabic. For example, the otherwise unknown John Titchbourne (MA 1592), who offered instruction in Arabic in the early 1590s to at least one of his students, Thomas Comber, who would become master of the College in 1631.²⁰ Trinity College would also remain central to the study of Arabic. Abraham Wheelock matriculated in 1611, and Herbert Thorndike followed two years later. Another group flourished at Emmanuel College. It included William Bedell (MA 1592), who 'attained also no mean skill in the Syriac, Arabic and Hebrew tongues', knowledge he 'bettered himself much after in his travels'.²¹ Younger contemporaries included Samuel Croke (MA 1596) – who, his biographer informs us, was skilled in both Hebrew and Arabic, languages 'which he sparingly made use of, only upon necessary occasions [...] for the more full, and clear opening' of Scripture²² – and the before mentioned William Eyres (MA 1599), who regretted his failure to improve his Arabic while Philip Ferdinand had resided at Cambridge. Many similar clusters of scholars proliferated at Cambridge and Oxford throughout the seventeenth century and beyond, and it was owing to these mutual 'support groups' that Arabic achieved not an insignificant footing in England during the early modern period.

As new research continues to expand our understanding of the scale of the community of Arabists, the extent of their commitment, and the degree of proficiency they attained remains a desideratum. Certainly, an assessment is in order, given the penchant for hyperbole on the part of their biographers. Consider the effusive praises bestowed on Miles Smith, Bishop of Gloucester.

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- 19 L. Andrewes, *Ninety-Six Sermons*, 5 vols, Oxford, 1848, vol. 5, p. 291; A. Hamilton, *William Bedwell the Arabist 1563–1632*, Leiden, 1985, pp. 9, 111.
 - 20 D. Lloyd, *Memoires of the Lives, Actions, Sufferings & Deaths of Those ... That Suffered ... For the Protestant Religion*, London, 1668, p. 447.
 - 21 W. Bedell, *Two Biographies of William Bedell Bishop of Kilmore*, ed. E.S. Shuckburgh, Cambridge, 1902, p. 5.
 - 22 S. Clarke, *A Collection of the Lives of Ten Eminent Divines*, London, 1662, p. 27.

According to the divine who preached his funeral sermon in 1624, Smith had been 'perfect in the Greeke, the Hebrew, the Chaldee, the Syriacke, and the Arabicke tongues'. Eight years later, the editor of Smith's sermons went further: 'so conversant he was and expert in the Chaldaie, Syriacke, and Arabicke, that he made them as familiar to him, almost as his owne native tongue'.²³ Now, Smith almost certainly began studying Arabic only in his late fifties, while living in London and putting the final touches to the King James Version of the Bible. As Josephus Abudacnus intimated to Thomas Erpenius in 1611, Smith had been among those who had approached him for instruction in Arabic. Smith appears to have made some progress, for already the previous year Abudacnus had informed Bedwell of his intention to send Smith 'something in Arabic'. Smith evidently continued to study Arabic until his death, judging by his acquisition of Raphelengius's Arabic lexicon and Erpenius's Arabic grammar – both published in 1613 – as well as Erpenius's editions of the Arabic New Testament and the Arabic Pentateuch published, respectively, in 1616 and 1622. Only a careful study of his annotations to these books will offer clues to Smith's proficiency, though preliminary results indicate, unsurprisingly, his exclusive concern with the contribution of Arabic to the elucidation of Scripture.²⁴

The eagerness with which elderly scholars embarked on the study of Arabic when an expert could be found was relatively common. When Mathias Pasor settled in Oxford in 1626, for example, he was employed by the forty-eight-year old John Prideaux – Rector of Exeter College – and by the fifty-one-year old Thomas Clayton, Regius Professor of Medicine. One may also assume the presence of senior members of Oxford among the 'diverse constante hearers' who frequented Pasor's public lectures in early 1627.²⁵ Enthusiasm, however, invariably proved short-lived; partly owing to the inherent difficulties involved, partly to cost, and partly to the inadequacy of the lecturer. Within a few months, for example, Pasor found it prudent to substitute the teaching of Arabic with Hebrew and Chaldean – either because demand for Arabic waned, or because he had quickly exhausted his own limited knowledge of the language.²⁶

23 M. Smith, *Sermons*, London, 1632, p. 302, sig. ¶¶2. Wood copied the latter statement into his biography of Smith. Anthony Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses ... To Which Are Added the Fasti*, ed. P. Bliss, 4 vols, London, 1813–1820, vol. 2, p. 359.

24 Smith's books are in Hereford Cathedral Library; I owe my knowledge of them to information received from Tom Roebuck.

25 G.J. Toomer, *Eastern Wisdom and Learning: The Study of Arabic in Seventeenth-Century England*, Oxford, 1996, p. 98; Bodl. Oxf., MS Tanner 72, fol. 211.

26 For Pasor, see Toomer, *Eastern Wisdom*, pp. 98–9. Christian Ravius claimed that Pasor had 'no expertise at all in Oriental Studies'. Ussher, *Correspondence*, vol. 3, p. 890.

