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Congratulations!

Congratulations are in order for our colleague and fellow-member of Congregation: the nomination of Irene Tracey as our next Vice-Chancellor is a remarkable, and brave, development. It is a reversion to tradition – and the wisdom often built into traditions – i.e. an internal appointment from the ranks of heads of house. It was a bold decision on the part of the Nominating Committee for the Vice-Chancellorship – which for the first time included (non-voting) student and early career representatives – because observers could well interpret this as another example of Oxford resisting progress and outsiders will no doubt argue that only the fresh perspective of an external appointment could possibly bring about modernisation. We will see soon enough.

Some would say that none of our three previous Vice-Chancellors – all external appointments with international backgrounds – ever quite managed to understand the peculiar features of Oxford in all their complexity and that each of them made mistakes along the way as a consequence. The great virtue of this appointment is that Professor Tracey will from the start be thoroughly familiar with the complexities and the difficulties of getting things done in the University. Our immediate thoughts will turn to wondering what Professor Tracey's agenda will be – she is bound to have one. Will she be radical? Will she be able to force through change? Most especially, will she be able to gain the support of the broad majority of staff in whatever it is that she aims to do?

The tenor of each Vice-Chancellorship tends to follow a 180 degree rule, each one being the reverse of the previous one. Opinions are going to vary greatly on the aspects of Professor Richardson's term that might seem in need of reversal. Was she too supportive of a growth agenda, new building and financial indebtedness? Did she do enough on climate change? Did she centralise power at the expense of college autonomy? Did she allow student numbers to grow to a degree that threatens to undermine the collegiality that is so central to our identity as a university? In one area there can be little dispute: she allowed our democratic governance mechanisms to wither – Congregation, and by all accounts Council, are no longer serving their intended purposes. Shockingly, secrecy at the centre has become the norm.

During Professor Richardson's time Oxford has maintained top billing in various world league tables and we had an exceptionally good pandemic in terms of public impact. We cannot assume that such advantages can be maintained during Professor Tracey's time in office and the recent, apparently disappointing, REF results are perhaps a portent. We have to anticipate reduced QR funding – because funds will now be more evenly distributed among universities – alongside the effects of inflation and frozen student fees. The incoming Vice-Chancellor faces daunting headwinds. When, eventually, we judge her legacy we will need to remember the circumstances of her appointment: her background and qualifications seem perfectly to encapsulate the mood that Oxford feels it at this particular moment appropriate to display.

A really radical new Vice-Chancellor will campaign against the nonsense of the grade inflation that has occurred in the REF: when almost all the "research" done across the UK is now self-rated as either "world-leading" (41%) or "internationally excellent" (43%) the exercise loses real meaning, particularly when scores include politically constructed assessments of "impact" (25% of each score) and "environment" (15%), with the result that the REF is no longer the supposed direct measure of academic quality that it was originally intended to be. While being fully engaged she will also be suitably sceptical of the policies and influence of the Office for Students.

INSIDE

But perhaps the first policy challenge for the new Vice-Chancellor will be the EJRA. Will she have unwelcome decisions forced on her just before assuming office if and when Congregation considers the 10-year review recommendations – a step expected to be taken next term? Or should Congregation's consideration of the complex issues involved ideally be delayed until she has assumed office? Will she be able robustly to address the important implications of an EJRA policy for career paths, incentivising increasingly nervous young researchers to join academia, pensions, and the treatment of retired staff?

Professor Tracey's greatest challenge will, however, be how to restore our democratic governance structures. When John Bell was recently asked for his "Biggest career mistake" he replied: "Trying to help modernize Oxford University by sitting on its council" (*Observer*, 8th May 2022). Three years ago *Oxford Magazine* identified the primary reason for Congregation's mounting dysfunction as secrecy at the centre (*Oxford Magazine*, No. 403, Oth Week, HT 2019) and then detailed some of the potential remedies (No. 404, No. 405).

B.B., 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.

Postal votes
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.***
Advice on Congregation procedures is available from the Council Secretariat on request (email: ***congregation.meeting@admin.ox.ac.uk***).

Prospective Leadership

PETER OPPENHEIMER

It is merely a single battle, not the whole war. Remedies henceforth will depend on the new incumbent. But in nominating (through his Committee) Irene Tracey as Oxford's next Vice-Chancellor, Lord Patten has plainly responded to the mounting despair – the term is not exaggerated – across the academic community at how governance of the University has evolved over the past two decades: its obsessive hostility to Oxford's collegiate character, its bureaucratic harassment of academic staff combined with indifference to academic standards, and its unbelievable misuse of resources, in the form both of its own administrative establishment and of real estate and unwarranted building projects.

The hope, in a word, is that Irene Tracey will prove able to ameliorate the damage, restoring educational values and a sense of common purpose. She is the fourth Vice-Chancellor of Oxford to be appointed since the ill-judged North reforms at the turn of the century – but only the first "insider". One could argue about the minimum number of years for which a person needs to have been an Oxford academic staff-member in order to qualify for this designation. In the present context it suffices to say that none of Professor Tracey's immediate predecessors ever occupied an academic post there.

The importance of the point is that the Vice-Chancellor's officially stated responsibility "for…. strategic direction and leadership" of the University may in principle be exercised in two quite distinct ways. One is by issuing orders, giving or withholding approval and choosing between alternatives – in short, the way of the chief executive or commanding officer. The other is by presiding over suitably representative bodies and ensuring that they reach consensus, possibly but not necessarily through formal voting – the way, in short, of the non-executive chairperson and of democratic decision-taking. The second is also the long-established Oxford way, in which, for example, Professor Tracey has been leading Merton College as its Warden since 2019, and in which all Oxford Vice-Chancellors operated until the end of the twentieth century, presiding equally over small committees formulating limited or routine decisions and over the University-wide assembly of Congregation to decide on far-reaching items (as well as purely ceremonial ones).

The North Committee in its Report (1997) was impelled by a mixture of political pressures from Whitehall, sloppy thinking and personal vanities to espouse the doctrine that governance of universities should ape that of business corporations – with, accordingly, different lines of activity ("Divisions") all under the control of, and reporting to, a single board of directors ("The University Council") including an ample quota of outsiders and headed by a single full-time chief executive. Two things, unfortunately, were lacking in this model. One was the remotest grasp of how corporate business depends on the profitability criterion to guide and constrain its decision-taking. And the other was any attempt to understand how Oxford's high reputation as a university was related to its existing system of governance, and what this ought to teach us for the future.

