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Doing the right thing

In this issue of the *Magazine* we include two articles which, between them, pose some of the most profound challenges of our times for society and for universities in particular. They may at first sight seem worlds apart but there is a common element and working towards clarity in defining the overlapping problems raised must be one's essential starting point.

Our interview with the Director of the Pitt Rivers Museum addresses, in peculiarly stark form, the thorny issues surrounding the general problem of decolonisation. Museum collections can present, in the most tangible material way, the consequences of the history of empire, e.g. items possibly stolen, plundered or removed as war trophies, such as the Benin bronzes some of which the Pitt Rivers contains. How therefore could one not now hope that injustice and illegality, once proven, should be acknowledged and appropriately rectified?

In the case of the Fisher window, removed in the name of a not dissimilar cause (in this instance focused specifically on the racialist implications of eugenics), Anthony Edwards points out critical aspects of a situation that is echoed in a number of comparable cases involving previously little highlighted supposed historical crimes, such as the campaign to efface Francis Galton's name at University College London (*Oxford Magazine*, No. 420, 2nd Week, TT 2020) or the Rhodes Must Fall movement. The first question to be asked is how accurate and complete is the information gathered: i.e. in the charge of "being a eugenicist" in Fisher's case. Then it is necessary to ask whether the supposed offence is sufficiently serious to outweigh other aspects of his life and work, and which person or persons are in the appropriate position to make that judgement. Particularly difficult is the question of what, exactly, the use of the word "eugenics" meant at the time (now many decades ago and before Hitler transformed the implications of the word – perhaps by 180 degrees). One possibility is that eugenicists originally might have had the highest and most admirable possible motives, ones that we ourselves might well have shared in the context of those times.

The two cases share the challenge of how to translate principles and values into actual practice – when, moreover, either action or inaction is controversial and any decision is likely to be a matter of a fine balancing of complex alternative arguments. In both cases history plays a part not just in the establishment of the accuracy of the degree

Oxford Magazine publication arrangements

We are unable to publish the *Oxford Magazine* in print for the foreseeable future, as a result of COVID19-related working restrictions. Arrangements for archival copies will be made at a later date.

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INSIDE

of guilt as this would have been judged at the relevant time – which is hard enough – but, more to the point, in the rights, wrongs and meaningfulness of judging – and seeking to rectify – historical events and motives by today's inevitably changed standards. One benchmark against which one might evaluate such rights and wrongs must be that most extreme of examples, the legacy of Nazi Germany. Here the historical facts and the ascription of guilt are not in dispute and Germany has found ways to provide redress. But most importantly it seems to be generally accepted that, after eighty years, younger generations in Germany do not have to bear the responsibility, nor therefore the need to endlessly seek to compensate for a history that cannot be changed.

Edwards touches on one aspect of the Fisher example that should be of particular concern for the academic community. A fair and meaningful judgement in the case of a scientist like Fisher requires a full understanding not just of history but of the science involved, including the nature of human genetics at the time. Academic historians will tend to judge Fisher in one way – perhaps to the point of seeing all scientific developments as primarily a reflection of personalities or social forces – but this will be quite different from the way of scientists and especially of those specialists in biology who alone can evaluate the high merit of his contribution to advancing now well-established scientific understanding. Whereas decisions about museum collections – as public resources – ought to reflect the values of wider society, decisions on individual academics must mainly involve the academic community, but one wonders to what extent any consensus is achievable given the chasms separating subject disciplines in universities.

In terms of their implications the two cases considered here span a continuum within the arena of the many unavoidable ethical challenges faced increasingly by universities. A given relatively clear and well justified decision to return a particular Benin bronze to Nigeria, a presumably irreversible act, is bound to raise questions about many museum collections worldwide and may even lead to changes in the purposes of museums in general. Like fair Covid vaccine allocation and compensation for unequal historical carbon emissions the similarly complicated general problem of redistribution of museum collections must surely become a matter of international agreement and cooperation in the end. At least in the case of the Fisher window the decision is more a matter of ideas rather than objects and it is entirely reversible.

T.J.H

How to initiate Congregation actions

How to trigger a debate or discussion in Congregation

It is open to any 20 or more members of Congregation to propose a resolution or topic for discussion at a meeting of Congregation; requests must be made in writing to the Registrar not later than noon on the 22nd day before the relevant meeting. Any 2 or more members of Congregation can submit an amendment to, or announce an intention to vote against, a resolution or a legislative proposal (*i.e.* a proposal to amend the statutes). Notice must be given to the Registrar (in writing) not later than noon on the 8th day before the meeting.

Questions and replies

Any 2 or more members of Congregation may ask a question in Congregation about any matter concerning the policy or the administration of the University. Requests must be submitted to the Registrar (in writing) not later than noon on the 18th day before the Congregation meeting at which it is to be asked. The question and the reply (drafted by Council) will be published in *Gazette* in the week prior to the relevant meeting. The answer is also formally read out at the meeting. Supplementary questions are allowed.

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Attendance at meetings of Congregation tends to be low. Postal voting can potentially allow opinion to be easily accessed more widely across Congregation membership. Congregation can trigger a postal vote after a debate (but not after a discussion or a question and reply where no vote is taken). 25 or more members of Congregation have to be present ("on the floor") at the relevant debate. The request must be made by 4pm on the 6th day after the debate, signed by 50 members of Congregation, in writing to the Registrar. Council can also decide to hold a postal ballot, by the same deadline.

Flysheets

To generate a flysheet for publication with the *Gazette*, the camera-ready copy (2 sides maximum) should be submitted with at least 10 signatures on an indemnity form (obtainable from the Registrar) by 10am on the Monday in the week in which publication is desired.

Regulations governing the conduct of business in Congregation can be found at: ***http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/statutes/regulations/529-122.shtml***
Items placed on the agenda for Congregation are published in the *Gazette*.
The Congregation website is at: ***www.admin.ox.ac.uk/councilsec/governance/congregation.***
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NOTICE

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Reminders

Below, following consultation with Professor Innes, we republish an article from the *Magazine* of 1992 (*Oxford Magazine*, No.79, 4th Week, HT 1992) because it has relevance to the review of harassment policies currently underway in the University.

Joanna Innes was the author of the article in her role as chair of the working party which first formulated University policy regarding harassment, a position to which she was appointed while serving as Senior Proctor. We are struck by how many problematic aspects of harassment policy still remain problematic, even though the new policies brought in in 1992 were the foundation of current practice and procedures, and remain the essential basis of the University's ever-more important approach to harassment. For current university advice and arrangements, see ***https://edu.admin.ox.ac.uk/harassment-advice#/***

In the last few weeks there has been another *Observer* story about failings in the University's response to an alleged case of rape in an Oxford college, and the government (through the Office for Students) has issued new guidance to universities on their handling and reporting of the whole range of forms of unacceptable discriminatory behaviour. We still struggle with clarity of definitions. Underlying issues of responsibility, consent and constantly shifting public standards of acceptable discourse remain as difficult to negotiate now as they were then: challenging issues indeed for anyone charged with giving advice or adjudicating complaints.

The article outlines arrangements and processes that were agreed in 1992, including the setting up of an advisory panel (one of whose roles was to overcome problems arising from the inexperience of most departmental and college "advisers"). It refers to factors that may make those subject to harassment reluctant to come forward and to a realisation that wide awareness of policy throughout the University was key – themes that the current review will also no doubt have in mind. The later history of developments in policy in Oxford and how we ended up with today's structures are possible subjects for further *Magazine* articles.

Harassment Revised

JOANNA INNES

As many people will be aware, the University is currently in the process of implementing a new policy on harassment. This policy embodies – in broad outline, if not always in fine detail – the recommendations of a working party established a little over a year ago. The recommendations of the working party can be viewed as offering a series of pragmatic solutions to essentially practical problems. This article describes and explains the main elements of the new policy in these terms. A second article will set the new policy in a broader – and more complex – context [*Oxford Magazine*, No.82, 2nd Week, TT 1992]. Harassment policies have proliferated in organisations and institutions in North America, Britain, and Europe in the past decade. Implicit, and quite frequently explicit, in the working party's discussion was a concern to assess the merits and shortcomings of these broader trends, as a basis for determining when to follow them, and when to modify or part company from them. The companion piece will reflect on these larger themes.

Oxford University first adopted a sexual harassment policy in 1989. That policy was set out in a code of practice. The code condemned sexual harassment as an unacceptable form of behaviour, and required all departments, non-departmental faculties, and certain other university institutions to appoint two advisers, one of each sex, to advise those who presented themselves as suffering harassment, and, where possible, help them to resolve the problem informally. The code provided that, when problems could not be solved informally, the 'relevant disciplinary procedures of the University' might be set into motion, though precisely what that entailed was not spelled out. Council commended the University's initiative to the attention of colleges, and, in the event, during the next couple of years, most colleges did draw up their own codes, and appoint their own advisers or advisory panels.

True to standard Oxford form, the policies colleges have adopted differ, more or less substantially, both among themselves, and from university policy. Particularly noteworthy is the variety of definitions of 'sexual harassment' offered in different codes. The definition adopted by the University in 1989 was a relatively narrow one, implying that sexual harassment should be conduct taking a *sexual form*. By contrast, some college codes offer definitions comprehending all forms of harassing behaviour *relating* to the victim's sex.

A number of considerations determined that, by the end of 1990, the case for revising university policy in certain respects was under discussion in Wellington Square. First, some argued that university provision was deficient in a respect the general wording of the code concealed. Though the University had – it was thought – power to discipline academic and non-academic staff who could be shown to have engaged in sexual harassment, it plainly had no relevant powers in relation to junior members. If a junior member had been shown to have engaged in some serious form of sexual harassment not properly dealt with informally, despite what the code might have seemed to imply, there would have been no relevant *university* disciplinary procedures to set into motion. Colleges of course might have taken cognizance of cases, but the University could not have been said to have power at its own disposal to make good its promises. Accumulating proctorial experience suggested that this and other features of the prevailing system of provision were in practice sources of difficulty.

In November 1990, a CVCP [Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals] circular injected another element into developing discussion. The CVCP urged all universities to promulgate codes of practice in relation both to sexual and to racial harassment. The two forms of harassment have a similar standing at law. According to recent court rulings, employers are responsible, under sex-discrimination legislation on the one hand, race-discrimination on the other, for protecting employees from harassment relating either to their sex, or to their race. Oxford's sexual harassment policy, in its then form, did not unfortunately seem to lend itself to simple extension into this new domain. On what grounds could the University's multitudinous amateur advisers, appointed so as to ensure equal representation of the two sexes, claim competence in cases of racial harassment?

Though these various considerations were already providing matter for discussion, the immediate stimulus for the establishment of the working party came from an independent source. In November 1990, the *Observer* published an article, based on a student union survey, which asserted that sexual harassment was prevalent in Oxford, especially within the student community, and that existing university and college provision offered inadequate protection to beleaguered women. In the light of this article, and supporting representations from the Student Union, Council set up a working partywhich, as Senior Proctor of the day, I was asked to chair to review experience under the 1989 code, and to recommend improvements.

The working party was a compact body. Its six members comprised the two then Proctors; two other senior members with an established interest in such matters, and two junior members, one of them the Student Union's sabbatical Women's Officer. All the members of the working party had relevant experience of their own to draw on; their secretary, as the University's Senior Personnel Officer, and Equal Oppportunities Officer, added another dimension of expertise. The working party consulted widely, circulating questionnaires to all university advisers and, through heads of houses, to relevant college officers. Members of the working party also met with college doctors, the head of the Counselling Service and the Thames Valley Police.