One may infer Pasor's experience at Oxford from Philip Ferdinand's lot as a Hebrew teacher at Cambridge a generation earlier. In 1597, while still an undergraduate at King's College, William Gough began frequenting the lectures of the converted Jew, along with 'many other' students who availed themselves of such an opportunity. Most 'grew soon weary', and Gough alone 'kept close to [Ferdinand] so long as he tarried. But when he was gone, those which before had lost the opportunity, now seeing their own folly, they came to Master Gough, and entreated him to instruct them in the grounds of the said language'.²⁷ Cognizant of the limited appeal of a private teacher of Hebrew, Ferdinand left Cambridge after only one year. Whether he offered instruction in Arabic as well during that year is unclear. All we know is that William Eyres, as noted above, regretted his failure to take advantage of the opportunity.

If demand rarely sufficed to maintain a visiting Orientalist for an extended period, aspiring students found recourse to local talent. William Gough's willingness to impart to others the knowledge he had acquired from Ferdinand mirrored Lancelot Andrewes's readiness to assist colleagues in learning Arabic – a pattern that became a staple in the transmission of recondite learning. Thus, no sooner had Abraham Wheelocke acquired a reputation as a capable Arabist, than he became an oracle for those wishing to improve themselves. On 26 April 1625, for example, Robert Robinson, a former colleague from Trinity College, and now schoolmaster of King's Lynn, wrote Wheelocke a fulsome letter by way of requesting assistance: 'what course I must take to reade y^e Arabicke without theyre vowells [...] seeing my Evangells are such. secondly whether any Syriacke Grammar bee sufficient to teach to reade ye Syriack Testament for Myricaëus is not [...] & 3 onely at this time whether a chaldee grammar in a chaldee character bee to bee gotten or any meanes to reade my chaldee psalter'.²⁸ Four years later, another claimant on Wheelocke's time, the sixty-nine-year-old John Bois, appeared transported. He had 'fallen in love with Arabicke', a friend informed Wheelocke, 'and that which seemed before to him very difficult, now he thinketh to be easie: he can reade most wordes with recourse to the Alphabette'.²⁹

Our knowledge of how, where, and when, hopeful scholars acquired their grounding in Arabic, is extremely fragmentary. Did Ambrose Ussher, for example, learn the language during his sojourn in Cambridge – probably in the early years of the seventeenth century – or had he been one of William Bedwell's

²⁷ S. Clarke, *The Lives of Thirty-Two English Divines*, London, 1677, p. 236.

²⁸ CUL, MS Dd., 3.12. v. 11, cited in J.C.T Oates, *Cambridge University Library: A History from the Beginnings to the Copyright of Queen Anne*, Cambridge, 1986, p. 193.

²⁹ CUL, MS Dd., III. 12 v. 5.

first London students? Certainly, Bedwell's dwellings became a Mecca for numerous would-be Arabists, including Thomas Erpenius, John Selden, John Greaves, Edward Pococke and, probably, Abraham Wheelocke. Such pilgrimages were common practice. John Gregory, for example, was reputed to have 'travelled through twelve Languages without any guide, except Mr. [John] Dod the Decalogist, whose Society and Directions for the *Hebrew Tongue* he enjoyed one Vacation near *Banbury*'.³⁰ Even if Gregory did not spend another vacation with Bedwell, he undoubtedly improved his Arabic through the assistance of those who did – Greaves and Pococke, for example. Crucially, however, the initial instruction received from Bedwell or from visiting scholars, was invariably followed by extended periods of solitary study, punctuated only by occasional consultation or collaboration with colleagues.

Seventeenth-century visitors to Oxford and Cambridge, who are known to have offered instruction in Arabic, included the above-mentioned Josephus Abudacnus, who taught intermittently at Oxford for three years (1610–1613). The identity of his students is unknown, but they may have included Richard Kilbye, regius professor of Hebrew, and Arthur Lake, Warden of New College. Such inference is based on the small collection of Arabic books that Lake gave to New College Library in 1617, and the Arabic dictionary that Kilbye bequeathed to Lincoln College three years later – probably Raphelengius's *Lexicon Arabicum*, which Isaac noted seeing in his study in 1613.³¹ In the following decade, as noted above, Mathias Pasor offered some Arabic instruction in Oxford, and in 1649 it was Christian Ravius's turn to try his luck there, with no more success. According to Thomas Danson – a former student of Ravius – the latter left Oxford after only one year 'because he found few inclined to the study of the orientall Tongues'.³²

In addition to such 'professional' lecturers, other visitors appear to have assisted the Arabic studies of Oxford men while in attendance. Sixtinus Amama, for example, who arrived in Oxford in 1614, after studying Arabic for several months with Erpenius, may have offered instruction in Arabic, in conjunction with his teaching of Hebrew at Exeter College.³³ Another former

30 Lloyd, *Memoires*, p. 89.

31 M. Feingold, 'Oriental Studies', in *The History of the University of Oxford, vol. 4: The Seventeenth Century*, Oxford, 1997, ed. N. Tyacke, p. 476; J. L. Black and R. J. Fehrenbach, 'Richard Kilby', *Private Libraries in Renaissance England*, 7, Tempe, AZ, 2009, pp. 225–35 (234).

32 Bodl. Oxf., MS Top. Oxon c. 160, fol. 7; Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses*, vol. 3, p. 1131. For Ravius's career at Oxford, see Toomer, *Eastern Wisdom*, pp. 196–7.