The result was that this existing, highly effective system of democratic decision-taking – through twin executive bodies (Hebdomadal Council and the General Board of the Faculties) answerable ultimately to Congregation – was abrogated. Formally, in theory, the two executive bodies were replaced by the above-named single University Council (and its various subordinate committees). In practice, the Council has been helpless and dysfunctional, acting as a rubber stamp for whatever notions are put before it by the Vice-Chancellor-plus-whichever-persons-happen-to-have-his/her-ear-in-any-particular-instance.

But – as the hyphenated tail suggests – the converse applies in equal measure. That is to say, the Vice-Chancellor's position has itself been rendered dysfunctional by the inability of to-day's Council to identify or elicit the collective judgement of the academic body. The old arrangement of a democratically rooted executive structure was not, after all, some clumsy anachronism, but a highly practical means of arriving at institutional consensus and optimising resources to academic ends. Deprived of such consensus, recent V-Cs have, so to speak, been operating blind, with recourse to a variety of uncomfortable expedients: conspiratorial manoeuvres (*vide* the creation of Parks/Rueben College), vacuous appeals for solidarity and compliance ("one Oxford") and – when all else fails, retreat into an administrative kremlin with its own occupying army of officials which the removal of democratic control has allowed to proliferate.

Happily, some of these failings should prove correctable in short order. There is no need for a renewed Commission of Inquiry to undo every bad result of the last one. By simply putting to Congregation a couple of well-judged resolutions (which may or may not call for Statute changes), Irene Tracey can at a stroke both resuscitate Congregation itself and open the way to revival of academic policy-making by consensus from the grass roots. The resolutions in question would amalgamate, i.e. abolish, the three non-clinical academic Divisions; and at the same time, provide for the creation of a Combined Academic Board, its members nominated by the various faculty- and department boards freshly released from their Divisional straitjackets. A number of corollaries follow, the most important being the need to specify the distribution of functions between Council and the new Academic Board, as well as the revised membership and modes of appointment of the former. The Clinical Medicine Division will need to be fitted into the structure in one way or another.

Another corollary will be reduced requirement, or reduced pretexts, for central administrative staff to service the former Divisions. This, however, is part of the much wider issue alluded to above, of central administrative empire-building and invasion of academic space, which

followed the North reforms. In an ideal world, swathes of superfluous staff in central administration, from the portfolioed Pro-Vice-Chancellors downwards, would be allowed to fade away through natural wastage. In reality, the process is likely to be obstructed by vested interests and the inherent appeal of administrative sinecures.

Two fresh examples of such obstruction appeared – surprise, surprise – just weeks before Professor Tracey's nomination. One was called the *iTransform* initiative, for comprehensive reshaping of Oxford's IT facilities and procedures, whether academic or administrative. IT Services has form as one of the most ruthlessly overmanned sections of the central bureaucracy. Its existing dimensions date from 1st August 2012, when two academic IT departments (OU Computing Services and the ICT Support Team) with a combined staff of 158 were grabbed by Wellington Square at 48 hours' notice and merged with the administration's own Business Services and Projects. Congregation was not consulted. No evidential justification (e.g. by way of staff economies or improved services) was ever produced. In the present instance, a pretence was made of soliciting consultation "from staff and students across the collegiate University" up to mid-April 2022 – but until the end of March the project itself was communicated to only a handful of people.

The other example, launched (also at the end of March) with a four-page document on the University's Staff Gateway, is a project entitled *Professional Services Together* (PST henceforth). Its precise ownership was unstated. It had previously been mentioned by the Registrar, Gill Aitken, as in preparation. But her name did not appear on the document, and the authority cited for further information was the Public Affairs Directorate. The purpose of PST was described as follows:

> *"We want to build on the great achievements of Oxford departments, divisions and services to shape a culture where we can provide professional services together and support our University's core mission of education and research as one community."*

One has to take a deep breath and ask oneself, quietly and calmly, what lies behind such peculiar fantasies. Oxford's "great achievements", however defined, have been the work not of any "departments, divisions and services", but of individuals or limited *ad hoc* groups. University divisions did not even exist before 2000, and are in any case purely bureaucratic superstructures, not service providers. A useful clue was contained in the Registrar's prior notification, to the effect that the project is not about greater centralisation, nor about cost-cutting. That appears to leave two possible motivations. One is to assist with staff recruitment by peddling myths about career ladders and the like. The other is to solicit increased recognition. Non-academic staff both in colleges and in academic departments are appreciated by their academic colleagues. The central administration frequently is not.

This misses a key point. Every college and every department is subject to an overall external budget constraint, determined by a complex mix of factors (endowment income, donations and research grants obtained, student fees and charges, and so forth). The central administration, uniquely, appears exempt. Short of bankrupting the entire University, it spends whatever it wants to spend on its own personnel and accommodation, blithely transferring any budgetary pressures on to other parts of the institution. To cite the most spectacular resulting example, since 2000 the number of students on one-year and two-year postgraduate taught courses has risen by approximately 5,000, potentially funding approximately 1,000 additional central officials.

I conclude accordingly by suggesting a further modest resolution for Irene Tracey to put to Congregation. There should be an overall budget constraint upon the University's central administration, supervised by a specially designated committee of academic postholders, and calibrated so as to bring about a significant percentage reduction in central administrative staff numbers over the next five years. Meanwhile, I congratulate her unreservedly on her nomination, and hope that she may go down in history as the person who, along with her services to other forms of pain relief, rescued the University from the agonies of mis-governance.

Comms, consultation and conversation in an 'all-staff 'community

G.R.EVANS

It is nothing new for Congregation to seem unengaged for long periods; only when a particular issue raises hackles sufficiently is the Sheldonian crowded for a debate. That criticism has regularly been heard in earlier generations. Limited engagement in routine matters is even more understandable in modern Oxford whose afternoons are no longer free for many to attend a Congregation meeting. Cambridge is also finding that only a few attend and speak in Discussions except when there is a controversy, but again that is nothing new.