On the basis of their enquiries, the working party concluded that existing university provision had indeed some important shortcomings. It concluded first, that the relatively narrow scope of university policy was causing difficulties. Uncertainty about what precisely 'sexual' harassment consisted in – not assisted by the variety of definition in circulation – was giving rise to dispute about the applicability of codes to particular cases. What might have been thought to be crucial questions – questions about the degree of harm resulting, about intentions, reasonable expectations and responsibility – were being obscured by definitional and jurisdictional wrangles, not hinging on any such fundamental points.

The term 'sexual harasssment' also appeared to have unhelpful connotations. Many take it characteristically to denote what might be termed 'one-sided romance'. On this basis, it is widely assumed that nothing very grave or disturbing is at issue when people bring complaints. In fact, the working party's enquiries suggest, complaints of sexual harassment have varied enormously in substance. By no means all the behaviour complained of has been sexual in form. Some, though perhaps sexual in inspiration, has been highly and incontestably aggressive, perhaps taking the form of violent abuse, or non-sexual forms of assault. Ironically, the effect of labelling such behaviour 'sexual harassment' sometimes seem to have been to encourage more sceptical, less serious forms of response than such conduct might otherwise have been expected to attract.

Against this background, the working party concluded that there were grounds for redefining the scope of policy *in order to achieve the objectives of the original policy*. The fact that racial and other forms of harassment, lacking any sexual element, could be argued to be equally properly objects of concern, provided independent grounds for supposing that it might be desirable to redefine the scope of policy. But that was not the sole reason for advocating change.

Other problems the working party's enquiries revealed appear to reflect the limitations of the administrative machinery which had been established under the 1989 code. In all, perhaps a couple of hundred people were given advisory responsibilities in university institutions and colleges during 1989-90. Whatever may have been the case in colleges, university advisers were, by and large, given minimal instruction in their duties, nor were they provided with any special support. It was assumed that heads of department and the like would appoint suitably experienced people, who would be able to act on the basis of common sense. In fact, the post has sometimes been treated as a routine departmental chore, assigned without much regard to the personal qualities of the appointee. The requirement that one out of every two advisers must be a woman has meant that a substantial proportion of all women in the University have been given advisory responsibilities, by no means all of them with much in the way of relevant prior experience, and some of them so junior that they are hampered by their low status, if by nothing else, from playing any very effective part. Advisers so appointed may be well-placed to offer a shoulder to weep on. They may not be well-placed to do much more. Faced with the complexities of overlapping college and university jurisdictions, uncertain about the precise extent of their powers and responsibilities, numerous advisers have reported – unsurprisingly – that they feel ill-qualified for their role. Against this background, it is not surprising to find that many potential *users* of the system of provision should also have expressed a lack of confidence in it.

Upon concluding its enquiries, early in the summer of 1991, the working party proposed to Council that four main sorts of change should be introduced to remedy or at least alleviate problems exposed.

Firstly, it proposed that the scope of university policy should be broadened, to cover 'harassment' in general, rather than one (or more) specified forms of harassment.

Secondly, it proposed that the University's lack of relevant disciplinary powers in relation to junior members should be remedied, by the introduction of a new disciplinary regulation, making 'harassment' by junior members a university offence.

Thirdly, it proposed that a university advisory panel should be established. It suggested that members of this panel might usefully perform a variety of functions. They might supply advice to any junior or senior member or member of staff of the University in connection with incidents of harassment, in this respect providing an alter-

native service to that already offered by departmental, faculty and college advisers. They might equally supply advice to *advisers*, and more generally, assume responsibility for supporting, co-ordinating and monitoring the University's system of provision. Finally, on the basis of the experience they could be expected to accumulate in these other roles, they might supply advice to Council, to assist its oversight of policy and practice.

The working party did not propose that the advisory panel should *displace* other advisers – though it noted that the existence of the panel would make it possible to phase out certain other advisers, in due course of time, if that seemed desirable. The working party was very ready to suppose that there would be many cases in which 'local' advisers would be best-placed to act, and would best meet complainants' perceived needs. However, the working party had discovered that one particular reason why some potential users lacked confidence in existing provision was that they did not believe that any adviser within their own institution could guarantee either confidentiality or impartiality. To meet these fears, it seemed necessary to offer people access to sources of advice outside their own institutions. The working party did not suppose that, once a case had come into the hands of a member of the university panel, it would permanently have left the orbit of the original institution. Following an exchange with a panel member, a complainant might well decide to have recourse to departmental, faculty, or college level advisory or disciplinary facilities. What the working party hoped might develop, as a result of the establishment of a university panel, and its assumption of a co-ordinating role, was a university-wide web of advisers, all of whom might be enabled, by virtue of their own integration into that web, to offer more confident and effective advice, or, if appropriate, to redirect complainants to some more potent source of help.

The working party's fourth and final general recommendation was that more effort should be put into publicising the University's policy, and into associated education and training. It suggested that what was obviously going to be a very hardworking advisory panel might be given general responsibility for these matters.

During the summer of 1991, Council endorsed the main substance of the working party's recommendations. In September, the process of implementation began. A new 'harassment' regulation was drawn up and approved by Rules Committee, a committee consisting equally of senior and junior members. Passage of this regulation gave the University a 'full house' of disciplinary powers: over junior members, academic and non-academic staff. At about the same time, nine senior members – three men and six womenwere appointed to the university advisory panel, of which the Proctors are also *ex officio* members. The panel set about revising the code of practice, both to take account of new provisions, and with a view to making this document – a widely-distributed, official statement of university policy – as clear and informative as possible. Council approved the new code in December. It has since been published in the *Gazette*, and copies have been sent to all heads of department, to chairmen of relevant faculty boards and the like, and to all heads of house. Copies of the working party's report – an extensive document – and of a comparative analysis of college codes, compiled by the working party, have likewise been circulated to all heads of house, with the suggestion that they might be made available for consultation by any interested senior or junior member. Further copies of all these documents are available on request from the Equal Opportunities Officer, now also the secretary to the panel, Ms Alison Cross, at the University Offices.

During the past month, the advisory panel has been occupied in drawing up leaflets for the information of people suffering from harassment on the one hand, advisers on the other. Copies of these will shortly be circulated to all university advisers. Heads of house have been invited to register with the Equal Opportunities Officer the names of any officers or other members of their colleges whom they think might usefully be placed on the panel's circulation list. College advisers so registered may, but need not, participate in the monitoring exercise the panel will also undertake in the course of the year; college participation in this scheme is at the discretion of the college. College officers who would like to be added to this register should preferably apply through, or with the endorsement of, their head of house, indicating whether they wish to participate in the monitoring scheme. Members of the panel are now planning further educational, publicity and training activities, some of them in conjunction with junior members.

Members of the panel are also now available to any junior or senior member or member of staff of the University for consultation in connection with incidents of harassment. Enquirers can make contact with a member of the panel via a special number: (2)70760.

At the end of the year, the panel will report to Council about its own experience during the year, and broader patterns of experience in the University. Anyone who wishes to make comments or suggestions, that might be fed into the panel's discussions, may do so via Alison Cross at the University Offices.

The editors invite and welcome contributions from all our readers.
The content of Oxford Magazine relies largely on what arrives spontaneously on the editors' desk and is usually published as received.

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An Interview with Dr Laura Van Broekhoven, Director of the Pitt Rivers Museum

Dr Van Broekhoven holds a Professorial Fellowship at Linacre College, and is associated with the School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnography at Oxford. Previously she led the curatorial department of the National Museum of World Cultures (Amsterdam, Leiden and Berg en Dal) and was a lecturer in archaeology, museum studies and indigenous heritage at the Faculty of Archaeology at Leiden University. She is a member of the Women Leaders in Museums Network (WLMN) and sits on the European Ethnographic Museum Directors Group. She was a participant in the Getty's Museum Leadership Institute, and co-chair of the Oxford and Colonialism Network.

OM: Could you tell us about your own background, and how it brought you to the Pitt Rivers?

LVB: I was born in Leuven and grew up in Antwerp, one of Belgium's historic cities, where part of my family continues to live. For my studies, I moved to Leiden to study Archaeology with a focus on the Americas. I lived in the Netherlands for much of my working life, with shorter periods living in Mexico, Nicaragua and Colorado in the USA. In 2016 I became the Director of the Pitt Rivers Museum.

Please tell us about your own research. I noted that you have a particular interest in Latin America, and working alongside its indigenous peoples.

The focus of my research has been on developing museum and research practices that are guided by theory of decoloniality (also referred to as praxis) and working with stakeholders locally and globally. This has meant working with delegates of Indigenous Peoples and citizens living in diaspora from different countries and continents (such as in Suriname with Wayana, Kali'na, Lokono, and Trio; in Brazil with Ka'apor and Kayapo; in Ecuador with Shuar; in Kenya and Tanzania with Maasai communities); it has also meant working with feminist thinkers, anti-racism and decoloniality activists; representatives of the LGBTQIA+ community; forced migrants and refugees.

Developing that praxis on the one hand has meant questioning the ways we do research and the premises that we build our theories on, listening and learning to other ways of knowing (epistemologies) and fore fronting Indigenous ways of knowing (epistemologies) and being (ontologies). This approach is very much inspired by the way we were taught archaeology in Leiden, where our professors (Maarten Jansen, Willem Adelaar, Aurora Perez Jimenez) strived to ensure that as students we acknowledged not only what our discipline had to offer academically but also where its weaknesses lay. We learnt to identify the colonial systems and structures that formed the basis of the disciplines we were taught and how they were systemically racist. They focused on ensuring our curriculum was filled with Indigenous scholarship and how to see the gendered and racist biases of our disciplines (Anthropology, Linguistics, Archaeology and (Art) History). Focus was put on learning Indigenous languages and literature; and several of our professors were Indigenous knowledge keepers and scholars. At the time, this approach was rather unorthodox but offered us the possibility of against-the-grain readings of literature. Jansen and Pérez fought to broaden our horizons and scopes which led to many of their alumni now continuing to lead and put in practice necessary processes of change in countries around the world (including the US, Mexico, Peru, UEA, UK, Germany, Dubai, the Netherlands, Belgium).

My work started in Tamulté de las Sabanas, a Chontal town in the Maya area, where I focused on (hi)story telling and worked with teenagers and young adults who are visual artists; I then moved to Nicaragua, documenting histories of Indigenous Resistance through an against-the-grain reading of Spanish historical sources; moving on to mapping archaeological sites with Mixtec knowledge keepers and more recently documenting life histories of Mixtec merchants, markets and merchandise, in Oaxaca, Mexico. Since joining the world of museums (in 2001), my work has focused on a museum praxis that foregrounds reconciliation, redress, equity and self-representation. Although, honesty bids me to say: I do spend a lot of my time in meetings these days… so much of my research happens in compacted moments where research is possible and in weekends and evening hours.

What's it been like working in the Museum during the pandemic? How much normal activity – or things like it – has been possible?

Since the pandemic started, I sometimes jokingly say that I'm doing my job without all the fun bits; especially at the beginning a lot of what needed to be done was crisis management, including ensuring that all of our staff were safe and cared for, set up to work remotely, and our buildings and collections, security and safety were insured. When I talk to people about the work that we do at the Museum, I point out that even when we are open, two thirds of the work that we do happens behind the scenes. Much of that work therefore could and had to continue. There were a number of major projects underway, such as packing up a third of our object collections (about 100,000 objects) that needed to be moved to another storage facility; we also started a project to ensure our collections used better nomenclature for cultural groups, in order to do away with outdated and often very problematic words; this

meant reaching out to communities across the globe to try and find out how they would prefer to be named. Working offsite without access to a live database made this job increasingly difficult but the team did an incredible job, while also home-schooling and caring for loved ones. Everyone was busier than ever as we prepared to reopen the Museum to the public as soon as it was safe to do so. We put new measures in place to ensure visitors' and staff's well-being, including ticketing systems, which were new to the University and its museums. All of this was able to happen while we were also continuing to work with communities such as our Multaka volunteers, a programme of work where we work together with refugees and forced migrants around collections from the Middle East and North- and West- Africa (***https://www.prm.ox.ac.uk/event/weaving-connections-0***).