33 J. E. Platt, 'Sixtinus Amama (1593–1629): Franeker Professor and Citizen of the Republic of Letters', in *Universiteit Te Franeker 1585–1811*, eds G. Th. Jensma et al., Leeuwarden, 1985, pp. 236–48.

student of Erpenius, Henry Jacob, became in 1629 praelector of philology at Merton College, where he remained until the Parliamentary Visitors of the University ejected him in 1648.³⁴ Twelve years later, Merton College became home to Thomas Cawton, Jr., who had studied Oriental languages in Rotterdam with Robert Sheringham, and who came to Oxford in order to study with Samuel Clarke. Cawton left in 1662, owing to his refusal to conform to the religious settlement of the Restoration, and established a dissenting congregation in London, where he died in 1677.³⁵

The establishment of Arabic professorships at Oxford and Cambridge in the 1630s did not fundamentally alter the piecemeal manner through which Oxbridge dons acquired and maintained their knowledge of Arabic. For one thing, university professors could no more rely on a continuous and healthy supply of students than could itinerant lecturers. In 1639, for example, Abraham Wheelocke intimated to Thomas Greaves his disappointment at the paucity of auditors: 'I am ashamed to tell you few do Arabicari in this university; yet some doe yet ἄλλις ἐις ἄλλις οὐδεὶς. Soe that in the church there will be some that promote these studies'. In contrast, two years later he commented with some astonishment on the 'unusual number of auditors at his 8 a.m. lecture'.³⁶ For his part, Thomas Greaves expressed in a 1639 letter to Archbishop Laud his concern regarding the establishment of the Oxford professorship in Arabic on a voluntary basis: 'Neither are any bound to be Auditors, which freedome makes the company the lesse'. Nevertheless, he added, 'I can truly affirme, that there is now a greater frequency then heretofore. The most of them are Masters of Arts. Diverse have come unto me for private directions, of whose proficiency I can give good testimony'.³⁷ The Statutes of the Professorship ultimately enjoined all bachelors of art, as well as medical students, to attend the lectures in Arabic, but it is doubtful whether such a clause was ever enforced. During the heydays of Pococke's tenure as professor there existed at Oxford a small, but significant, community of Arabists, but by the end of the century, the well had nearly dried. When Thomas Tenison, Archbishop of Canterbury, requested Thomas Hyde to train a competent Arabist who could serve as translator for the Crown, the Oxford professor pointed out that without a 'promise of some

34 Toomer, *Eastern Wisdome*, pp. 66–7.

35 Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses*, vol. 3, p. 1108; A. Hamilton, 'An Unlikely Friendship: Robert Sheringham and the Cawton Family', in *Living in Posterity: Essays in Honour of Bart West-erweel*, eds J.F. Van Dijkhuizen et al., Hilversum 2004, pp. 133–7.

36 J. Greaves, *Miscellaneous Works of Mr. John Greaves*, ed. T. Birch, 2 vols, London, 1737, vol. 1, p. lxix; BL, MS Harley 374, fol. 164, cited in Toomer, *Eastern Wisdome*, p. 88 n. 159.

37 Toomer, *Eastern Wisdome*, p. 112.

preferment from the government [...] such a long and difficult task will not be readily undertaken'. He himself, Hyde expatiated, had studied 'the languages because [he] had a naturall love and inclination to them. But its hard to finde any who loves them so well, they being much neglected in these days, so that I have seldome any Auditors at my Lectures'.³⁸

Scarcity of students was not owing to sloth entirely. As noted above, university professors were not expected to inculcate the rudiments of their respective disciplines—acquired previously in school or college—but to offer advanced instruction. Arabic professors alone could not assume prior knowledge and, consequently, they often found themselves in the position of glorified schoolmasters, obliged to spend their time in rehearsing the elements of grammar and diction. It may not be too far-fetched to extrapolate from Peter Goldman's account of his hardship, when studying Hebrew with Jacob Barnet at Oxford—what Arabic professors occasionally, at least, encountered. Writing to Patrick Young in 1611, Goldman recounted how he had embarked on studying Hebrew, but thus far made little progress in it. For just as 'boys need the help of a nurse when they learn to walk, so, when I totter, the Jew holds me up; when I fall, he lifts me; when I am running into the wall, he changes my course. To confess the whole truth, he is everything to me. Believe me, this language is harder than I suspected. Some parts of it are impenetrable, and many points require hard work, a fair number of them require intelligence, and a great many require the presence of a teacher'.³⁹

We may safely assume, then, that Arabic professors begrudged, at least some of the time, the toil involved. Again, an inkling of such sentiments may be inferred from Isaac Barrow's expressed reason for resigning in 1663 the Regius professorship of Greek at Cambridge. He had accepted the position, Barrow stated, when it was 'desireable to none by reason of the small or even no Reward for the vast Labour attending it'. Now, when others were available, nothing stopped him from following his own inclinations: 'from changing a heavy Labour with a very light Gain, by withdrawing myself from the Drudgery of *Grammar* to the more desireable Exercise of *Mathematics*'.⁴⁰

38 BL, MS Add. 28927, fols 94–94^v.

39 A. Grafton and J. Weinberg, *"I Have Always Loved the Holy Tongue". Isaac Casaubon, the Jews, and a Forgotten Chapter in Renaissance Scholarship*, Cambridge, Mass., 2011, p. 258. For Casaubon, see A. Hamilton, 'Isaac Casaubon the Arabist: "Video longum esse iter"', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 72, 2009, pp. 143–68.