Until the 1990s it was natural to speak of a 'community of equal scholars'.[1] Congregation remains the sovereign body but its members are now also recognised to be part of a much larger 'community' composed of 'all staff'. Human Resources places a strong emphasis on inclusivity in the widest possible sense.[2] The Equality and Diversity Unit[3] 'supports the University's commitment to fostering an inclusive culture which promotes equality, values diversity and maintains a working, learning and social environment in which the rights and dignity of all its staff and students are respected'. This shift reflects national trends in social and even legal expectations.

However, 'all staff' embraces a range of employee categories in significantly different positions when it comes to active participation in the University's affairs as a whole. There are the academics, including those in conjoint appointments with colleges; the contract research staff; the academic-related in libraries and laboratories; the academic-related administrators; and a large number of 'support' staff at lower levels of the salary scale. These are subject to different pension schemes and different retirement requirements, all to Statute XIV, some also to Statute XII. It is far easier for some to have their say than for others.

Recent Vice-Chancellorships have seen different norms of internal communication. The current Vice-Chancellor's 'One Oxford' mantra has often been (mis)interpreted as seeking to bring the whole University together as a community, while Andrew Hamilton merely circulated staff emails summarising Council meetings. The Public Affairs Directorate which emerged during the Vice-Chancellorship of John Hood began as a reinvention of what had been a more or less conventional 'university press office', primarily outward-looking; intended to be vigilant in protecting the University's reputation in the ocean of media coverage in which it constantly bathes; equipped to make announcements of good news and achievements; above all with a mastery of the language appropriate for such purposes. It has since also became responsible for internal communications and has faced new responsibilities. Those are currently summarised on its website as including 'fostering staff engagement'. It also 'disseminates information about major change initiatives to keep staff safe and informed'. It does this through 'University-wide channels, including all-staff emails, the Staff Gateway webpages, *University Bulletin* and the *Gazette*.'[4]

This widening of expectations about communication creates new difficulties. How are 'all staff' to be kept informed and about what? Are they all to be consulted about proposed changes and which changes? How are they to be engaged in conversation among themselves and with what are now (ironically) being described as their 'seniors'? The current use of Blogs in which figures described as 'senior' write personally to 'all staff' behind SSO is one attempt to find a way to engage with all members of this new broader University 'community'. Internal communications emailed to 'all staff' beg questions concerning the enormous range of employees with very different interests, concerns and 'needs to know'.

On 3 May, in order to encourage the development of a less one-sided conversation, an 'Oxford Staff Communications Survey'[5] was launched as a consultation through the *University Bulletin*. Its authorship is not stated but its URL[6] suggests that it was created with the aid of JISC-run 'onlinesurveys' support.[7] In Oxford the use of this JISC[8] provision seems to be the responsibility of IT, using the Online Survey Tool of Jisc Online Surveys.[9] The only clues about the authors of its content are mention of a 'we' who have 'consulted widely' in framing it, and a quotation from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for People and Digital, who says 'only by understanding what is most helpful to staff can we maintain and improve staff communications in the coming months and years.'

How well-judged for this purpose is this survey? Page 1, Question 1 has a promising heading: 'What information are you most interested in hearing about?' First come the 'views' of 'senior staff', followed by 'updates' on 'major change', for example in capital projects, 'updates' on 'strategic priorities', 'operational updates' and 'celebrations of 'success'.[10] These options all seem to be based on the assumption that 'all staff' are to be told things rather than asked to join a conversation.

Next comes 'How do you receive information about the University?' These sources are oddly jumbled in order, beginning with 'Team or 1:1 meetings', followed by the *University Bulletin* and only then the *Gazette*. 'Divisional or departmental e-newsletters or emails' follow, then College e-newsletters or emails; emails from the Vice-Chancellor or Pro-Vice-Chancellors; social media posts; website content ('please detail which websites below'); Intranet content; staff events such as Open Forums; word of mouth; posters/physical leaflets; 'other'. The respondent is to tick 'all that apply'.

The respondent is next asked to rate each 'source of information' on a scale of 1-8 as 'most likely' to be read. Here 'source' refers not to the mode of communication

but to the 'authority' sending it out: the Central University; College; Division; Department; Research Centre; Research/PI group; Line Manager/Supervisor.

The next 'Page' moves to a request for the respondent's 'views on current communications'. This asks on which 'topics' the respondent actually saw a communication on a series again oddly sequenced:

> *'USS Pensions; Covid-19 Health Guidance'; Return to Onsite working/Business Continuity Planning ; Launch of Vice-Chancellor Awards; EJRA; COP26; the Race Equality Taskforce; LGBT History Month; Changes to University regulations; The University sustainability strategy; staff offers and discounts.'*

The respondent is next asked whether there has been too much, too little or the right amount of information. These three bowls of porridge are followed by a mere two to choose between. Was this 'the right content or topics for you' or not? Then comes a request for the respondent to identify preferred modes of communication (email; e-newsletter; social media; website; department/college communication; staff events) and to list all the 'social media platforms' he or she 'regularly uses'.

It is not easy to design a consultation capable of attracting enough respondents (who are in this case informed that filling in the form will take them ten minutes) to produce sufficient useful data. But it should not have taken a sharp eye for the compiler to notice the assumption in the questions that 'communications' are to go all one way. 'Do you have any other comments about how Oxford University can improve its communications with you as a staff member' is 'optional'. 'Perhaps give me regular opportunities to join in and make this less of a one-way conversation', the 'all-staff' respondent might write in that box. This survey method seems inadequate as a means of discovering how to engage with the 'all staff' community so as to 'hear' them as well as tell them. Members of Congregation can always initiate a Resolution or made the objection needed to ensure a Debate. This possibility cannot of course include 'all-staff'. Non-members of Congregation need their own routes to active participation in the University's affairs.

The problem is that a society which has historically been a community of scholars supported by other staff in a very wide range of capacities cannot easily become an all-staff 'community of equals' when the democratic governance lies with only a portion of such a community. It is not easy to see how all categories of staff can realistically participate, especially in the hierarchical structure created by line-management. The creation of an all-staff community of equals would raise some formidable difficulties about the adjustment of the constitutions and governance of both Oxford and Cambridge. Resolving those would – and should – be a very tall order.