To make sure that visitors didn't miss out on too much whilst not able to visit in person, we invested in transferring all our exhibitions online and switched to curating exhibitions online. We also made our 360-degree dollhouse-view easily findable (and people loved it! Especially in March and April 2021 the PRM online virtual tour ended up being number 1 most popular on several lists) (***https://my.matterport.com/show/?m=ns3yCKpUzSq&help=1***).

In June and early July, the Pitt Rivers Museum became a site of protests during the Black Lives Matter movement and as part of the Oxford Rhodes Must Fall movement. Being present at the protests on the lawn, I was able to answer a number of questions protesters asked, in particular around repatriation and redress and work we are developing with communities globally and locally.

During the summer of 2020 we curated a series of interventions that were installed in the Museum in September and announced a number of changes. The intervention consists of an introductory case that outlines the various ways in which the Museum upheld colonial ideologies, and how, today, we are developing ways through which redress and reconciliation can occur. The interventions use audio and video recordings which we made accessible through QR codes to expand on the histories and stories being told within each case and emphasised the Museum's commitment to more plural narratives.

In the past couple of months we also have transformed our education programme, so it can be streamed by an onsite member of our team to schools so that the students can still feel as if they are in the Museum. We've designed two exhibitions; one on women collectors and women in our collections; and the other one on weaving connections, which is very much focused on our textile collections.

Another aspect of work has been organising webinars which everyone in Oxford is very welcome to join. We're trying to make sure that we are sharing a bit more of what's happening behind the scenes with our audiences, sharing our thinking, and also very much want to use these webinars as a way for us to listen, for us to talk to members of as many communities in Oxford and around Oxford as possible and get feedback from them. The series is called '*Radical Hope Critical Change*' and a lot of information can be found on our social media platforms and also on our website.

As you see, there is almost too much to tell, and all of this has been taking place at the same time as a major construction project just outside! Behind the colourful hoardings on Parks Road, we're building a Collection, Teaching and Research Centre under the lawn of the Museum that will house a large part of the University of Oxford's collections.

I am particularly proud of the resilience of our team, their ingenuity, commitment and dedication and the continuous sector-leading, innovative work that is developed in every part of the Museum. Anyone who would like to see more information can find a lot of our work on our social media and website.

The Pitt Rivers has been criticised in the context of ongoing debates about colonialism in Oxford. Do you think the Museum has a particular problem with its colonial legacy?

The Pitt Rivers Museum is known for being a visually stunning Victorian space which houses an awe-inspiring number and variety of objects and carries out a wide range of research, education and outreach which has a real impact on individuals and living communities. Although many people think the Museum has never changed, it has been a place of constant changes and innovation since it was founded in 1884. Admittedly, in contrast to other museums in Europe, which have attempted to refashion their institutions by renaming and refurbishing them as part of a process of 'rebirthing' them as more modern museums (e.g. the Musée du Quai Branly in Paris or the VärldskulturMuseum in Gotenburg), the Pitt Rivers has kept – and intends to keep – its Victorian lay out. Nonetheless, and contrary to popular opinion, none of the original nineteenth-century displays still stands; all have been refurbished (the last one sometime in the 1990s). What does still remain, however, is the Grade 1 listed building, the accumulated collections and the original labels and writing on the objects. In order to remain relevant, each and every Director has led changes to the Museum that kept it relevant to its audiences and its times.

Up until World War Two, the Museum was driven by ideas of social evolutionism and then shifted to illustrating technological developments. Driven by postcolonial utopian ideas of reinvention (and also the lack of suitable space and proper maintenance), the 1950s-60s were marked by the drive for new capital investments aimed at developing a new building on a different site. This new site was to be a Rotunda that would allow visitors to walk in circular paths following objects ordered by type, or radially by geographic region. Due to lack of funding, however, this building was left unbuilt. From the 80s, the Museum continued to develop its galleries, becoming a place that wants to celebrate art and creativity from across the globe, as part of a more humanistic vision. Today, its dense, multi-layered displays function as a "democracy of things", revealing fascinating distinctions and parallels across cultures, thereby encouraging reflection, both compelling and challenging in equal measure. As a result, it is now also mobilised as a unique space for conversations that are of societal relevance with regard to colonial history, identity, migration and global developments. What we are ensuring we do today, is to bring more multi-vocal narratives into the Museum that represent and work for all of our audiences.

In the past, visitors may have been struck by the presence of human remains in the museum. Could you tell us about the Museum's policy and work in this area?

One of the big recent changes was that we took human remains off display. This was received mostly very positively, although some people also expressed a lot of concern because they were worried that we were being too rash in our decision making. I certainly would like to reassure people that this was part of an extended and thorough process of thinking about what we needed to do. There were three main reasons for our decision: 1. The changes brought the Museum in line with national guidance from the Ministry of Culture. The way human remains were put on display was in breach of that ministerial guidance: human remains should not be on display in a way that people would inadvertently come across them. 2. Given the reaction of visitors, we had come to conclude that our curation of the display did not help people understand the *tsantsa* or other human remains that were on display. People would stand in front of the *tsantsa* and refer to the Shuar as 'primitive' or 'murderers'; they would also talk about the *tsantsa* as 'ghoulish', 'gory' and 'savage'. 3. Since 2017 we have been working with Shuar delegates in collaboration with the Universidad de San Francisco in Quito and Shuar delegates have very clearly expressed their views about not wanting to be represented in this way in a Museum. Similar objections were made by other communities whose human remains were on display. We are now working with communities from across the globe reaching out to ensure that they know that we have human remains and we want to make sure that in the possible redisplay of stories about these communities, we involve the community so that they are able to tell their own stories and be involved in the way that we display components of their cultures.

The Museum possesses a number of artefacts that are claimed by people around the world as theirs. How does the museum respond to these claims?

The Pitt Rivers Museum has a long history of positive dialogue and engagement with indigenous communities about the care, display and retention of cultural objects. This work continues daily and, where appropriate, the museum is strengthening engagement with indigenous communities about the repatriation of artefacts (a good example of such a project can be found here: ***https://prm.web.ox.ac.uk/maasai-living-cultures***). These discussions take time and sensitivity – it is not something which can or ought to be rushed. The Museum deeply cares about people and the artefacts they make and use and aims to approach this challenging task with respect and sensitivity.

Has the Museum turned down any requests for returns? On what grounds?

We consider each case on a case-by-case basis and have clearly outlined procedures that have been agreed by the University (since July 2020).* We do not receive many requests for returns and at times the eligibility of the claimant isn't established (for example a claimant might indicate they represent a community; in one case, for example, we were approached about certain objects by a claimant based in the UK who felt entitled to the objects in question, while the objects were documented as acquired and originating from a country in Asia).

As well as return, there is the question of redress. Do you think the Museum should make reparations to those communities and peoples who have had artefacts stolen or taken without their informed consent?

I don't think the Museum is in the position to pay reparations to communities but we are very much engaged in processes of reconciliation and redress. In the sector, the Pitt Rivers is considered to be one of the institutions which is facing these issues head-on. We firmly believe that museums like ours should be welcoming to all and that they can be spaces for the co-production of knowledge – connecting peoples and reconnecting people with things. We also believe that there are many unhelpful hurdles put in the way of doing that. These four themes, therefore, drive our programming, collecting, research and investments: No Binaries, No Boundaries, a serious investment in Redress and making the creative case for Health and Wellbeing. From our work, we know that the Pitt Rivers Museum is a site where redress can happen in a variety of ways. We recognise that we are all part of this ongoing problem. We have an institutional responsibility to no longer be part of the continuation of these systems and as an institution, have been fore-fronting work that focuses on social justice and decoloniality through socially engaged practice.

Could you tell us about the role of forensic anthropology in the museum's activities today?

As part of our stewardship of human remains, the Pitt Rivers Museum is working with communities to find ways to heal past wounds. Given the international origins of the collections, this is a long-term process that will involve collaborative engagement over a long period. This process may lead to remains being returned, cared for differently, or redisplayed. In the past, the Museum has returned human remains and associated objects and will continue to work with international partners on this important work.

In May 2017, 10 ancestral remains were returned to Aoa Tearoa. The initial request was made in 2015 but conversations started in 1999. The Maori and Moriori remains, comprised of seven *toi moko* (ancestral mummified heads) and three *kōiwi tangata* (parts of a skull), were returned home in 2017.

For the last few years, the Museum has been working with the Australian Government towards the repatriation of 18 human remains and one associated item. The return was approved by Oxford University Council on 11 May 2020. There are 114 human remains of which 18 are non-artefactual and which we can be certain came from Australia. We hope the remains will travel back to Australia once travel becomes possible again.

In your own work, you talk about concepts of "co-curation" with indigenous peoples. Could you tell us more about this, please?

Collections like the one we steward were largely gathered during the time of the British Empire. During this period, systems and structures used for the exploitation of re-

sources and people, including enslavement, were set up in institutionalised form in order to accumulate wealth and power for the colonisers. Part of that system of disempowerment of local authority was through the taking of (often sacred) objects. The people who took these objects felt entitled to do so; to appropriate them in order to represent cultural practices, and to speak about and for others from eurocentric perspectives. This process of taking and categorising cultural practice was often highly problematic, as there was no acknowledgement of the views of the originating communities and no reflection on the methods used to dispossess communities of these objects. So, much of the work we do today aims to ensure that we are reaching out to communities, working in collaboration and working towards more equitable and joint co-curatorial ways of understanding each other, objects and cultural practices related to them. That helps us to tell more meaningful stories to our audiences and ensures people who are represented are the ones that are telling their own stories. A good example of that kind of work can be found here: ***https://www.prm.ox.ac.uk/haida***

* *Oxford University Gazette*, Supplement (2) to no. 4787, 15 November 2006

Cancelled by his college

How a panicking Cambridge institution obliterated the memory of one of its most famous sons

A.W.F. EDWARDS

Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, founded in 1348, has an extraordinary record as the home of some of the greatest scientists and mathematicians of the past two centuries: John Venn of the logic diagram, Francis Crick of DNA fame, Sir James Chadwick, who discovered the neutron and, like Crick, was awarded the Nobel Prize – and Sir Ronald Fisher.

Fisher (1890-1962) may not be as widely known, but he was the deepest thinker of them all, promoting the new concepts that made him the founder of modern statistics and in evolutionary biology "the greatest of Darwin's successors". In statistics he was the worthy successor to Gauss and Laplace. In biology he brought together the work of Mendel and Galton and showed how Mendelism provided the mathematical structure that rescued Darwin's theory of natural selection from the disfavour into which it had fallen. He was one of the founders of human genetics through his department at University College, London.

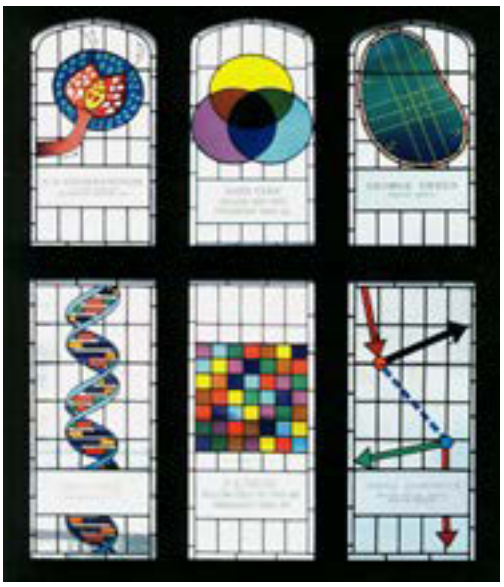
Comparisons at the heights of science are difficult because the talents required are so varied and the challenges so diverse, but Fisher was one of the giants of the twentieth century. He was also every inch a "Caian". He was not just a student at the college, but an entrance scholar; not just a fellow, but twice a fellow (1920-26 when Chief Statistician at Rothamsted Experimental Station and from 1943 when Professor of Genetics back in Cambridge). Ultimately, he was elected by the fellows as President, the "head of the fellows" (the Master being the head of the college). Never a member of any other Oxford or Cambridge college, "he loved his college", as his London colleague Mrs Sarah Holt told me when I myself was elected a fellow in 1968.