40 I. Barrow, *The Usefulness of Mathematical Learning Explained and Demonstrated*, London, 1734, p. xxii.

If Barrow considered the teaching of Greek poetry and prose to those endowed with more than a modicum in the language as 'drudgery', how much worse must have been the lot of the Arabic professors – Especially those who aspired to improve themselves and gain reputation through publications? Case in point, Abraham Wheelocke. When in 1631 he approached Thomas Adams for support, Wheelocke sought funding for an ambitious research agenda, not for teaching Arabic. It was Adams who insisted on establishing a lectureship 'on condition that it were frequented by a competent number of Auditors'. The benefactor made his mind clear in a letter to Wheelocke (3 March 1632), wherein he related a discussion with Richard Holdsworth, Master of Emmanuel College, in which he requested the latter's 'opinion of it and in particular touching the paucity of Auditors, whereat [he] formerly sticked'.⁴¹ Small wonder, therefore, that Wheelocke discouraged such students who failed to exhibit proper resolve or talent – like Isaac Barrow and Samuel Sprint – or that the center of his scholarly interests soon shifted. Nevertheless, he obviously nurtured several promising youths, like Thomas Hyde, perhaps emulating Andrew Downes's manner of turning John Bois into a superb Grecian: by taking the youth into his home 'and [ply] him exceedingly'.⁴²

Preaching Wheelocke's funeral sermon in 1653, William Sclater hinted at the precarious state of Arabic studies at Cambridge. On the one hand, he enthused, Wheelocke's memory cannot die, 'whilst so many hopefull plants of his setting, spring up after him, and daily grow famous in Cambridge'. On the other hand, he conceded the precariousness of such a legacy: Wheelocke had discharged both of his professorships 'with so compleat abilities as found acceptance of all, admiration of many, hopes of imitation but in a few'.⁴³ Isaac Barrow, too, eulogized the departed professor in an oration he delivered in 1654, with rhetoric suggestive of a desire for a brighter future: 'there are Arabic scholars among us', he declared, and therefore we must not 'despair that with your lively vitality, under the fertilizing influence of oriental heat, some new Professor of the Oriental Languages may spring up from the ashes of the Arabic Phoenix now dead, and may enable us to penetrate the land which is said to be rich, not only in gems and spices, but in wisdom and hidden learning'.⁴⁴

41 'The Life of Sir Thomas Adams, Lord Mayor of London', *The Universal Magazine*, vol. 64, 1779, pp. 324–25 (324); *Original Letters by Eminent Literary Men of the Sixteenth, Seventeenth, and Eighteenth Centuries*, ed. H. Hellis, Camden Society, 23, London, 1843, p. 148.

42 W. Allen, *Translating for King James*, Nashville, 1969, p. 133.

43 W. Sclater, *The Crowne of Righteousnes*, London, 1654, pp. 32, 30.

44 Barrow, *Theological Works*, vol. 9, pp. ii, 38.

Sclater mentioned by name only two of Wheelocke's students: Richard Hunt and Robert Austin. Both were educated at Eton and entered King's College, Cambridge, in 1645 and 1647, respectively. Significantly, Thomas Hyde, Wheelocke's last student, had also been an Etonian, and was admitted to King's College in 1652. Such instances may indicate that by the mid-1640s select students at Eton received some grounding in Arabic – comparable to the instruction initiated concurrently by Richard Busby at Westminster School⁴⁵ – developed under Wheelocke's guidance in Cambridge.⁴⁶ Noteworthy, too, is the appointment in 1652 of the Orientalist John Boncle as Head Master, a position he vacated the following year upon becoming Fellow of Eton.

St. Paul's School did not lag behind. Indeed, if anything, it probably enjoyed a more durable tradition during the seventeenth- and early eighteenth- centuries. The headmaster who instituted the teaching of Arabic at St. Paul's was Samuel Cromehome, who probably acquired his knowledge of Arabic under the tutelage of Thomas Greaves and Edward Pococke, while a student at Corpus Christi College, Oxford, between 1635–1642. In 1659 Edmund Castell named him as one of the three best 'Arabitans' in London – the other two being Adam Littleton, recently appointed second master of Westminster School, and one Mr. Wood – while Samuel Clarke consulted a manuscript copy of the Psalms in Arabic, owned by Cromeholme, during his work on a projected seventh volume of the London Polyglot. Cromeholme's students included William Wyatt – who entered Christ Church and probably studied with Pococke, gaining renown as an Orientalist – and Samuel Johnson, author of the notorious critique of passive obedience, *Julian the Apostate* (1682).⁴⁷

45 For the teaching of Arabic at Westminster School, see Toomer, *Eastern Wisdom*, pp. 265–8.

46 In 1651 Wheelocke related an anecdote regarding Austin, his amanuensis at the time: 'This young man, in the space of two months time, not knowing a letter in Arabic, or Persick, at the beginning, sent a letter to me in Norfolk of peculiar passages. So that, of his age, I never met with the like; and his indefatigable pains, and honesty, or ingenuity, exceed, if possible, his capacity'. L. Twells, 'The Life Of ... Edward Pocock', in *The Lives of Dr. Edward Pocock ... Zachary Pearce ... Thomas Newton ... And Philip Skelton*, London, 1816, vol. 1, p. 181. I interpret this letter to have been written while Austin was still at Eton, by way of introducing himself to Wheelocke.

47 BL, MS Add. 22905, fol. 246; Toomer, *Eastern Wisdom*, pp. 264, 228; M.F.J. McDonnell, *A History of St. Paul's School*, London, 1909, pp. 230, 238; R.B. Gardiner, *The Admission Registers of St. Paul's School, from 1748 to 1876*, London, 1884, p. 52. Latin speeches delivered by boys in the late seventeenth- and early eighteenth- century make particular mention of Hebrew, and more oblique references to Arabic. *The Academy*, vol. 42, 1892, p. 30.