Cambridge's counterpart problem

Oxford is not alone in facing this difficulty of finding a way to get a conversation going with an 'all-staff' community in which governance lies with only a proportion of its members. Recent changes in the qualification for membership of the Regent House have brought the number to 7022 in the annual Promulgation, [11] with continuing pressures to broaden it even further rejected on a ballot.[12]

Cambridge's route to the creation of a new approach to its sense of community responds to the same pressures and legal expectations as those affecting Oxford, but it has encountered its own bumps in the road. In the *Reporter* of 11 May appeared a *Notice* about an 'HR Consultation' requesting 'comments' by 31 May on a *Mutual Respect Policy*. Behind that lies a long story of misjudged attempts at bringing all-staff together in such a scheme. A *Report of the Council on updates to the University's freedom of speech documentation* was published in the *Reporter* on 18 March 2020.[13] This was to become known as the 'Change the Culture' campaign.

At the Discussion on 9 June[14] Professor Arif Ahmed especially regretted the choice of the word 'respect'. He suggested that 'respect implies appreciation or admiration' but 'there is no reason the University should expect anyone to appreciate or admire all opinions'. He proposed that 'respect' should be replaced with 'tolerance', on the dictionary definition of 'willingness to accept behaviour and beliefs that are different from your own, although you might not agree with or approve of them'.

The Council took time to consider. In a Council *Notice* in response, published in the *Reporter* on 28 September 2020 it said that 'the Council concurs that not all views are worthy of equal 'respect', but remains content with the use of the word 'respectful'. The Council, also 'content that its proposed changes as set out in the Report and its Annexes provide a suitable framework to uphold lawful free speech', submitted Graces for the approval of the recommendations in the *Report*.[15]

The Regent House disagreed. Three Amendments were created, based on the 'Ahmed' concerns and far more than the necessary number of signatures was collected. Rather as with a Congregation Resolution, Cambridge Amendments are considered by the Council. It decided not to accept them. The ballot (now always postal in Cambridge) was duly set in motion. Unusually a *Placet* 'Statement' was published by the Council, instead of the normal 'Council' Flysheet. It repeated its defence of the term 'respect'.

The signatories were undeterred. Their Flysheet said the University should not expect everyone*:*

> *'to respect patently false opinions concerning e.g. vaccination or climate change. Nor should the University demand respect for all political or religious identities, from white nationalism to Islamic fundamentalism. But we must permit them to exist. That is exactly what "tolerance" means: "willingness to accept behaviour and beliefs that are different from your own, although you might not agree with or approve of them".'*

The ballot was duly held and the *Reporter* of 16 December announced that the three Amendments had been approved by large majorities.[16] A duly revised Statement was put onto the University's website.[17]

The furore about all this left the Vice-Chancellor with some personal reputational damage, well remembered by the media when he made his announcement that he intended to leave office two years early (at the end of the academic year 2021-2). *Varsity* published a comprehensive summary.[18]

In June 2021 it was announced that the Vice-Chancellor had 'decided to withdraw the *Change the Culture* campaign. It had, said the statement, 'become clear that the updated HR policies which underpinned the campaign were launched prematurely and without full scru-

tiny. 'Because they affect the whole University community it is important that there is widespread engagement and support'. 'New proposals will be brought before the General Board and the Council in due course'.[19]

The new Notice contains the promised 'new proposals', but now for a *Mutual Respect Policy*,[20] to apply to 'all University employees and workers'. The 'respect' expected is to include the problem areas which had caused so much controversy. It cautiously includes reference to the Cambridge Statement on Freedom of Speech, 'approved following' the ballot.[21]

The status of this Statement in the Statutes and Ordinances is not quite clear. It is referred to in a footnote to the Code of Practice issued under section 43 of the Education (no. 2) Act 1986. That could prove important. The Twenty-Sixth Report of the Board of Scrutiny commented that in the case of the 'Change the Culture' campaign 'significant concerns' had been 'raised about defects in the process by which these materials had been approved' and the Council had subsequently 'set up a Working Group to advise the HR Committee on anonymous reporting and related matters' and that 'procedural changes for the 'signing off of documents and website' have been adopted in the HR Division'.[22]

The opening statement of the proposed new *Mutual Respect Policy* repeatedly says what the University expects and requires and will do with respect to its 'employees and workers', but the University for such purposes is the Regent House (Statute A,III) and this Consultation is launched merely by *Notice*. It is far from certain whether the results of the Consultation will lead to a *Report* making recommendations for the Regent House to approve. This sort of constitutional question goes to the heart of the problems created by an all-staff approach to any attempt to frame an 'all-staff community.

The new *Mutual Respect Policy* includes an enormous range of expectations. It says it 'sets out the University's expectations around how we should behave and not behave towards other members of our community'. It encourages complaints by those who may feel other employees or 'workers' have not shown them 'respect', for example by 'circulating or displaying any type of communication on any form of media that could reasonably be perceived as offensive, intimidating or degrading'. In this 'all-staff' society 'allegations should always be taken seriously, and action taken as quickly as possible to stop inappropriate behaviour'. Encouragements of that sort were precisely what had led to concerns being expressed during the failed 'Change the Culture' campaign that noone would be safe from such complaints and some of them would be malicious or vexatious. A climate of *Mutual Respect* could become a climate of mutual recrimination.

1 Supplement to *Gazette*, 6 March, 1995.

2 With colleges running their own provisions.

3 ***https://edu.admin.ox.ac.uk/home.***

4 ***https://www.ox.ac.uk/public-affairs/about-pad***

5 ***https://oxford.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/staff-communications-survey-tt22***

6 ***https://oxford.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/staff-communications-survey-tt22***

7 ***https://www.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/***

8 JISC, the Joint Information Services Committee, began in the 1990s, as the subject of ministerial guidance to the then-new statutory Funding Councils, including HEFCE. It was funded partly by Government and partly by the Funding. In 2011 HEFCE became concerned about its cost and complexity and conducted a review. In 2012 JISC became a not-for-profit charity drawing its funding from Government and universities. It merged with Eduserve in 2019 and in 2020 it merged with HECSU, ***https://www.jisc.ac.uk/website/legacy/eduserv*** and ***https://luminate.prospects.ac.uk/***

9 ***https://services.it.ox.ac.uk/Service/research-support/online-survey-tool***

10 *Updates on major change (e.g. COVID guidance, capital projects)*

Updates on strategic priorities (e,g. Race Equality Taskforce, sustainability strategy)

Operational updates (for example, changes to systems, processes or premises)

Celebration of success (e.g. external or internal awards)