But now the college Fisher loved has turned its back on him. It has removed from the Hall a stained-glass window commemorating him, one of a set of six installed to celebrate him, Crick, Venn, Chadwick and two other distinguished college figures, Sir Charles Sherrington and George Green [pictured on right]. It has done so because of accusations that Fisher was a proponent of eugenics.

The college council stated its intentions last June:

'Sir Ronald Fisher was a student, Fellow and President of Caius. His contribution to science, through his work on statistics and genetics, was fundamental to fields as wide ranging as clinical trials in medicine through to increased production in agriculture. However, while Fisher was at Cambridge [as a student] he became the founding chairman of the University of Cambridge Eugenics Society and his interest in eugenics stimulated his interest in both statistics and genetics. He was a prominent proponent of eugenics, both in his scientific work and his public pronouncements throughout his career.'

Fisher was the inspiration for the whole set of the six windows in Hall. His was the first to be suggested. The chosen design – the Latin Square from the dust-jacket of his book *The Design of Experiments* – set the tone for the rest. In particular, with this pattern in the lower window of an embrasure there was a need for something compatible in the upper window. The choice was not difficult: the



three-circle logic diagram of John Venn, one of Fisher's predecessors as President. These two windows were installed in time for the celebration of the centenary in 1990 of Fisher's birth. They were much admired, and pressure for a further four soon mounted. The whole set was the work of Maria McClafferty, chosen on the strength of her rose window in Alexandra Palace.

After the council's statement the window was swiftly removed and is now "being stored securely", according to the college website.

None of the reasons advanced by the college council for removing the window stand up. Fisher was not "the founding chairman of the Cambridge University Eugenics Society"–he was one of the "Provisional Committee of Undergraduates" who approached dons already members of the London-based Eugenics Education Society. He became the student chairman of the Cambridge society's council. The chairman of the society was Professor A.C. Seward FRS and the treasurer was John Maynard Keynes.

Nor was "his interest in both statistics and genetic" stimulated by eugenics. In statistics it was generated by his mathematical training supervised by the Caius astronomer F.J.M. Stratton and by his postgraduate year in the Cavendish Laboratory under Stratton and Sir James Jeans. In genetics and evolution it arose from his boyhood love of natural history and the ownership of the 13 volumes of the John Murray edition of Darwin's works that he chose as a school prize at Harrow. Fascination with the theory of natural selection and the arguments of Galton's *Hereditary Genius* reinforced with his reading of Darwin's *The Descent of Man* turned his mind to the implications of the theory for man. His interest in this aspect of eugenics was roused by his scientific understanding. It is a fantasy of social historians that it was the other way round.

Neither was Fisher "a prominent proponent of eugenics . . . throughout his career" in any general sense. He only wished to counter the existing tendency in the British population for infertility to be associated with the characteristics of families rising in the social scale. He proposed a system of family allowances to do this, but not surprisingly it failed to gain political support. It finally died under the friendly fire of Sir William Beveridge in his 1943 Galton Lecture of the Eugenics Society (of which he was himself a member). Beveridge had no objection to Fisher's concerns, for he ended his lecture, "Eugenic aspects of children's allowances", by saying:

> *'As a nation we look back with pride on our ancestors of 200 or 300 years ago, and some can look back individually to ancestors of distinction. If we look back, I do not see why as a community we cannot look forward 200 or 300 years and see that we ensure the best possible posterity. That depends on breeding not from the worse stocks, but from the better.'*

What then persuaded the Caius council to act as precipitately as it did? The conventions of the college require issues of memorials and portraits to be considered first by the governing body, that is, the general meeting of fellows, the procedure followed when the windows were originally approved. No such meeting had been summoned.

On 12 June 2020 the fellows were informed that the Fisher window had come in for particular criticism in the college in connection with concern that Caius was not doing enough to ensure that it was a welcoming community free of discrimination. Apparently, the issue of the Fisher window had been raised by students the previous January because of his involvement in eugenics. We were informed that the tutors were working with student representatives to bring a letter in relation to the window for decision by the council on 24 June. Fellows would be invited to support it, and those who disagreed with it should send in their own statements by 4 pm on 19 June. The letter was circulated at 5.15 pm on 16 June over the name of the Senior Tutor and members of the student union. It was tendentious in the extreme and proposed the removal of the window. It drew attention to a petition (on ***change.org***) for the removal, started by a Caius student. Three days were allowed for objections.

The attack on Fisher had actually started well before the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis on 25 May, which provoked an upsurge in the activity of the Black Lives Matter movement. In October 2018 University College London set up a "Commission of Inquiry into the History of Eugenics at UCL". After two extensions its report finally appeared at the end of February 2020. But the journal *Significance*, published jointly by the Royal Statistical Society and the American Statistical Association, jumped the gun. In its June 2019 issue it carried an article, "The Troubling Legacy of Francis Galton", which stated, "In fact, the views [on race] of Karl Pearson and R.A. Fisher were arguably more shocking than those of Galton", from which an editorial constructed the heading "The celebrated statisticians Galton, Pearson and Fisher were prominent eugenicists, and each held and expressed racist views". When the UCL report was published it was clear that it had been designed to deal with Galton alone. No assessment of Fisher's work as Galton Professor of Eugenics at UCL (1933-43) was attempted and no criticism offered. So much for "the History of Eugenics at UCL".

The scene then moved to the United States. On 4 June 2020 a Twitter thread by Daniela Witten was started as a reaction to the Minneapolis event. Dr Witten, a professor of statistics and biostatistics at the University of Washington, had learnt that Fisher had been a "eugenicist", presumably from reading *Significance*. "Unfortunately, Fisher was not a great guy. He was really big into eugenics. Check out his Wikipedia page: 'eugenicist' is actually the second word used to describe him (after 'British', but before 'statistician' or 'geneticist')." She probably did not know that Fisher's Wikipedia entry had recently been altered, by bringing "eugenicist" to the fore.

Witten's comments inspired another US statistician, Miles Ott, to start a ***change.org*** petition to rename the Fisher Lecture of the Committee of Presidents of the Statistical Societies (COPSS), of which Witten was a member. The petition said simply, "Fisher was a prominent proponent of eugenics", and quoted his comment on the 1952 Unesco Report on Race. On 23 June COPSS removed Fisher's name from the lecture, quoting equity, diversity and inclusion, and giving as their sole objection to Fisher his association with the subject of eugenics. It had taken just 19 days to condemn him. He had become a target for Black Lives Matter, and his Caius window soon appeared on a BLM map of statues and memorials in England it demanded be removed.

Caius's statement also said that it had acted "after serious and considered decision" aided by "the thoughtful papers and arguments presented to it by fellows, students and other members of the wider College community".

These papers were not made public, but fellows and some others had access to them on a dedicated website. A particularly influential one was sent in at the last moment (after the deadline) by a fellow who quoted information from "Sir Richard Evans, Regius Professor of History Emeritus, Honorary Fellow of Caius and author of the great three-volume history of the Third Reich". A month later, on 28 July, Evans went public with his accusations in the *New Statesman*, in an article headlined "R.A. Fisher and the science of hatred". The sub-head read: "The great statistician was also a racist who believed in the forced sterilisation of those he considered inferior".

Evans's allegations panicked nearly half the Fellows of Caius into signing the letter by the Senior Tutor and students that proposed the removal of the window, to which the council agreed. These allegations were not only that (1) Fisher was a racist and (2) he believed in forced sterilisation, but also mentioned (3) his co-authorship of the Brock Report of 1934 calling for the legalisation of compulsory sterilisation, (4) that he took a favourable view of Nazi eugenics, (5) moreover that before and after the Second World War he corresponded with Otmar von Verschuer, a German geneticist and supervisor of Josef Mengele, and (6) that he supported von Verschuer's "elimination of mental defectives to benefit the German racial stock".

Let us take these allegations in order:

(1) is negated by much personal testimony in which I can personally share. Among his few Cambridge PhD students were the Indian C.R. Rao, one of the most famous statisticians of his generation, and the Ghanaian geneticist Ben Laing, who became Professor of Botany in Accra. Fisher's many visits to India in support of Professor Mahalanobis and the Indian Statistical Institute are still fondly remembered there.

(2) No evidence for this has been presented, and Fisher explicitly denied it in a letter drafted in response to this accusation in 1926 published in the *Fisher-Leonard Darwin Correspondence*.

(3) The Brock Report did not call for compulsory sterilisation.

(4) There is no evidence for a favourable view of Nazi eugenics in its grotesque generality (see 6).

(5) A correspondent writes: "The connection between Verschuer and Mengele only became well-known after the work of Benno Müller-Hill in the 1980s. It was simply not known about in the 1940s outside a small number of individuals in Germany. Fisher knew that Verschuer had experienced some 'denigration' since Verschuer had told him in a previous letter but only in non-specific terms. This information did not reveal the name of Mengele and there is no evidence that Fisher had other sources of information which would have indicated that. Verschuer had denied wrong-doing to Fisher, and offered to supply him with more information on the matter, but Fisher didn't ask for it."

(6) Fisher, in a testimonial for von Verschuer after the war, supported von Verschuer's "wish to benefit the German racial stock, especially by the elimination of manifest defectives, such as those deficient mentally". The wording is unfortunately brief, but Fisher the professor of genetics is referring to the future "stock" and the ultimate elimination from the population of the genes that cause the defect, as is clear from his earlier writing on the subject. To eliminate the defectives themselves would constitute murder.

Evans concluded his *New Statesman* article by reflecting on the "classic rift between the scientists on the one hand, and the humanities and social science dons on the other. Which is more important – a scientist's undoubted eminence, influence and distinction in his special technical field, or the fact that he espoused broader views that now arouse strong objections in a community of scholars and students?"

This is a false antithesis. Fisher's "broader views" were based on his "distinction in his special technical field", including his views on the effects of natural selection on the genetic composition of the British population that worried him. Like all good scientists, his ambition was for the truth uncontaminated by any political posturing. As in his case, this sometimes leads to a lack of appreciation of the social implications of scientists' work. Fisher's honesty was transparent, but so was his political naivety.

Dons in the humanities and social sciences, by contrast, too often demonstrate their lack of understanding of the scientific subjects on which they pontificate. Some are prone to the fallacy of the null hypothesis, choosing their favoured one to be true and rejecting all evidence against it as too weak, or even that it is improper to study it at all.

The irony of this is overwhelming: the Fisher window commemorates the very book in which he coined the phrase: "In relation to any experiment we may speak... of this hypothesis as the 'null hypothesis', and it should be noted that the null hypothesis is never proved or established, but is possibly disproved, in the course of experimentation." Yet many non-scientists cling to the null hypothesis that no behavioural traits are partly genetically determined and excoriate leaders in the field like Fisher for suggesting otherwise. As I remarked in my book *Likelihood* in 1972, "What used to be called judgement is now called prejudice and what used to be called prejudice is now called a null hypothesis. In the social sciences, particularly, it is dangerous nonsense (dressed up as 'the scientific method') and will cause much trouble before it is widely appreciated as such."