Thomas Gale, Cromeholme's successor, apparently continued the tradition. He had been educated under Richard Busby, and improved his knowledge while at Trinity College, Cambridge, upon which he bestowed in 1697 a considerable collection of Oriental manuscripts. John Postletwaite, who succeeded Gale, proved an even more avid patron of Oriental learning. He appears to have taught Arabic to at least one student – John Wallis, future Laudian Professor of Arabic – while headmaster of the grammar school that Archbishop Tenison founded at St. Martin's in the Fields. Indeed, it appears that it was owing to Postletwaite's urging, that Tenison obtained William III's permission to establish two Arabic studentships at Oxford – the Lord Almoner's Professorships, as they later came to be known – the first recipients of which were Wallis and Benjamin Marshall – Postletwaite's pupil at St. Paul's. A third student, who also enjoyed a stipend from the government, was Anthony Corbière, who entered Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1703, and within two years attempted to establish an epistolary exchange with the venerable London Orientalist, Thomas Smith. By 1709, before graduating MA, Corbière served as secretary to the British ambassador in Lisbon and, on account of his knowledge of Arabic, was sent as envoy to the Emperor of Morocco.⁴⁸ Noteworthy, too, is that Postletwaite hired Solomon Negri to teach Arabic and French at St. Paul's. School while in London – c. 1700–1701, and perhaps later, too.

Our knowledge of such teachers and students is fragmentary in the extreme. Few, if any, had distinguished themselves as scholars, but one must not discount their possible contribution to inspiring young scholars, or participation in literary efforts of other Orientalists. Consider the above-mentioned Richard Hunt. His nephew, William Hampton, described him as a 'perfect master' in Hebrew and Arabic, evidence for which seems not to have survived. Nevertheless, Hampton recalled how he 'had the happiness to be bred up under' Hunt, and how his uncle personally carried him in 1659 to Oxford, placing him under the care of the Oxford Orientalist Thomas Marshall, rector of Lincoln College – undoubtedly with the intention of further improving the youth.⁴⁹ College tutors with some knowledge of Arabic could also be expected to add instruction in the language to the diet of promising students, as did Edmund Matthews, fellow of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge. According to the autobiography of Thomas Comber (BA 1663), in addition to tuition in the common

48 McDonnell, *History of St. Paul's School*, pp. 273–4; E. H. Pearce, *Hartlebury Castle; with Some Notes on Bishops Who Lived in It and on Others Who Lived Elsewhere*, London, 1926, p. 197; A. Boyer, *The History of the Life & Reign of Queen Anne*, London, 1722, p. 355; Bodl. Oxf., MS Smith 46, fols 193–4; Bodl. Oxf., MS Smith 59, fol. 175.

49 J. Ward, *The Lives of the Professors of Gresham College*, New York, [1740] 1967, p. 318.

course, Matthews had 'taught [him] privately ail kinds of sciences and ingenious Arts [...] and besides made [him] understand all the Orientall Tongues'.⁵⁰

Whether Comber persevered in such study is unclear. Nor is it possible with our present knowledge to assess the nature of studies of other students who left some suggestive evidence of pursuit of Arabic. Richard Duke, for example, studied under Busby at Westminster School, and proceeded to Trinity College, Cambridge. In 1682, upon graduating MA, he donated to the College library a copy of the Qur'an, perhaps a symbolic gesture of his abandoning such study, as he began pursuing a literary career.⁵¹ An exact contemporary was the child prodigy William Wotton, who entered – age eleven – St. Catharine Hall, Cambridge, in 1676, already fluent in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. By the time he graduated BA three years later, Wotton had acquired some proficiency in Arabic, Syriac, and Aramaic as well – proficiency which he exhibited before astonished audiences in London in early 6 July 1679.⁵² Equally intriguing is the possibility that Thomas Bennet of St. John's College Cambridge (MA 1694) studied Arabic. We may infer this from a request made in 1698 by Abraham de la Pryme – a former student at St. John's – to know what proficiency Bennet had made in his study of Hebrew and Arabic. The latter responded with marked modesty: 'I am sensible I am master of nothing, and though I were as learned as I could wish myself, yet it does not become me to talk of my own abilities'.⁵³

It should also be borne in mind that Oxbridge students were in the habit of seeking out the company of like-minded scholars, often forming mutual support groups. Thomas Smith, who studied under Wheelocke during the 1640s, commented in 1647 on his habit of sending letters in Arabic to Wheelocke as well as to 'other friends at Cambridge'. Presumably such 'friends' responded in kind. At Oxford, John Gregory's considerable knowledge of Oriental languages rendered him something of an 'oracle' to colleagues, so much so that a group of scholars met with him twice a week, during which meetings 'none communicated his notions more readily, none expressed himself more satisfactorily'

50 T. Comber, *The Autobiographies and Letters of Thomas Comber*, ed. C.E. Whiting, 2 vols, Durham, 1946–1947, vol. 1, p. 3. Matthews graduated MA in 1640, and may have studied with Wheelocke. A younger contemporary at Sidney Sussex was John Luke (MA 1656), the future Adams professor of Arabic.

51 M.R. James, *Western Manuscripts in the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge*, 4 vols, Cambridge, 1900–1904, vol. 2, p. 245.