Insight into what other staff do

11 *Reporter*, 5 November 2021

12 See Fly-sheets published in the *Reporter*, 8 December 2021.

13 ***http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2019-20/weekly/6582/section5.shtml#heading2-13***

14 ***https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2019-20/weekly/6585/section3.shtml#heading2-8***

15 ***https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2020-21/weekly/6589/section1.shtml#heading2-9***

16 ***https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2020-21/weekly/6601/6601.pdf#page=32***

17 ***https://www.governanceandcompliance.admin.cam.ac.uk/governance-and-strategy/university-statement-freedom-speech***

18 ***https://www.varsity.co.uk/news/22113***

19 ***https://www.cam.ac.uk/notices/news/statement-from-the-university-of-cambridge-on-the-change-the-culture-campaign, 3 June 2021.***

20 ***https://www.hr.admin.cam.ac.uk/files/220504_draft_mutual_respect_policy.pdf***

21 ***https://www.hr.admin.cam.ac.uk/hr-policy-consultations-easter-term-202122-full***

22 *Reporter*, 20 October, 2021.

Contracts for all

ROGER BROWN

'There are few indicators of teaching performance that would enable a systemic external assessment for teaching quality. [If universities know] *the committee would be glad to be told how to do it.'* (University Grants Committee Circular 22/85).

It is very hard to know what to make of David Palfreyman's contrast between the Donnish Dominion depicted by Chelley Halsey and David Riesman and the consumer sovereignty model now so much in vogue (*Oxford Magazine*, No. 443, Noughth Week, Trinity Term 2022). In particular, it is very hard to tell whether – on the basis of his very considerable knowledge and expertise in this area – Palfreyman really believes that individual consumer contracts are a suitable means of protecting students from exploitative institutions, or whether by putting them forward he is simply seeking to make the best of a bad job, and perhaps averting even more radical interventions (although fining institutions for providing too much online education would seem to be fairly draconian). But his ideas are of great importance, not least in view of his association with the Office for Students (a body which – at least conceptually – is based on the regulators of the national utilities).

The distinguished Professor of Higher Education at Berkeley, Martin Trow, once wrote that higher education was 'a process masquerading as an outcome'. The fundamental problem in controlling quality in higher education is the difficulty of specifying the product and, therefore, of creating meaningful performance measures (at least in the abstract, and without allowing for so many critical variables, not least the student's own contribution). This has two important, and completely unavoidable, implications.

The first is that higher education (and especially student learning) is almost uniquely unfitted for the Neoliberal model of identifying and quantifying performance outcomes as a means of choosing between competing suppliers. As another distinguished American professor wrote:

'People investing in human capital through a purchase of higher education don't know what they are buying, and wouldn't and can't know what they have bought until it is far too late to do anything about it.'

In fact, what happens – as in other markets where specifying quality for purchasers is difficult – is that consumers and the media look for proxies, and in higher education the proxy chosen is institutional standing, which in turn usually reflects institutional status, longevity and resources. This in turn sets off a whole series of distortions which then create a further set of detriments: league tables, anyone?

The second is the power that this absence of applicable quality indicators gives institutions ('marking their own homework') and their staff, at the expense of the unwitting and uninformed customer. This aspect appears to preoccupy David Palfreyman. One would never know from his account that most staff in most institutions are genuinely trying to do their best for their students in an environment which has deteriorated significantly over the past forty or so years (as for most people working in what used to be called the 'public sector'), and as a result of the same disastrous Neoliberal policies that I hope to write a bit more about in a future issue.

In the same year as the UGC Circular quoted, the report of the Lindop Committee on Academic Validation in the Polytechnics and Colleges stated:

'The best safeguard of academic standards is not external validation or any other form of external control but the growth of the teaching institution as a self-critical academic community.'

The issue then is finding the best way of helping institutions and their teaching and support staff to be self-critical. Providing more information for students and others about what is done with their fees may help at the margin. But, as with research, the only effective way of protecting the quality of teaching is to subject institutions' work to periodic peer review of (a) the learning demands made on their students, (b) how far those demands are being fulfilled, and (c) how both can be enhanced, including through staff training and development, and not avoiding engagement with managerial and resourcing issues where these are relevant. The job of an external regulator is then to see that this happens and to ensure that there is some commonalty of peer approach across the sector, including through the nourishment of peer networks where this is helpful.

Of course, this is very far from the Neoliberal assumptions that underpin the work of the Office for Students and the whole fee regime. It is indeed (very) old hat. But it is the only secure basis for informing and reassuring students about what they may expect from their higher education. We delude both them and ourselves if we pretend otherwise.

Roger Brown was the Chief Executive of the Higher Education Quality Council between 1993 and 1997. He was Vice Chancellor of Southampton Solent University between 2005 and 2007 (having been Principal of Southampton Institute since 1998). His latest book 'The Conservative Counter-Revolution in Britain and America 1980 to 2020' *is being published by Palgrave Macmillan in the autumn.*

Statement on Sir Ronald A. Fisher

In June 2020 Gonville and Caius College Cambridge decided to remove one of its stained-glass windows in the College Hall illustrating the work of the great statistician and geneticist R.A. Fisher, former scholar, Fellow and President of the College, in response to claims that he had been a eugenist and guilty of racism. The decision was and remains controversial. Caius has just (21-22 April 2022) held a conference 'R.A.Fisher in the twenty-first century' as a sequel to the window's removal, during which a dozen senior Fellows felt the need to issue this collectively authored Statement for distribution to participants.

It is a sensitive matter to organise a conference on the scientic work of Sir Ronald Fisher in his own College less than two years after the College publicly dishonoured him. Some recent commentary has expressed strong feelings against any kind of endorsement of Fisher, even of his work. Although it would not have been our proposal to hold a conference on Fisher's work in the College at this time we nevertheless wish to circulate some comments to the conference ahead of the closing panel discussion. We hope these will contribute to the debate and understanding of Fisher and his work. In these comments we particularly wish to address the charge of racism which has been levelled against him, and his support for eugenics.