Gonville and Caius College through its council, with the hurried and informal support of a minority of its fellows and with a minimum of opportunity for opposition, has joined the cacophony of the echo chamber "eugenics and race, eugenics and race". Like *Significance*, the *New Statesman*, the Committee of Presidents of Statistical Societies of North America, Rothamsted Research and its Trustees, the US Society for the Study of Evolution, and University College London, the college leapt before it looked.

How glorious it would have been if Caius had been true to its mission of "education, learning and research" and earned the accolade of academe by opening the echo chamber to the fresh air of rational discussion and objective analysis for which it is uniquely qualified – and to which the life of its famous son Ronald Aylmer Fisher contributed so much.

This article was first published in "The Critic".

Charles Bridge

In the city of Prague, where my grandfather told me he had driven lorries across the Charles Bridge, I had been walking alone in the darkness. I left my friend behind at the dinner table. They hadn't looked at me once. I looked over my shoulder to see that the other tables were looking at us. I got up to leave. 'Where are you going?' 'For a walk.' 'Why?' 'I'm coming back, don't worry.' My friend was looking up at me with their large eyes wide, catching the hot restaurant lamps and the reflections of the flies caught in the wire. I walked out of the square, breathing out the hot pain, breathing out cold breath.

I passed the astronomical clock, its new face looming low, the lower clock ticking round, a hue of medieval gold. Other notes: The blue clockface so blue, it was quite dark. The movements of planets tracked in molten bronze plates, Death striking ten o'clock. I felt death in my ribs as I watched another figure sitting on top of the clock, nodding their head, slowly, smiling, slowly. A chime rung out. The other figures all shook their heads, they were not ready to go. Crossing the bridge, I glanced into the coves, but I saw nothing. I kept moving. I grew cold at noticing that there was no one else around, but then relaxed because a movie crane spun around in the distance.

There were actors in bathrobes standing by. The noise and the activity were comforting, they explained the deserted bridge. The pain in my ribs grew weaker, and I walked a little more confidently. The night air is always cool and fresh, much better than the unbearable heat of the daytime. I followed the river and moved along it, passing all the things that the city is famous for, lovely Bohemian houses, extremely yellow. Each house down this road had a car parked outside, of course, but looking more closely at one, underneath its rubber tires, was a pale hand.

I looked closer. A man, middle aged, face down. A thin sliver of light illuminating the edge of his features. He lay so very still. His hair was wet, his legs rigid. I noticed his clothes, his dinner jacket. The man was clearly paralytic after a drunken night in Prague, and he had decided to fall asleep on the pavement. I decided to walk back. Nearing the bridge again, I passed a wall covered in a metallic sheen, graffiti and sculpted golden masks. Looking at one mask, I noticed that the features bore a slight resemblance to the man on the street. 'He was asleep, wasn't he?' I thought. 'He must have been. But what if he wasn't? Am I an awful person for leaving him there, without calling for help? No. There's plenty of people nearby, and in pairs, it's best left up to them'. Walking back to the square, the restaurant tables had been cleared away, only a cleaner remained outside, sweeping glass away as the clock sang low, sang lovely. I called for a taxi.

Pulling up to the apartment, I looked inside the pub next door. Smoke, men, oil lamps. I noticed them. I opened the door, much to the annoyance of every patron inside, and their eyes followed me with a small amount of contempt as I took a seat next to my friend. 'Would you like a night cap?' 'No thank you, I'm fine.' 'So where did you go?' 'Oh, just roundabout.' 'I see. Well. I hope your stomach is better.' 'Yes, it is'. They drained their drink. Their face, too, bore a slight resemblance to the golden masks in the wall. I think it's the large eyes, their mourning, decadent expression.

'You know, I've been thinking. My birthday is coming up soon, and I've been in a bit of a rut, so I'm thinking of renting out somewhere in the countryside and throwing a celebration there.' 'Oh, that sounds wonderful. Won't it be expensive?' 'Yes, but I've got some money saved up. I might as well enjoy it on my Birthday, ring in the New Year. Are you feeling alright? You look very white.' 'Oh, I'm fine, just tired. I'm not dying yet, thank God. I'm sorry but I don't think I've ever asked, when are you turning 21?' 'Oh, have I never told you? I was born on New Year's Eve.' I looked at him and realised that I was looking at a stranger.

TAMSYN CHANDLER

Tamsyn Chandler is a writer, actor, and musician from Wiltshire. They are currently studying for an MSt at Oriel College.

And You Are All The Candles

You are the ghosts that comb my hair. You are the train of a lost thought. You are lint that breaks apart and makes more lint. I am a bowl of stars on the clean table of an early dawn. Eat me with single cream and a great spoon. Wash me with cool water from a silver tap. I am cursed with a destiny that unwinds like cotton thread; f*orever, forever, forever*. I want to wrap it back up, tie it to a parcel to give to myself as a prize, as though the deeds are done. You are the unmeasured pour. You are the AM radio. *You are all the candles*. I trace words for you like the laughter of a child without language. Like a room fallen into silence. Picking through shards for tiny prayers wrapped in small squares of velvet. Each the length of a single breath. Fastening them with my thread to the feet of street pigeons. They fly to the spires of gothic buildings and sit on the stone wings of angels in cemeteries. And they are for you. Though you never, ever hear my silent prayers. They are for you.

RUPA WOOD

Rupa Wood is a daughter and grand-daughter of political asylum seekers and grew up in London, England with a garden full of rabbits. She is a multi-disciplinary artist exploring the philosophy of commonplace magic and a post-graduate student at Oxford University studying Creative Writing.

Youth to the Rescue?

PETER OPPENHEIMER

Contentment of the student body, aka "the student experience", is an objective beloved of the University's central administration, as it offers grounds for muscling in on the responsibilities of colleges and academic departments. All the more welcome, therefore, to see students registering some well-argued disapproval of the University's governance machinery, the immediate target being the University's approach to climate change and environmental sustainability. Back in Michaelmas Term 2020, pressure from junior members was a significant factor leading up to the Congregation debate which led to a resolution mandating the University to divest from fossil-fuel producers, albeit on a somewhat uncertain timetable.

April 2021 has seen the fruits of a much more thoroughgoing exercise. Students from the so-called Oxford Climate Justice Campaign have produced a report entitled Money, People, Reputation: Oxford's Ties with the Fossil Fuel Industry. Its research is admirable and its timing impeccable. Bang in the middle of toe-curling festivities proclaimed by Wellington Square to launch its laboured and myopic Environmental Sustainability Strategy ("in this year, when COP26 will be held in Glasgow, the University has a strategy it can be proud of"–the intended reference being, apparently, to the University of Oxford, rather than of Glasgow). The student campaigners themselves are not so blunt about Oxford's shortcomings. On the contrary, their report gains added credibility from judicious doses of faint praise ("the recently launched Oxford Sustainability Strategy marks a significant improvement in the University's stance") and by mentioning academic bright spots ("Oxford's researchers make huge contributions to climate science").

A critique of the Oxford Sustainability Strategy formed part of my article, "The Road to Academic Debasement" in the last Oxford Magazine (No. 431, Noughth Week, Trinity Term 2021). In brief, the focus of the Strategy document is not–as it should be–on Oxford's impact as a leading academic institution capable of dynamically influencing both public opinion and policy-makers. Instead it is on parochial, second-order adjustments to its own fuel usage and the like, and on using the monitoring of these as a pretext for consolidating the central bureaucracy's oppressive grip on University affairs. The OCJC report raises essentially identical objections with different phraseology and different illustrations.

For one thing, it highlights the distinctly sniffy attitude of the University's Information Compliance Team when asked for facts and figures not already in the public domain. The ICT does its utmost to withhold information, on grounds implying that–as the OCJC report neatly summarizes–"the commercial interests of the University are prioritised over transparency and academic freedom." The same attitude is apparent when central administrators demand first and foremost "the business case" for approving any suggested academic initiative; and when the Environmental Sustainability Strategy states–however apologetically–that "International flights are currently core to our business model." The fact is that universities have no business having a business model at all. That is not what they exist for. If that is the language they employ, it shows that they are being run by the wrong people.

Such generalities aside, the student report draws a key analogy–and shows up the Environmental Sustainability Strategy as half-baked–when it argues that the University should be treating the fossil fuel industries in the same way that it treats the tobacco industry: in short, not merely disinvesting from it and forbidding smoking on University premises, but also declining to accept either donations from it (whether for academic posts, student bursaries and scholarships, research grants, buildings or anything else) or personnel linkages with it (ranging from advisory or professional appointments–in either direction–at the senior end, to recruitments through the University Careers Service at the junior end).

Lest I be thought forgetful, prejudiced or uncritical, I need to register three qualifications. First, I too have had miscellaneous personal linkages with fossil-fuel companies, both in this country and in Russia. During the mid-1980s I obtained two years' full-time leave of absence from the University to work as Chief Economist for Shell. I retain personal friendships in the company to this day, and it is a matter of regret to me that the company's response to the global climate issue has been less constructive and less innovative than it ought to be.

Next, addiction aside, nobody ever needed to smoke. Boycotting the fossil-fuel sector is a far more complex matter than boycotting tobacco, because its economic role is infinitely more deep-rooted and extensive. There has to be room to plead individual exceptions for consideration by impartial assessors. A case in point is Peter Edwards' letter in The Guardian of 21st April, defending–against the strictures of the Campaign report–the KACST-Oxford Petrochemical Research Centre and its Saudi funding. Edwards is not alone. As the report ascertained with the help of FOI requests, research funding from the oil sector for a range of Oxford projects in recent years runs into £millions. Significant investments are also held not by the University but by a number of Oxford colleges in the capital of energy companies. At the same time, the envisaged "impartial assessors" would certainly not include the existing University Committee to Review Donations and Research Funding, whose record shows it to be toothless and, like the ICT, subservient to "the University's commercial interests".

Third and last, a significant weakness of the student Campaign's report is its equating of fossil-fuel exploitation with neo-colonialism and perpetuation of global inequalities. This is accurate neither historically nor in contemporary terms–and has the unfortunate effect of confusing the vital global issue of climate change and its implications for the planet. Until the mid-twentieth century extraction as well as use of fossil fuels was essentially confined to Europe and North America. Only since then have both been more widely spread; the change has, moreover, been accompanied by diminishing inequality of income across continents. Associated environmental

impacts have also found governments of newly industrialising countries no less complicit than their western predecessors – spectacularly so in the case of the coal-based industrialisation of China. And Western countries for their part have experienced an ample quota both of human casualties and of environmental calamities. Among recent cases are the 1966 Aberfan disaster in South Wales (an indirect result of mining coal in earlier decades), and two horrendous oil spills off coasts of North America (the Exxon Valdez incident in 1989, and the Deepwater Horizon episode of 2010).

I am reluctant to close these remarks on anything other than a positive and encouraging note. Student campaigning to repair broken University governance is altogether praiseworthy. The question is whether its focus can realistically be extended to further aspects. One possible domain is that of degree standards and assessments. A powerful case can be made that the inherited system is now irreparably damaged and hence an anachronism, and should be replaced by formal records of students' completed coursework and what this comprises. The case was in fact anticipated within a series of nine reports commissioned back in 2008 by the then responsible Government minister (John Denham, at the short-lived "Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills"), to suggest or stimulate the development of UK higher education over the ensuing "15 years".