52 Evelyn, *Diary*. vol. 4 p. 172–3.

53 A. De La Pryme, *The Diary of Abraham De La Pryme, the Yorkshire Antiquary*, ed. C. Jackson, Surtees Society, 54, Durham, 1870, p. 186.

than Gregory did.⁵⁴ On occasion, a determined head of house attempted to institute a more solid infrastructure for Oriental studies, much as Richard Bentley attempted to do at Trinity College, Cambridge. In 1712 Bentley boasted that, since his election as Master of Trinity in 1699, the College had 'grown like an University' and, along with other disciplines, 'Oriental learning was cultivated' to such an extent, that by their example 'the whole youth of the University took a new spring of industry'.⁵⁵ Toward that end, Bentley attempted to recruit Henry Sike – who arrived in Cambridge in 1704 to become regius professor of Hebrew – as well as to rely on his colleague at Trinity, Charles Wright, who was elected Adams Professor of Arabic in 1702.⁵⁶

We are not much better informed of the attainments of more advanced students, who sought guidance from the Arabic professors. Humphrey Prideaux, who studied under Busby at Westminster School before matriculating at Christ Church in 1668, is a case in point. Several months after graduating MA in April 1675, Prideaux intimated to a friend his deep concern over Edward Pococke's deteriorating health which, he feared, would cut short his own scholarly ambitions. Pococke's death would not only 'deprive [him] of the best friend' he had at Christ Church, but 'utterly spoile me for a linguist; since the greatest encouragement I have to follow those studys is the more than ordinary helpe which I hope to receive from him. However, I have got all his comment transcribed, that they may not be lost with him'.⁵⁷ We do not know what projects Prideaux had in mind at this early stage in his career, and we know far less about a younger contemporary, Thomas Lane, who became fellow of Merton College, Oxford, in 1680, having received his undergraduate education at Cambridge. Shortly after graduating MA in 1682, Lane informed a friend of his labouring on a history of the Saracens, 'which I design and am advised to compose principally out of Arabian authors, which have so lately been known in these parts of the world that the relations concerning the great empire will be perfectly new'. Pococke and Obadiah Walker, Lane added, promised 'to be kindly severe and

54 Hartlib Papers 15/6/27A; Lloyd, *Memoires of the Lives, Actions, Sufferings & Deaths of Those ... That Suffered ... For the Protestant Religion*, p. 88.

55 R. Bentley, *The Correspondence of Richard Bentley*, eds J. Wordsworth and C. Wordsworth, 2 vols, London, 1842, vol. 2, p. 449.

56 For Sike, see L. Forster, 'Henry Sike of Bremen (1669–1712) Regius Professor of Hebrew and Fellow of Trinity', *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society*, 10, 1993, pp. 249–75. Bentley, *Correspondence*, passim. A. Hamilton, 'Henry Sike,' *ODNB*; id., 'Arabists and Cartesians at Utrecht,' in *Leven na Descartes. Zeven opstellen over ideeëngeschiedenis in Nederland in de tweede helft van de zeventiende eeuw*, eds P. Hoftijzer and T. Verbeek, Hilversum, 2005, pp. 97–105.

57 Prideaux, *Letters of Humphrey Prideaux ... To John Ellis*, p. 43.

read it over before it goes to Press'. A year and a half later Lane was still plodding along, for, he admitted, 'it is a troublesome task that history was never composed by any European author before'.⁵⁸

Lane probably never completed his work. He certainly never published it – yet another ambitious design by an early modern Orientalist to miscarry. Nevertheless, the evidence thus far garnered suffices to make clear that, while the received view regarding the scarcity of Arabists of the stature of Pococke or Selden in England is valid, the range of opportunities available for the study of Arabic – and the number of individuals to take advantage of such opportunities – is far greater than previously assumed.

To illustrate this point, and the value of casting a wide net in order to enrich our understanding of the manner in which Orientalists may have gained instruction in Arabic and assistance in their subsequent studies, we may consider the career of George Sale. Since he never attended university, scholars have been hitherto baffled by the manner in which he acquired his considerable knowledge of Arabic. A probe of Sale's background, however, presents some useful hints. Sale (born in 1696) is reputed to have studied in King's School in Canterbury. If correct, it is not unlikely that he received his grounding in Arabic from David Jones, headmaster between 1700–1713. Our knowledge of Jones is sketchy, but filled with tantalizing clues. He was born in St. Albans in 1674, and attended the local grammar school under the headmastership of Charles James. James himself had studied under Richard Busby at Westminster School, whence he proceeded in 1659 to Christ Church. If James studied Arabic at Westminster, as many upperclassmen did during the 1650s and 1660s, he may well have continued studying the language under Pococke in Oxford and, subsequently, have later imparted his knowledge to Jones. Certainly, within a month of matriculating from Magdalen Hall, Oxford, on 26 March 1691, Jones began compiling an Arabic dictionary – a manuscript he bestowed on Jesus College, Oxford, half a century later. Jones undoubtedly continued to engage in Arabic, for he also gave to Jesus College a manuscript copy of the Koran, which had been 'sent from Aleppo in [...] 1710'.⁵⁹

Sale never mentioned Jones, but in the preface to his translation of the Qur'an he acknowledged consulting a manuscript copy of the Gospel of Barnabas, lent to him by George Holme (MA Queen's College, Oxford 1702).

58 *Manuscripts of the Earl of Egmont*, ed. R.A. Roberts, 3 vols, London, 1920–1923, vol. 2, pp. 116, 123.