In a ***change.org*** petition of June 2020, and elsewhere, incorrect assertions were made about Fisher's beliefs, e.g. that he viewed certain racial groups to be inferior to others. This is not correct. Indeed he made clear statements that he considered the human race to be a single family. His actions throughout his life bear this out. He had an unusually high proportion of students from African and Asian countries whom he supported warmly in their careers. Fisher's last known letter, written shortly before his admission to hospital for an operation from which he did not recover, was to his former student Ben Laing in Ghana. The address given at Fisher's funeral in St Peter's Cathedral, Adelaide on 2nd August 1962 by Professor E.A. Cornish includes the following words:

'As to the man himself, an outstanding characteristic was his immense capacity for work. Aside from his books, his personal contribution totalled between 300 and 400 research papers, but to this must be added an incalculable contribution to the research of literally hundreds of individuals, in the ideas, guidance, and assistance he so generously gave, irrespective of nationality, colour, class, or creed.'

Fisher's interest in eugenics in the early part of the 20th century was not unusual among intellectuals of the time. In Britain, eugenic concerns were *not* connected with race. The fear of population decline as well as the loss of so many young men in the First World War were motivating factors. In Fisher's youthful paper *Positive Eugenics* (1917) he speaks about the need to "increase the birthrate in the professional classes and among the highly-skilled artisans". Fisher was also involved, as a member of the Eugenics Society, with one other possible eugenic intervention. This aimed to reduce the incidence of inherited "feeble mindedness" or \grave transmissible defects" in future generations by legalising voluntary sterilisation and making it available, with the strictest safeguards to prevent abuse, to those who wanted it. Fisher's opposition to compulsory sterilisation is clearly stated already in 1926 in a letter to the Dean of St Paul's even though that policy was supported in some other countries until well after the Second World War. Fisher was also well ahead of his contemporaries in Britain in rejecting the idea of state intervention or control in eugenic matters. In October 1932 C.S. Stock included a comment in a letter to Fisher about the desirability of having a "Biological Dictator". Fisher wrote back immediately to firmly reject the notion. He went on to say:

'I am coming to the conclusion that the business of civil government may be left undemocratically to professionals, but that anything so big as eugenic aims must be controlled by the personal choice of individuals acquainted with their own individual needs and circumstances, as with the old economists - a demotic not a democratic ideal.'

Fisher had reached this view before Hitler came to power.

It has been said that Fisher's work in statistics and biology was motivated by eugenics. There is much evidence to contradict this, one example being a decision the young Fisher made which E.A. Cornish mentions prominently in his funeral address. In August 1918 Fisher was offered two jobs almost simultaneously: the post of senior assistant to Karl Pearson, the Galton Professor of Eugenics at University College London, and a short-term, unestablished post as Statistician at Rothamsted Experimental Station for agricultural research. He chose the latter. Fisher saw an opportunity to work with real data on an important problem of human concern and rejected the security and prestige of a post at the Galton Laboratory in favour of work at a small agricultural research station. Fisher's brilliance soon became evident at Rothamsted and the director E.J. Russell found a way to keep him. Within five years Fisher had solved all the major problems and established rigorous methods which are the foundation of experimental work in agriculture and medicine to this day. The publication of his book *Statistical Methods for Research Workers* in 1925 had an electrifying effect across the world and led to contacts and visitors from all corners of the globe. Joan Box in *R.A. Fisher, the life of a scientist* records that in 1929 correspondence from cotton experimenters alone came from the Sudan, Trinidad, Madras, and Tashkent.

The high regard in which Fisher came to be held around the world can be seen in the moving tribute of the Indian Statistical Institute when news of his death reached Calcutta. A condolence meeting was held with all students and workers in attendance and the Institute was closed for a day as a mark of respect. At the meeting the Council recorded that Fisher had established contact with statistical workers in Calcutta in the early 1920s, and through eight visits to India, personal contacts, scientic contributions, advisory work and visits to other scientific centres, he helped in a most significant way the develop-

ment of the Institute and the advancement of statistics in India. Statistician C.R. Rao concluded: "A great man of science has gone, and no one knows whether the void would be filled again".

Jimmy Altham
Bob Butcher
A.W.F. Edwards
John Ellis
Joe Herbert
Yao Liang
Neil McKendrick
Kevin O'Shaughnessy
Michael Prichard
Jeremy Prynne
John Robson
M.C. Smith

Fellows of Gonville and Caius College 19 April 2022
(Names in alphabetical order)

Resinous | Chimay | Blue

man —
  them monks look raw

drunk —
  in horse drawn carts

from —
  wet wineries

to —
  dry monasteries

they —
  birth darkness and

kill —
  the ray-dee-aunt!

but you'd want to be an ass to apple man

to —
  please everyone

Niall James Holohan

Niall James Holohan is an Irish writer whose works include short stories, nonfiction, poetry, lyrics and scripts for the stage. In 2021, his first full-length play 'now what?' was selected for The New Theatre's 'Writing Development Week' and his first flash fiction piece 'Love's A Ninnyhammer' received honourable mention in NYC Midnight's Microfiction Challenge.

Hydrangea Heap

hydrangea night blooms inside me
a black thundering waterfall
the peaceful rhythm of a star imploding
I wonder about the sound of your heart
how it is also a part of the dark
I think about your tongue in your mouth
tracing an edge of me I never knew I had
the monster moon gathers unknown forces
outside the quiet heaps upon us in the dark

outside the quiet heaps upon us in the dark
the monster moon gathers unknown forces
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a black thundering waterfall
hydrangea night blooms inside me

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.

Precarity Spanish Style

MARÍA BASTIANES AND DUNCAN WHEELER

Restaurant meals in Spain often wind up with credit cards at dawn, paying for friends or mere acquaintances thought to be a pleasure and an honour. A notable exception is the post-Viva PhD dinner. Tradition dictates that the youngest doctor in the house foots the bill for their supervisors and examiners (sometimes up to five). Historically, there was a logic underpinning this custom as the qualification almost guaranteed a pay-rise and permanent employment. There is, in the precarious present, however, something perverse about a young scholar with no prospect of a living wage on the horizon paying for their more established elders to gorge themselves on fine food and wine especially given that many universities pay external examiners a generous subsistence allowance. If less exploitative fees (hundreds not thousands of Euros a year in the public system) ensure fewer bank-loans are used to fund Humanities PhDs in Spain than in the UK, more than one post-graduate has wound up in debt after the Viva. A highly ritualistic affair conducted in front of friends and family (who have been known to turn up with video cameras), the Spanish Viva is not strictly speaking an oral examination as it has effectively been passed in advance. Almost all receive a Cum Laude.