Those 15 years end in 2023. Alas, the anniversary can hardly be expected to impress itself upon student campaigners currently or recently at university. Dons have probably forgotten about it too. To be sure, contemporary events may suggest fresh perspectives on so-called institutional governance. In the Post Office, an incapable and blinkered ruling executive was responsible for the flawed prosecution of hundreds of conscientious sub-postmasters trapped by a faulty IT system. There are perhaps some uncomfortable parallels here with to-day's alienation between Oxford's machinery of governance and its academic staff – not excluding recourse to legal action by the ruling clique on such matters as retirement ages. Again, however, though student support would be very welcome, members of the academic community must find the determination to speak – and act – for themselves. From this many – among those sufficiently knowledgeable to be troubled by the state of affairs – are currently inhibited, largely by fear of belonging to a vocal minority, and hence readily subject to victimisation by their bureaucratic overlords.

The Joy of Vaccinating

ROBIN JACOBY

Doctors who retire can be roughly divided into those who can't wait to leave, and those who hanker to return. I belong to the latter group, and the Covid pandemic provided me with an opportunity I was desperate not to miss. The General Medical Council (GMC) contacted many of us who had recently relinquished our license to practise and offered us relicensing without the need to jump through the tedious hoops of so-called continuing professional development. "Yes please" I said to the GMC but, unfortunately, there was no call for a superannuated, academic, old age psychiatrist. Covid does not appear to have added to the mental problems of older folk: they have either died or got on with life as best they could.

Then came vaccination. I might be a psychiatrist, but I am still a doctor and was delighted to be accepted as a vaccinator. I thought that I should just be able to turn up, be given a syringe, a vial of the juice, and told to start jabbing. Not so: there were hoops to jump through in the form of some 12 online courses each followed by an online test with a pass-mark of at least 80% and sometimes 100%. I dutifully spent several hours at my computer. Most of the courses were medically, if sometimes only remotely, connected. I passed all the courses first time except two: 'Equality & Diversity'; and 'Prevention of Radicalisation'. I passed both second time, but I hope that my failure on the first won't put Oriel, my old College, off erecting a statue of me in the future. As to prevention of radicalisation, it is difficult to see how much you can do when the vaccinee is with you for all of three minutes.

The one hoop through which I was pleased to jump, was a live course on how to give an intramuscular (IM) injection in the deltoid (shoulder) muscle. Doctors who have spent all their career in hospital have probably rarely, if ever, given IM injections, because nurses do it. I have stuck needles into veins, arteries, and pretty well every body cavity, but I don't think that I ever gave an IM injection. The teachers on the course were delightful nursing lecturers at Brookes. Once I had taken a few stabs at a practice arm made of sorbo rubber, I was pronounced fit to be let loose on the public.

Oxford NHS Healthcare Trust uses the Kassam Stadium for mass vaccination and now has the capacity to immunise 2,000 people a day. The procedure for such a throughput is so quick and efficient that very many vaccinees comment on it, not only with approval, but also surprise that the British can do it. The staff consist first of "marshals", some of whom are volunteers from St John Ambulance, who direct everyone through all stages from car-park, entry into the building, vaccination and back out again. Secondly, there are the "administrators" who register everyone on arrival and record the details of each vaccination as it is given. Thirdly, there are the pharmacists who keep us supplied with vaccine, and the cleaners who not only clean but clear away the vast amount of clinical waste accumulating during the day. Fourthly, there is an NHS manager to oversee the whole process, and finally, the clinical staff: mainly nurses but with the occasional other health-care professional, e.g. a physiotherapist, a few superannuated doctors, such as myself, and one practising doctor with overall responsibility for clinical decisions that sometimes have to be made.

Before the process was changed, we vaccinators spent

half our shift giving the jab, and the other half undertaking clinical screening beforehand, asking a series of questions to exclude those who should not be vaccinated: e.g. if pregnant or if they had received another vaccination in the preceding seven days. I used to hand over a two-sided laminated sheet listing the questions, and ask people to read and answer them individually. One woman read to the bottom of the first side of the sheet and looked at me. "Turn over," I said, to which she replied with a mischievous smile, "me or the sheet?" The process has now been changed and we vaccinate for the entire shift, asking the questions from memory before giving the jab.

Vaccinations take place in a large hall. Each vaccinator sits with an administrator plus computer in a "pod" delineated by moveable screens. To start with we were injecting almost exclusively the old, but occasionally a young person would appear. These were care-workers or had serious illnesses that pushed them up the priority list. One young woman of about 20, who told me she was working part-time in a care-home, turned out to be one of our own medical students: just exactly the sort we should be training. I felt a great sense of pride.

I came up to Oriel in 1961 with French & German but read Russian & French. After graduating I changed to pre-clinical medicine. I still speak those three languages moderately fluently, and I like to surprise vaccinees from those countries by talking to them in their own tongue. Mostly they are surprised and pleased, but one German responded grumpily with, "*at least this is something you do better than us!*" All the other Germans to whom I have given the vaccine were not at all sour: on the contrary they were very happy and grateful to exchange a few words, as were the French. So far, I have had only one Russian who sounded off about how ghastly Putin is [true] and how unfortunate her relatives are [true] to be living in Russia. A Lithuanian was happy to speak Russian once she understood I was English.

The commonest first words of vaccinees entering our pod are, "I'm terrified of needles". This is often followed by the exposure of florid tattoos covering the muscle to be injected. I am told that having a tattoo is much more painful than a single vaccination jab. I have now plunged a needle variously through the eye of a dragon, the mouth of a mythical beast, the nipple of a buxom wench [a tattoo, not a poor aim on my part] and numerous other fanciful skin decorations.

Up to the time of writing only the Oxford Astra Zeneca (OAZ) vaccine has been given at the Kassam. When we ask for formal consent, the overwhelming majority respond with patriotic, specifically Oxford, fervour. "*Of course, we're here in Oxford, this is our vaccine*." A few are hesitant about the OAZ. I don't seek to persuade them to take it, but say that they do have to decide whether to be vaccinated or not, as there is a queue outside. All have so far accepted it. Others with some, but a lesser degree of hesitancy, ask me to explain the risks. I sometimes quote the BA pilot who said over the intercom once, when I landed at Heathrow, "*if you're going on from here by car, you're undertaking the most dangerous part of your journey – so please take care.*" Often I repeat what our own John Bell said on the BBC that a much quicker way to a thrombosis is to get Covid.

How shall I summarise why the vaccination exercise works so well? Clearly, the managers at the Health Trust have not only planned it efficiently, but are also repeatedly changing procedures to improve the operation. Assuming that the Kassam is typical, I should say that everyone appreciates the need to do this for the greater good. The whole team from cleaners to clinicians are pulling in the same direction. There is no squabbling within the workforce; the clinical hierarchy with two or three senior nurses in charge on any single shift is very light touch. Humour is in evidence. In almost any work setting there tends to be a target for whingeing. If there is any at the Kassam, it is externally directed e.g. a few, not terribly serious grumbles at the agencies franchised to employ us. I am enjoying my time, and look forward to continuing to wield a syringe for much of the rest of the year. The work is useful, my colleagues are all friendly. Most of all, what I am permitted to do can only be described as a privilege.

A Library without Readers?
- historical trends at the Bodleian

G.R.EVANS

When I matriculated, duly read the historic undertaking aloud in Arts End in Duke Humfrey and was handed the little green card, I was told it would admit me to the Bodleian for the rest of my life. Today's new Readers are merely 'deemed to have subscribed' to that declaration. I have often been surprised to encounter students at the end of their third year gazing wonderingly at that staggeringly beautiful space and saying they had come to look at it because they believed this was their last chance. The urgings of the present website to those about to graduate leave future members of Convocation to apply for a Reader card.[1] The Libraries invite applications for Reader cards from 'students at other universities'; 'academics at other universities' 'independent researchers'; 'charity or company-affiliated researchers' – OUP staff, with *alumni* to be found last in the listed categories.[2]

I have duly kept about me down the years the plastic card which replaced the green cardboard one. I was therefore baffled by the decision in January to close the Libraries 'temporarily' to Readers without SSO, and concerned to read in the *University Bulletin* of 12 April that this exclusion would continue until July. I asked the Pro-Vice-Chancellor responsible for the Libraries for a copy of the record of the making of this decision. She responded

promptly to say she had asked the Secretary to the Curators (Bodley's Librarian) to assemble them. On 25 April she sent them to me, for which speed and transparency she is greatly to be thanked, as is Richard Ovenden.

These disclosures tell a story. On 6 January the Silver Group took the decision to 'cease admission for external readers and prioritise online services for Oxford students and researchers'. The stated reason was that 'study space is a key element in our academic support provision'. The Silver Group decision was then sent to the Curators for their January 14 meeting with a Paper which explained the thinking. The aim was primarily to provide 'study spaces', 'for students and researchers to work outside their college room'. Actual 'access to the collections' would chiefly be 'met by the non-zero contact services'.[3] Feedback from the Curators was mixed, though there was mention of the importance of the SSO exclusion being only 'temporary'. A general purpose 'Study Space Working Group' is mentioned

On 29 January Richard Ovenden emailed the Curators to say that Silver Group had asked for a plan 'on the progressive extension of reading room availability', which he attached. This was based on the University being at Stage 3 of 'its emergency response'. 'Access for external readers would be stopped.' Among the 'tasks currently under way' was to 'implement SSO in SpaceFinder to prevent external reader bookings (prioritisation of access to limited study spaces)'.

A Paper was considered by the Curators on 8 March. This included the statement that 'Action required by Curators' included 'to approve the continuation of the policy regarding external reader access to reading rooms and related services', and:

> *'Due to issues over access to reading spaces, we recommend that we continue to exclude bookings by External readers, with the exception of the Weston Library'.*

The 'exception' allows Readers to access Special Collections without SSO, but that is of limited use. For example readers accessing the the University Archive in the Weston will still find themselves barred from the print material on the history of the University collected in Duke Humfrey and intended to be used with it. The 'University Roadmap' dated 11 March with its URL link in the *University Bulletin* says the exclusion is to continue until the end of Trinity Term. No record has been disclosed recording the Curators agreeing to this.

It is apparent that while Readers without SSO have had their research stopped dead for months, those with SSO have been causing some annoyance by making bookings and not turning up. Now:

> *'Given the importance of having a place to study, especially during exam time, the libraries will be suspending those readers who routinely miss their reading room slot and do not cancel.'*

Now 'any readers who have missed four bookings in one week, or six bookings in a fortnight, will be suspended from SpaceFinder.' 'Suspended readers will still be able to make use of Click and Collect but will be unable to Browse and Borrow'.[4] Meanwhile the excluded cannot indicate the scale of their potential 'demand' because they cannot do so without the SSO they lack.

The shrinkage of the Libraries estate

The present focus on a shortage of Reader seats should draw attention to a quarter of a century of shrinkage of the Libraries estate as a matter of policy. This has taken place with scant concern for the maintenance of adequate provision for Reader access.

In Michaelmas 1966 the *Report of the Committee on University Libraries* (the `Shackleton Report') spoke of 'unplanned independence [and] enthusiastic rivalry'. In the 1990s the University was still rich in specialist subject libraries (with college libraries of course remaining the independent concern of their colleges). Academic Librarians with specialist knowledge to meet the specialist needs of readers could commonly be found in reading rooms. In 1995 it was decided to take stock of the organisation of the University's library provision. The *Report of Council's Working Party on Senior Library Posts*, published in the *Gazette* in September 1995, found it regrettable that Oxford's library services were 'provided by nearly 100 independently managed library units'.[5] The *Report* set out radical proposals for a 'leaner, more cost-effective library system', to be supervised by the 'Curators of the University Libraries'.

Congregation debated a general Resolution on the 'Future organisation of university libraries', to approve the establishment by Council of a new post of 'Director of University Library Services and Bodley's Librarian' with effect from 1 January 1997. The first of the holder's responsibilities would be to bring forward 'within three years for consideration by Congregation proposals for the creation of an integrated library service' which would have a series of listed 'major objectives'.