59 J. Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses*, 4 vols, Oxford, 1891–1892, vol. 2, p. 819; H.O. Coxe, *Catalogus Codicum Mss. Qui in Collegiis Aulisque Oxoniensibus Hodie Adservantur*, 2 vols, Oxford, 1842, vol. 2, pp. 40–41 (separately paginated).

Holme may have studied Arabic under Hyde and/or John Wallis. From a 1718 petition seeking to recover arrears from the government, we learn that 'by Order' of Queen Anne, Holme had been appointed in 1706 as chaplain to the 'British Consul and Factory residing in Algiers' – expressly for 'Support and Encouragement in the Study of the Arabick and Turkish Languages' – with an annual salary of £100. Holme remained in Algiers until 1718, and upon returning to England was engaged by the Secretary of State in translating various Arabic and Turkish documents.⁶⁰ In the same year he was installed as rector of Headley, Hampshire, where he lived until his death in 1765. We do not know when Sale may have met Holme, or the nature of their acquaintance. However, these two instances make clear that Sale was part of a broader circle of Arabists than the limited circle he has been traditionally associated with – namely, the Syrian Christians Solomon Negri and Carolus Dadichi, who resided in London during the 1720s.

Sale and Negri were involved in the publication, by the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, of an Arabic Psalter and New Testament. It is worth mentioning that other Arabists had been involved with the Society. Anthony Horneck – preacher at the Savoy in London 1671–1696, who offered much of the inspiration to the formation of the Society, which he did not live to see – 'had addicted himself to the *Arabic* from his younger time; and retained it in good measure to the last'.⁶¹ Postletwaite, too, was active in the affairs of the Society until his death in 1713. The London community of Arabists in the early eighteenth century also included Jezreel Jones, who spent much of the first decade of the eighteenth century in North Africa and, after returning to London, served as 'Interpreter to the Ambassadors from those Parts' until his death in 1731.⁶²

60 Henry Compton, Bishop of London, proved instrumental in securing the appointment and salary for Holme. *Calendar of Treasury Papers*, vol. 3, 1702–1707, pp. 437, 441; *Calendar of Treasury Books* vol. 21, 1706–1707, p. 186. Following the death of Robert Cole, the Consul in Algiers, in late 1712, Compton sought, unsuccessfully, to intrude Holme into the position. TNA, SP 34/20, fol. 74, cited in Sugiko Nishikawa, *English Attitudes toward Continental Protestants with Particular Reference to Church Briefs c. 1680–1740*, Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1998, p. 176. Holme chose to remain in Algiers, though perhaps no longer as a chaplain, with a reduced stipend of 30 guineas a year. TNA, Treasury Papers, 1/213, fols 230, 232. I thank Glyn Parry for furnishing me with a copy of the petition.

61 R. Kidder, *The Life of the Reverend Anthony Horneck, Late Preacher at the Savoy*, London, 1698, p. 40.

62 *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. 1, p. 221. For Jones's activities, see *Calendar of Treasury Papers* 1702–1707, London, 1874, pp. 402–3; *Calendar of Treasury Papers* 1720–1728, London, 1889, pp. 260, 529; *Calendar of Treasury Papers* 1729–1730, London, 1897, pp. 78, 85, 93, 125, 155, 159, 447, 496; *Calendar of Treasury Papers* 1731–1734, London, 1898, pp. 44, 166, 528–9

I have enumerated in considerable detail discrete pieces of evidence regarding students of Arabic, about whom little else is known, partly to expand our understanding of the contours of the English community of Arabists during the early modern period, and partly to propose a course of action for future research. While we are unlikely to come across another Pococke, we may at least identify unrecognized ties and lines of influence between practitioners; unearth lecture notes; gather information about book ownership and marginalia; and assess attempts at composition – good, bad, and indifferent. The need to embark seriously on such a research agenda is particularly pressing for the eighteenth century. In his brief survey of Arabic studies at Oxford during the eighteenth century, based on a very limited range of sources, P.J. Marshall depicted a rather gloomy reality, according to which the professors – none of whom truly distinguished themselves – rarely taught, and few students frequented the lectures they did deliver. Nevertheless, Marshall recognized that these irregular and ‘ill-attended lectures may not be a reliable indicator of the amount of instruction actually imparted’.⁶³ Further research, along the lines I have suggested in this essay, may very well confirm this coda.

Few examples should suffice. One must be careful not to generalize from the charming anecdote told about Edmund Castell who, in anticipation of an empty lecture hall, affixed upon the school-gate the following notice: ‘Arabicae Linguae Praelector eras ibit in desertum’ (Tomorrow the Professor of Arabic will go into the desert).⁶⁴ As noted above, fluctuation in the number of students was the norm, in the seventeenth as well as in the eighteenth centuries. Richard Browne, Laudian Professor of Arabic (1748–1780), for example, informed his patron in 1763 that he lectured ‘constantly to considerable numbers in the University’, but on another occasion, eight years later, only one student attended his Arabic lecture.⁶⁵

Equally important, we should bear in mind the availability of professional teachers of Arabic, at both universities who, for a fee, carried out the lion’s share of introductory instruction. One such person was Henry Wild, the self-taught ‘Arabian Taylor’, who lived in Oxford between 1715–1720. According to his biographer, and former student, Wild ‘studied in the Bodleian while open, and when it was shut, he employed most of his leisure time in teaching the oriental languages to young gentlemen, at the moderate price of half a guinea,

63 P.J. Marshall, ‘Oriental Studies’, in *The History of the University of Oxford*, vol. 5: *The Eighteenth Century*, eds L.S. Sutherland and L.G. Mitchell, Oxford, 1986, pp. 551–63 (554).