But what happens the day after the big event? Options are limited. A post-doc position in Spain provides time for research, but offers no guarantees after a couple of years. There are some tenure-track positions but the average age of a junior lecturer in Spain being forty gives some indication of just how difficult these are to attain. Even then, the new arrival is generally expected to do the department's dirty work, all the administrative and teaching duties nobody else wants to do. On the plus side, after four years there is the chance to apply for an open-ended contract, which paves the way to seek promotion a few years later to become a "funcionario", a permanent civil servant with the kind of job security and protected pensions that few UK academics have enjoyed since the neo-liberal turn in the public sector.

An adventurous minority try their luck in the global marketplace. Spanish universities rarely figure in the top two hundred world rankings but their best graduates are nevertheless internationally competitive. The relatively high number of Spaniards working in foreign universities with prestigious post-doctoral positions such as the Marie Curie Individual Fellowship is testament to both the talent pool and the lack of opportunities back home. Such posts offer valuable experience and CV points that can facilitate reincorporation into the Spanish system, albeit with a significant pay-cut, but, again, come with no guarantees.

Especially for those working in the Humanities, prospects for the non-chosen-few are bleak. In the UK, where around a third of doctoral candidates self-fund, the number of PhDs being awarded is rising just as the number of open-ended (permanent is so last century) contracts reduce. Prospective supervisors (especially if they are seeking to extend their contract or apply for promotion) and institutions are not always transparent in their initial communications about the realities of an academic job market in which supply far outstrips demand. In Spain, low-fees and a relatively generous number of funding opportunities for doctoral study can make enrolling on a PhD seem like a no-brainer for the brightest young graduates in a country with 30% youth unemployment. Employers don´t, however, recognise the value added of a post-graduate degree in the Humanities in the way they do in the UK, where an increased emphasis has been placed in doctoral programmes on transferable skills and moving away from the traditional notion of a non-academic job as a consolation prize.

It is not just a question of disappointment for the many Spaniards unable to secure a contract in the university after the completion of a PhD. Many face the genuine prospect of unemployment. The option of secondary school teaching has become less viable since a fast-track route for those with a higher degree was dropped in 2009. As a result, young doctors need to self-fund a one-year Master's degree in education just like everybody else. This is highly competitive, with only 13% of applicants to public universities offered a place. Charging upwards of £3,500, private universities have profited from the excess demand for teacher training and, according to a recent report by *El País*, now award nearly half of the Master's qualifications in education. Newly qualified teachers then have to apply through a competitive state exam and oral presentation for a permanent position. Supply again outstrips demand although a key distinction resides in the fact that applicants for school as opposed to university positions tend not to have a prior history with the people deciding on their future.

For those who don't want to renounce the possibility of pursuing a career in academia, there is always the option of seeking work as an associate lecturer. This role was first introduced in the early 1980s, at a time when Spain was preparing to enter the EC, so as to allow professionals who had another career to teach without having to follow the rigid academic career-path or renouncing their work outside of the university. In other words, it was akin to the way that a number of leading British institutions, Oxford included, sometimes hire practising lawyers and medical professionals. In the twenty-first century, however, the role has been repurposed to nefarious ends, exploiting those with little option but to accept crumbs from the university high-table. The majority are young scholars who see no other way of beginning what they can only hope will eventually lead to a permanent post in academia.

Associate lecturers are routinely exploited for cheap labour, picking up whatever teaching needs to be filled. Perversely, a role designed to import specialist knowledge now requires the jacks-of-all-trades who currently comprise a quarter of the workforce in the Spanish public higher education system, with numerous universities

breaking legal limits on the number of permitted fixed-term contracts. Typically, associate lecturers are hired on a so-called 6+6 contract (six hours of lectures and six office hours) for around £500 a month before tax, between a half and a third of that paid to the most junior tenure-track lecturer. In terms of job security, their situation is little better than those on zero-hour contracts in UK universities, and they are likely to bring home even less than the worst-off UCU-member.

Associate lecturers can easily wind up teaching more than their permanent colleagues, who have an additional four hours of contact time stipulated in their contract from which they are, however, sometimes bought out of if they take on other roles. The casual labour-force are often expected to take on unpaid administrative roles. In order to harbour any hope of one day securing a tenure-track position, associate lecturers need to maintain a research profile in their "free" (i.e. non-remunerated) time. Contracts rarely include provision for marking or preparation given that the role was designed for specialists to deliver master-classes. A post created for eminences in their field is now closer to that of an unpaid intern. University employers have even outsourced the collateral costs of such unethical restructuring by obliging associate lecturers with no employment outside of academia to maintain the façade by registering as self-employed and covering the related costs (approximately £250 a month).

Nothing, as a young colleague recently observed, fuels precarity as efficiently as fear.

Whilst the war of attrition against the traditional departmental structure of UK universities has been a cost-cutting exercise with often disastrous consequences, it has at least challenged the fiefdoms of some feudal despots. Exploiting and humiliating those further down the food chain is hardly a new phenomenon, but the sheer lack of employment opportunities available to young Spaniards within and beyond the university ensures that emerging scholars have little option but to suck it up especially when relatively few academics move institution. A two-tier labour system in which personal and professional power remains concentrated in an aging and unsackable minority is a recipe for a toxic and antiquated working environment. If, as Henry Kissinger was once reported to say, the "reason that university politics is so vicious is because stakes are so small", precarity Spanish style has resulted in a situation where the stakes are all too high for young scholars caught in the crossfire of petty rivalries and vicious displays of power to which Professors can afford to dedicate much of their professional lives.

Jewelry Box

Auntie Magdalena opens a jewelry box
The one she inherited from her mother
Chains and necklaces fall through her fingers
A river flowing on a hot, stuffy afternoon
Waterfall of gold on loose emerald stones
Bright plantain leaves kissed by sun and dew
Sheltered by the little twinkling diamonds
That spot the velvet blackness of the box
Auntie Magdalena sees the red beneath
Dives through golden currents, leaves, stars
In hopes of finding shiny fish of ruby
Finding instead little bloody pebbles
Three hundred twenty bloody pebbles
Auntie picks them up and calls their names
Mario, Jorge, Juan, Andrés was just a child
Auntie wishes she could wipe them clean
Pebbles more precious than any other stone
Auntie Magdalena puts them back
At the bottom of the jewelry box

Daniela Sanjuanés

Daniela Sanjuanés is a Colombian writer, born and raised in Bogotá. She is interested in using poetry and literature to explore and understand the identity of her nation, and is currently studying for an MSt in Creative Writing at the University of Oxford.