Seven of the Taylorian Library staff signed a letter to the *Oxford Magazine*:

> *'pointing out that all the advantages of the present system, as listed in the report, concern the library's readers, while all the advantages claimed for the proposed new system are of a managerial nature.'*

The result, it was warned, would be that:

> *'we are going to be faced with the prospect of a huge, unwieldy, and unresponsive library system run by managers who are removed from their readers and staffed by librarians who are not specialists in the area of study to which their books pertain'* (*Oxford Magazine*, Fourth Week, Michaelmas Term, 1995).

Reg Carr, Bodley's Librarian (1997-2006), pressed for 'embedding throughout OULS the culture that there is one library system in the central University', with 'a single budgetary system' and a 'comprehensive staffing plan', with managerial 'senior posts', though he accepted that 'staff resistance' had been a problem. A *Report of the Council's Working Party to review the initial period of Library Integration* was published as a Supplement to the *Gazette* on 26 February, 2003. The Working Party recommended continuing an 'accelerated' integration.

From physical to digital: would that mean fewer reader seats would be needed?

In 2004 the introduction of Electronic Library and Information Services for the University of Oxford (ELISO)

made the case for substantial investment in electronic resources. In 2007-8 the Oxford University Research Archive (ORA) was developed, to become the institutional repository for the University, managed by OULS. The ORA would include pre-prints to e-theses and conference materials, and when Open Access requirements began that proved to have been a valuable beginning. Titles in the public domain held by the Libraries were scanned in partnership with Google and the scans made available online. However, the assumption that demand for reading room seats was likely to diminish as books and articles could be accessed online was to prove more true for the sciences than for the humanities.

'Physical consolidation and restructuring' and a changing role for librarians

On 17 March 2005 a *Staff Establishment Review* prepared by David Perrow as Acting Deputy Librarian went online.[6] It outlined extensive cost-cutting measures, including the introduction of an 'early retirement/voluntary severance programme'. In a 're-orientation of academic-related staff to a subject-based approach' the academic specialist librarians were to be replaced by a small number of 'subject librarians'. This was intended to remedy the 'over-grading' which had arisen 'because each academic department had formerly to employ their own professional librarian to undertake the full range of professional, managerial and supervisory duties'. It was proposed that some of those duties should pass to a new 'senior management team'.

The *Establishment Review* proposed that the saving of salary costs should be complemented by 'physical consolidation and restructuring', namely:

> *'the amalgamation of the science libraries with the Radcliffe Science Library; the remodelling of the New Bodleian and the move of Humanities' Area Studies to a new area, possibly the Radcliffe Infirmary site.'*

The 'amalgamation' of the contents of the Faculty science libraries with the Radcliffe Science Library proceeded. Some of the space in the RSL building was given to storage of 'museums' collections. The Radcliffe Science Library building was taken over by Parks (now Reuben) College in 2019, still further reducing space for seats to read in.

Humanities libraries have also been faced with a series of closures. One of the options considered for use of the Radcliffe Observatory Quarter site acquired by the University[7] was a new 'humanities library', into which might be decanted selected contents of more than one of the existing Faculty libraries, enabling them to be closed. That plan was put on hold for shortage of funding.

In 2011 it was suggested that the Indian Institute should be made over to the Martin School and the History Faculty Library be moved elsewhere. OULS was offered £1m to allow this move, though Reader seats would be lost. In early 2012 the student newspapers published indignant articles. There followed strong protests from academics too as soon as it was realised that the History Faculty Library was to take over the upper floor of the Radcliffe Camera, and much of the Camera's current content moved into the Bodleian Library with journals and 'low use' material open-shelf material there removed to remote storage in Swindon. In 2012 the Faculty Libraries for Philosophy and Theology were merged and moved into a wing of the old Radcliffe Infirmary building, housing a greatly reduced undergraduate collection for both subjects, and fewer Reader seats.

A Congregation Question was asked and in November 2012 a 'Topic' Discussion held on 'The Libraries and their future'. A speaker put the concern about seating:

> *'So what do we in the Humanities want? Faculty libraries for our undergraduates. With desks in them. And multiple copies of borrowable books. Research libraries. With desks in them. And reading rooms. With shelves. That have non-borrowable books on them and print journals. And an end to any downgrading and dematerialising of the Humanities in the libraries of the University of Oxford* (*Gazette* Supplement (1), 21 November, 2012).'

In 2015 it was proposed that the Oriental Studies Library should be closed and its contents moved into the Sackler Library. In 'Library mergers' in the *Oxford Magazine* (Second Week, Trinity Term, 2015), a student (name withheld) complained that 'for the fourth time in a decade, the library management have once again decided to cut back on resources for the everyday Humanities student'. That plan was abandoned in the face of determined opposition.

There had been high expectations in 2012, when the Libraries Annual Report said that Phase I of the new Humanities Library was 'anticipated to be completed in 2012', bringing together the Faculties of English, History, Philosophy, and Theology' with planned 'services for mathematics, area studies, and most other humanities subjects'. It was annouced in June 2019 that a gift of £150m from Stephen Schwarzman was to give Oxford a 'dynamic hub dedicated to the humanities' to 'include performing arts and exhibition venues designed to engage the Oxford community and the public at large, and bring new audiences to campus', but of course taking possible space for Reader seats for such purposes.

Remote storage expands and the Weston Library reduces reader seats

In a letter dated 1 June 2005, the National Archives queried the security of Duke Humfrey's Library (despite recent modifications) as a reading room for Special Collections material. It gave provisional approval for the University to hold National Archives Material for only three more years. The time-limit was reviewed in April 2008 and a further three years licence was granted.

Refurbishment of the New Bodleian had become urgent in any case because its underground stacks were leaking. The proposed location of a new Depository to store books at Osney Mead proved controversial, on the grounds that the location was itself subject to flooding and the proposed building height would interrupt the view of the Oxford skyline. The Depository became the subject of one of three Congregation Resolutions published in the *Gazette* on 5 May 2005 calling for a 'full report' on the Curators' 'plans for reorganisation of the University's libraries in the short, medium and long-term'. The Resolution was accepted by the Council and the *Report to Congregation* was duly published as a Supplement

to the *Gazette* on 22 September. The Report was more preoccupied with the problem of where to store the books off-site than with providing seats in reading rooms where they might be read.

Meanwhile the University appealed step by step against the repeated refusal of planning consent for the Depository. An emergency decision was taken in 2007-8 to send books for temporary storage to the old DeepStore 'salt-mines' in Cheshire. The cost prompted the further decision to reduce deliveries of requested items to twice weekly, considerably inconveniencing Readers visiting for research purposes with their return flights booked.

Once it was accepted that there could be no Depository at Osney Mead there was a speedy decision to build a Book Storage Facility in Swindon instead. Work began in 2009 and the 'facility' was completed in a year, with 153 miles of shelving, to 'house low-use collections' on the premise that shelves in the reading rooms should be used for high-use items and digital versions would increasingly be available for the rest. The site allowed for the expansion of storage, which has since been called for.

Planning for reconstruction of the New Bodleian moved slowly onwards. The *Gazette* of 2 November 2006 carried a notice about:

> *'an exhibition of proposals to give architectural expression to the concept of the redeveloped New Bodleian as a Special Collections Library.'*

It became clear that it was proposed to give a considerable proportion of the reconfigured internal space to uses other than reading rooms. The 'radical, multi-year transformation' of the New Bodleian into the Weston Library began in 2011. It resulted in fewer levels of underground storage and fewer reading rooms, with the ground floor open to the public, exhibition galleries, a 44-foot atrium, a café and a shop. This was calculated to cost £76 million. Julian Blackwell (of Blackwells bookshops) gave £5 million and the grand atrium was named the Blackwell Hall. The Garfield Weston Foundation gave £25m. The New Bodleian was renamed the Weston Library.[8]

Conclusion

The *Annual Report* of the Libraries for 2007-8 described this as a 'turbulent year', when the Libraries had faced a 'massive deficit, pegged at over £3 million on a budget of over £32 million'. There was 'a shortfall of some £4 million between the support received through HEFCE and the actual costs of providing the services to external readers'. This readership included, it was noted, a total exceeding 65,000. Accepting this as a proper part of the mission of Oxford's libraries, Ivor Crewe's *Review of the HEFCE funding for Research Libraries*, which appeared in 2008, designated OULS as one of five 'National Research Libraries'. In response HEFCE consolidated its previous streams of non-formula funding into a single stream of supplementary funding from 2008/09 on a long term and renewable basis. This was intended to support Oxford in providing for the needs of its international Readership as well as the needs of UK academics and students.

In what appears to be its most recent *Annual Report*, for 2018-9, the Bodleian Libraries says it 'provides 4,567 study spaces' across its 28 libraries.[9] Not at the moment of course, while 'social distancing' continues, but the 'University Roadmap' published by the *University Bulletin* records that since 7 April 2021 there are 2250 daily bookable seats, an 'uplift' of 850.

What has that 'Study Space Working Group' been doing to return the situation to "normal" for all readers? What about using the Examination Schools, with their many hundreds of potential 'study spaces', and on offer to the general public for booking as an 'event venue'?[10] 'Study spaces' have been provided in colleges and departments. What has been the case for taking over the libraries as 'study spaces', denying them their supremely important normal purpose as a library system run for the benefit of the world-wide pursuit of knowledge?

[1] ***https://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/finishing-your-degree***.

[2] ***https://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/join-the-libraries/apply***

[3] Those would be the digital provisions, with many, including the Hathi Trust which sets its own terms, inaccessible to Readers without SSO. Cambridge seems to have made special efforts to allow its graduates to 'access a suite of eresources' during its own periods of library closure, ***https://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/using-library***

[4] ***https://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/libraries/book-a-library-time-slot***.

[5] Only eleven of these were funded by the General Board from the portion of the block grant given to the libraries, of which 80% went to the Bodleian (£8,793,087 in 1993–4). Libraries run by Departments were funded from departmental budgets.

[6] It can no longer be accessed online but I have a copy.

[7] Sold to the University on 23 March 2003 with a lease to the National Health Service until 2 February 2007.

[8] ***https://www.development.ox.ac.uk/report2018-19/building-the-library-of-the-future***

[9] In that year it had 'accommodated 1,999,561 physical reader visits, welcoming a total of 87,074 registered readers which includes 31,973 external readers'. The libraries offer '350,766 study-space-hours per week in term', ***https://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/bodreader/documents/media/bodleian_libraries_annual_report_18-19.pdf***

[10] ***https://www.venues.ox.ac.uk/our-venues/examination-schools/***

News from 2050

By some freak of space time, this snippet from the manuscript for the next volume of '*The History of the University of Oxford*–Volume IX, 1990-2050' (published by Oxford University Press Ltd) seems to have ended up in the Editor's inbox–it appears to be a footnote to the volume's initial chapter...

'17–During these years of radical governance change that underpinned the deleterious shifts in academic strategy and priorities that we have discussed and that altered the University so dramatically by 2025, a perceptive critic produced a long series of articles in the 'Oxford Magazine' *warning that the University was drifting from the core values that had hitherto led to its national and global success (Mr Peter Oppenheimer, a Student and subsequently Student Emeritus, of Christ Church College).*

This collective of authors for Volume IX have, however, found in working through the voluminous archives of the Administration no recognition of, let alone discussion of, these warnings–and so it seems the University, remorselessly ill-informed and arrogantly unreflective, slid into the self-destructive scenario over 2025-2050 that we will now set out in the second part of this introductory chapter.'

(Editor's Note–We have to assume, having consulted David Palfreyman, that the authors of Volume IX must have been sloppy in their researches among the Wellington Square archives since we have every reason to believe–or at least hope–that the contents of the '*Oxford Magazine*' are influential in the evolution of the Administration's thinking.)