64 Twells, ‘The Life Of ... Edward Pocock’, vol. 1, p. 214n.

65 L.S. Sutherland, ‘The Origin and Early History of the Lord Almoner’s Professorship in Arabic at Oxford’, *Bodleian Library Record*, 10/3, 1980, pp. 166–77 (175, 177).

except for the *Arabic*, for which [...] he had a guinea'. Unfortunately for Wild, his biographer continued, 'the Rev. Mr. *Gagnier* [...] skilled in the oriental tongues, was in possession of all the favours the university could bestow in this way, for he was recommended by the heads of houses to instruct young gentlemen, and employed by the professors of those languages to read publick lectures in their absence'.⁶⁶ Gagnier's own contribution to the teaching of Arabic at Oxford, both privately and as Lord Almoner's Lecturer (1724–1740), has received some, though by no means sufficient, attention. Far less attention was paid to the Oxford career of the Orientalist Joannes Uri. Invited in 1766 to catalogue the Oriental manuscripts of the Bodleian Library, Uri remained in Oxford until his death some three decades later. According to Adam Clark, 'most members of this place, who have distinguished themselves in Oriental literature, owe their information to Dr. John Uri'.⁶⁷

Independent study continued to be a crucial factor in the genesis of Arabists right through the eighteenth century and beyond. In July 1764, John Jebb, fellow of Peterhouse, Cambridge (MA 1760), began studying Hebrew under the private teacher Israel Lyons, 'and, presently after, was his own master in the arabic language'. Jebb proceeded the following year to 'read through the penta-teuch in hebrew, harmonized the gospels, read about five hundred verses in the Koran, and some other things in arabic'. Jebb's biographer attributed such assiduousness to Jebb's unsuccessful bid to succeed Leonard Chappelow as Adams professor of Arabic.⁶⁸ Across the Atlantic, four decades earlier, James Logan had embarked on an independent study of Arabic for more altruistic reasons:

As the History of Man has of late years been a large part of my Entertainment and I would willingly know his Humours in all ages and Countries, I find I have been too difficient in inquiring into ye East tho' that appears to us to have been the first Seat and Nurse of Knowledge. I am willing therefore to be better acquainted with the Orientals especially the Arabians some of whose Writings I have, but neglected to

66 T. Hearne, *Remarks and Collections*, eds C.E. Doble et al., 11 vols, Oxford, 1885–1921, vol. 5 pp. 57–8; Z. A., 'Extraordinary Life of Mr Henry Wild', *Gentleman's Magazine, and Historical Chronicle*, 25, 1755, pp. 105–6.

67 J.B.B. Clarke, *An Account of the Religious and Literary Life of Adam Clarke*, 3 vols, New York, 1837, vol. 2, p. 443.

68 J. Jebb, *The Works Theological, Medical, Political, and Miscellaneous*, 3 vols, London, 1787, vol. 1, pp. 10, 18, 20.

purchase some others in London that then fell in my way, being displeased with some for the Price.

Logan's library includes quite a few texts in Arabic, attesting to his diligence. In 1737 such knowledge came in handy when the colorful Lebanese Christian, Sheik Sidi visited Philadelphia. 'As he spoke nothing but Arabic and a little Syriac,' Logan reported, 'he put me on scouring up what I had formerly gotten and forgotten of these, and we exchanged some little in writing'.⁶⁹

Just as the supply of private teachers become steadier in the course of the eighteenth century, so did the availability of visiting native speakers of Arabic, who offered instruction for fee or in return for hospitality. In 1727 James Logan found himself 'agreeably surprised to hear' that Robert Hunter, successively governor of New York, New Jersey, and Jamaica, embarked on the study of Arabic during a stay in England, 'assisted by two Arabs who are come over to England as Travellers to see the world'.⁷⁰ Further research might shed light on the identity of the two Arabs – assuming they were not Solomon Negri and Carolus Dadichi – and on whether they offered instruction to others as well. Additional research is also required to discover more about a certain Mirza, native of Aleppo, whom William Jones maintained in 1764 at Oxford, to assist in the study of Arabic and Persian.⁷¹ A decade earlier, another young Oxford scholar, Edward Gibbon, entertained similar fantasies about making a reputation for himself as an Orientalist: 'Since the days of Pocock and Hyde,' he recalled, 'Oriental learning has always been the pride of Oxford, and I once expressed an inclination to study Arabic'. To his chagrin, his tutor's 'prudence discouraged this childish fancy; but he neglected the fair occasion of directing the ardour of a curious mind'.⁷² So the question begs answering: who else shared such 'ardour' during the eighteenth century, and by what means did they quench it?

69 E. Wolf, *The Library of James Logan of Philadelphia, 1674–1751*, Philadelphia, 1974, p. 253; J.F. Watson, *Annals of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania, in the Olden Time*, ed. W.P. Hazard, 3 vols, Philadelphia, 1881, vol. 1, p. 552.

70 Wolf, *The Library of James Logan*, p. 156.

71 G.H. Cannon, *The Life and Mind of Oriental Jones: Sir William Jones, the Father of Modern Linguistics*, New York, 1990, p. 9.

72 E. Gibbon, *Memoirs of My Life*, ed. G.A. Bonnard, London, 1966, p. 55.