Meditation While Plaiting My Hair

I part my hair straight down the middle,
a river on either side–
In the past, someone shaped like me
poured water from a metal carafe
straight into my mouth,
the echo of my river submerged in your river–
Lately, I read about storms all night,
because there is no lightning here; instead
I see the wind pull down the tautness
of trees and the swans at the lagoon part
through the wreckage.
Each one is another translation for love
if love was more vessel than loose thread.

Once, we sat poolside outdoors in Dar es Salaam
and I chose survival over your body.
Why is it I only ever see the night heron alone?
I tendril neatly together my hair, soaked by salt
and the wood of a body I do not touch,
the spine of a book left open on the page
I forgot to bookmark–
The spine of a book I left out in a storm,
each of its rooms sliding into our margins,
into all these tendrils of blank space–and, tell me,
when did I let us splinter?

Originally published in VIDA Review

Avian Circulatory System

Birds have proportionately larger hearts than humans, which is to say
with a heart the relative size

of a crow's to its body, I would need the blood of all my ancestors.

The problem isn't that I don't know my grandmother's first name,
or that I haven't shared the tartness of tamarind

with my mother on any Tanzanian island.

Physiologically, they are so alike: four-chambered, cone and crescent
shaped, but

the problem is night–
how daybreak transforms two identical stones into a motherland

and a daughter, depending on the snarl of grassland at their ankles.

I have spent too long wishing for the heart of something else, bathing in a pond

in secret, so that I might hide the lacquer of my anatomy. I envy birds
that pump blood according to instinct,

never concerning themselves with the bloodline threading through.

Originally published in The Fiddlehead

I Want the Kind of Permanence of a Birdwatcher's Catalogue

At lochend park, swans tendril together
the shape of my longing,

a languid zipline trail of water.
I lean over the edge, see petals of my face

thorning in the water, a Tuesday morning vase
of unhurried thoughts and magenta

lipstick–

Any birdwatcher will tell you
that winged boats

do not howl through their sharp, pyramid beaks.

That sound clicking through
waterlogged bodies

must be the prosody of my own desires.

I showered in the summer solstice light
that morning

and read my morning prayers off the cracked
screen of my phone

–Forgi/ve me

as if a corner of my yearning refracted into an alternate
universe,

a parallel world, a symmetrical ruffled wing.

I reorient myself on the path, into a body turned
away from its doubling,

sick of my own gaze staring back.

There is departure in every window, in every
wind-rustled seed.

Forgi/ve me
for desiring the permanence of a birdwatcher's catalogue

each line of pigment an absolute, a trail of ink
never slipping beyond / its typeset world.

Audio originally published as the Scottish BAME Writers Network Mixtape

Faded

Say the word dark
translates to how I fold my body

like a fig
against a stippled moon.

Pull a string of sorrows from
my mouth.

Remind me that I am not a swan–

I am a long night of rain
with my mother's eyes.

Hold my tasbih to my heart.

Imagine we are
elk walking into tall grass.

This dream is the sky opening,

This dream is a river of faces.

This dream is all of the pine trees
replaced with smoke.

I call out to the water and the wind
scatters my thoughts,

fashions distances within me.

I call out *Allah*–

if I look up, I see a ghost
in the canopy.

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NOTICE

Jane Griffiths, literary editor of the *Oxford Magazine*, will be pleased to read literary submissions of any description–e.g. verse, critical prose, very short stories, segments of dialogue, reviews of new dramatic productions and books, etc. Submissions should be no longer than 750 words, and where possible should be sent by email attachment to ***jane.griffiths@ell.ox.ac.uk*** together with a two-sentence biog.

REVIEWS

Excellent dumb discourse?

The Winter's Tale, RSC. BBC 4, 25 April 2021. Directed by Erika Whyman.

It was a choice between *Line of Duty* and *The Winter's Tale*. I chose *The Winter's Tale*. At least no arcane acronyms there. I would have been astonished when I reviewed the RSC's *Julius Caesar* for this magazine in Trinity Term 1987 to have been told that thirty-four years later the theatre at Stratford would be out of commission for live audiences for a year. Even worse than when city authorities closed theatre because of plague in Shakespeare's time. At least now though one can see a production on television. Was this one satisfactory? Far from it.

There's something not quite right about Leontes's (Joseph Kloska) soliloquies. They are strikingly addressed to the camera, and to us. This is not right. We should be overhearing his thoughts, not having them so directly exposed. In other plays characters do address the audience – one thinks of the complicity between Richard III and Iago and their audiences. Petruccio says after a brutal scene on his honeymoon, 'He that knows better how to tame a shrew,/ Now let him speak; 'tis charity to show.' (4.i) I was always tempted to go to a production of *The Taming of the Shrew* with a short blank-verse speech, stand up and give a response.

I don't think the blocking in the first scene was as effective as it could have been. With more ingenuity we could have seen the interchange between Hermione (Kemi-Bo Jacobs) and Polixenes (Andrew French) through Leontes's eyes, registering that he might have a case. Leontes lurches into sudden and unreasonable anger. It's difficult to believe it, but that's Shakespeare's fault. Hermione is too shouty. Paulina (Amanda Hadingue) is shouty, but that is written into the part. Perdita (Georgia Landers) doesn't look like Perdita, and in the sheep-shearing dances does high- kicks to match Toulouse-Lautrec's Jane Avril and Louise Weber ('La Goulou'). Her accent is demotic, which is plausible if one wants the pastoral to be realistic, but whoever said that pastoral was realistic? A good deal of the dialogue in the pastoral scenes just gets lost. The final scene with Hermione's statue makes its impact, but then, it is difficult to spoil that completely.

The Winter's Tale, like many Shakespeare plays, has its relevancies according to when it is acted. For the original audience who saw it on 5 November 1612 the fortunate rescue from the planned explosion in 1603 must have had its resonances, so to speak. I recall seeing a Good Friday production on television in the 'fifties. This meant that the various lines about grace stood out, and, in particular, the observation made by a courtier: 'they looked as if they heard of a world ransomed, or one destroyed' (V.ii.14-15). Reminds one of Henry Francis Lyte's hymn 'Praise my soul the king of heaven':

Praise, my soul, the King of heaven,
To his feet your tribute bring;
Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,
Who like you his praise should sing?
Alleluia, alleluia!
Praise the everlasting King.

Seeing the play now brings certain things into relief, especially the stress on truth and evidence. One cannot but help reflect on Trump's monstrous and prolonged assault on truth, especially with his often-employed phrase 'fake news'. Camillo's lines, 'I cannot name the disease, and it is caught/ Of you, that yet are well' (I.ii.386-7) particularly strike us. Among the wares of Autolycus (Anne Odeke) are 'masks for faces and for noses' (IV.iv.223). But for the producer this is not enough, and relevance was not allowed to make its own claims; she had to thrust something in front of our faces in the theatrical equivalent of a message in capitals, bold, italics, underlining, multiple !!!!!s and purple ink when Autolycus says that Shakespeare lived in a pandemic and wrote *King Lear*. This was a totally dire moment, which should have been left firmly in the rehearsal room. I think it must count as *the* very worst moment I have ever witnessed in a Shakespeare production, and, believe me, there is a lot of competition.

The real disaster in this production, quite part from the crassly intrusive moment just mentioned, is Autolycus. Not even her Lambretta or Vespa can make one warm to her, or understand what in God's name she is saying and singing. Even more impenetrable than *Line of Duty*. At the best of times his/her part cries out for cutting, and fortunately a fair bit was cut in this production. One wants it to hurry up; one desperately needs Ted Hastings (Adrian Dunbar) from *Line of Duty* to make a cameo or intaglio appearance and interject, 'Jesus, Mary and Joseph and the wee donkey, can we just move this thing along?'

A really ambitious feature of this production is that the shepherdess's son (William Grint) communicates with sign-language. For those not *au fait* with this sub-titles are provided. Possible on television and silent film (Shakespeare in earlier times was on silent film), but difficult in the theatre I imagine. I suppose it's what Shakespeare would call 'excellent dumb discourse' (Alonso's phrase in *The Tempest*, 3.iii.38) and 'speech in their dumbness' in this play (V.ii.13). The politically correct times we are living in make it almost impossible to say that this production decision is ridiculous – as if the team is daring one to speak critically about it. The shepherd's ''Leven wether tod' survives. Anyone want to have a crack at explaining what that means?

The music in the sheep-shearing scenes (Isobel Waller-Bridge) is modern rock/pop. Very unpleasant, and out of kilter with the spirit of Shakespeare, but then many modern productions are buried in inappropriate sound. The setting of the song 'Get you hence, for I must go' reminded me of Annie Lennox's 'Sweet dreams are made of this':

Sweet dreams are made of this
Who am I to disagree?
I travel the world and the seven seas
Everybody's looking for something
Some of them want to use you
Some of them want to get used by you
Some of them want to abuse you
Some of them want to be abused

Couldn't decide whether it was allusion, accidental and unintended reminiscence or straight-forward theft. Having said this though, it was the case that the pastoral music in the original production was up-to-date and possibly shocking to the refined. Some of the groundlings puzzled by the high-falutin' elements in the play would have relished it, and felt they were getting their money's worth. I hope before I die to be able to see a reliable production of the play with authentic music performed on original instruments, but I suppose that is just a pipe dream.

The most famous stage-direction in the whole history of drama is 'exit, pursued by a bear,' but we didn't get one. It's a theatrical moment that fails more often than it succeeds.

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There has been a lot of interest in recent years in 'late styles'. Edward Said has written about them in *Music and Literature: Against the Grain* (2006), and there is the recent study *Late Style and its Discontents: Essays in art, literature, and music* (2016) by Gordon McMullan and Sam Smiles. Earlier there was an excellent essay by Kenneth Clark, 'The Artist Grows Old' (the Cambridge Rede Lecture for 1972, reprinted in *Moments of Vision* (1981)). *The Winter's Tale* is a classic case. Artists engaged in late styles tend to become very relaxed and free, and recycle earlier motives in a short-hand and self-reflective way, exercising supreme confidence. The development of the sexual

jealousy of Leontes is sketched in, but a more full-blown treatment appears in the earlier *Othello*. The blank verse loosens up. Earlier Shakespeare was reasonably strict with his genres. In this play we can't be sure whether it is tragic or comic. It's a bit of both. Certainly people die and, in the case of Hermione, seem to die, but the ending is more or less happy, as if the dire reversals of tragedy can be challenged. That doesn't altogether compensate for sixteen lost years though. *The Tempest* is another late play, but chillier than this one, and more wrapped up in the wish-fulfilment of controlling art. Art features in *The Winter's Tale* when the statue of Hermione seems to vie with nature, but actually it is merely nature presented as art. A Mannerist moment – appropriate that the artist should be Giulio Romano.

I have spent sixty years or so thinking that *The Winter's Tale* was a reasonably good play, but this production has made me change my mind. It's something of a dog's breakfast, and in this production proved even more indigestible than usual. Sorry. Being able to say fancy things about the symbolism of nature and nurturing, the mythological parallels, the botanical theory, the political and ideological concerns, the themes of jealousy and redemption does not automatically guarantee that it will be a satisfactory *theatrical* experience. In 1969 there was an RSC production with Judi Dench as Hermione. A great horse dominated the first scene. Judi said afterwards to Stanley Wells (the editor of the *Oxford Shakespeare*), she had spotted him in the audience, 'I could see you didn't like it.' He told me this story. I wonder what he'd think about this production?

BERNARD RICHARDS

CONTENTS

No. 432 Second Week Trinity Term 2021

Following his article in our previous issue Peter Carey writes: 'I wish to record my thanks to Dr Norman M. Ricklefs of the Ancient History Department, McQuarrie University, for his enlightening conversations on US-China relations.'

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