The same old struggle over Resources and Power

DAVID PALFREYMAN

The first Royal Commission of the three Government interventions over some seven decades that created the modern University of Oxford (and indeed Cambridge) reported in 1852 on *'The State, Discipline, Studies, and Revenues of the University and Colleges of Oxford'* (almost 800 pages; and note the use of 'the Oxford comma'). There follow just a few extracts indicating the time-old themes that could well feature in any similar intervention in, say, 2025.

• *'Cost of Collegiate Education'*: Seemingly at least £600 by way of tuition fees and accommodation over the duration of a degree course (but a student leading a less modest lifestyle might reach £800-1000). The tuition itself was only 'about £64' of that £600 – in today's money, respectively about £9k and some £86k (*sic*); making Oxford very much cheaper then by way of tuition fees (now 3 or 4 years X £9250) but way more expensive for living-costs (say, c£10k X 3/4 years). Hence the Commission had explored ways to expand Oxford's student numbers and in ways less costly than being residential members of a college – notably by living in supervised lodgings, thereby bringing the degree cost down to barely £200. The early-C20 Commission was still wrestling with colleges's domestic costs some 60 years on. Not now an issue, I suggest, in comparing Oxford with other Russellers and certainly such as UCL, ICL, KCL.

• *The Tutorial System in theory and practice*: A curate's egg: 'The good effects of the Tutorial system on the discipline of the place are obvious' given that, 'when the Tutor acts with zeal and judgment and the Pupil answers to his care by confidence and respect', it is clear 'that there can be no doubt the connexion is productive of great and lasting benefit' and not least by the Tutor being able to 'exercise a powerful moral influence on the minds of many [such pupils]' as well as the Tutorial enabling him 'to question them in such manner as to ascertain their diligence and quicken their faculties'. But, while these advantages are 'confessedly great' in theory, in practice the 'disadvantages resulting from its actual state are greater still' (citing the evidence of Mr Pattison – inter alia: incompetent tutors trying to teach 'too many subjects' to 'ill-prepared' and 'idle' students; while another witness saw 'the present tutorial system' as granting 'a monopoly of education' that is 'at the expense of the efficiency of the University'). One suspects that a C21 Royal Commission would hear evidence for the Tutorial as a pedagogical Jewel in the Crown at the same time as being told it is a uneconomic waste of academic resources compared to seminars of 15+ at competitor Russells. (See my '*The Oxford Tutorial*' (2019 Amazon/Kindle edition) for a collection of essays from Oxford dondom on the advantages of teaching this way.)

• *Defining and justifying the Colleges:* The Report sums up their then legal weirdness as 'Charitable Foundations for the support of poor Scholars, with perpetual succession, devoting themselves to study and to prayer, administering their own affairs, under the presidency of a Head within, and the control of a Visitor without, according to Statutes which were to be neither altered nor modified, and which are sanctioned by solemn oaths.' Now, relative to all universities globally and except Cambridge, the federal structure of Oxford and its legally independent Colleges is even more weird and doubtless a C21 Royal Commission would have to update the above description to allow for far greater control over them by such as the Charity Commission (albeit, not yet, directly by the OfS as for the University itself). And equally likely there would be the same calls as in the C19 for the Colleges to cede their Endowments to the University and just become upmarket Halls of Residence. The Report went on to query the 'eleemosynary' nature of the colleges in that their Founder's intentions for 'poor Students' to be educated seemed no longer to be honoured; while, similarly, the Report rather doubted that Visitors are at all energetic in exercising their powers effectively. All in all, the Report found that 'great deviations have taken place' and hence something must be done by way of 'University Reform'.

• *Some of the Colleges resented the intrusion:* For example, University College and Exeter, the former's Fellows responding to the Commission's request for 'a copy of its Statutes or a statement of its corporate revenues': the Master wrote 'I am desired respectfully to state, on behalf of the Master and Fellows of University College, that, as they do not feel themselves at liberty, so far as they are at present advised, to publish information respecting their corporate revenues or the internal affairs of the Society, or to furnish the Commissioners with a copy of their statutes and the decrees of their Visitor, they are unable to comply with the request of Her Majesty's Commissioners.'; while the latter's Visitor replied by flatly declaring that the Royal Commission had 'no right whatever' to question 'any Members of the College of which I am Visitor' or to expect them 'to accept any directions or interference whatsoever' that might 'trench upon' his 'visitatorial authority' (signing off 'with unfeigned grief to be compelled thus to address you [the Lord Bishop of Norwich as Chair of the Commissioners]'). One doubts that any College would be so bold as to tell the next Royal Commission to get lost!

• *New College as one of the colleges most in need of reform:* The 1852 Report noted that, as with Univ and Exeter and others, 'We have received no Evidence from this College' ('but we have procured a copy of its Statutes from the British Museum'). Hence the Commissioners have sought to mark out 'the course' by which 'this remarkable Foundation' can be reformed and 'restored to something like the proud position which it once occupied in the University'. (The Report, BTW, noted the Warden's 'emoluments' at £1400 pa – some £200k! – a figure to which the current Warden would probably welcome being 'restored'. And, again BTW, 'the long and formidable oaths enjoined by the Founder are [still] duly taken by every member of the Foundation' in terms of new Fellows being 'admitted'.) The main reform was to be that New College 'should open its gates to as many Commoners as it can accommodate' – and thus began the steady expansion of the College from the ludicrous 5 (*sic*) students 'on the Books' in 1849 to closer to the 50 or so at Christ Church, although all colleges began similar growth (*cf* during the 1840s over in Cambridge St John's and Trinity were hitting peaks of c125 and c165 respectively).

• *The evidence from Mark Pattison*: He was billed as 'Subrector and Tutor of Lincoln College' (later its Rector) and called for expansion of student numbers by Colleges using supervised 'Lodgings' while not worrying about any negative impact upon 'the habits and manners' of the young men since anyway 'little or nothing of moral influence is obtained by intramural residence, and neither is the College gate any mechanical security against dissolute habits' (by way of 'fornication, wine, and cards'). The University's academic appointments and College fellowships, as well as student entrance standards, need to be subject to much higher expectations and opened up 'to the nation and the world' as to kick-start 'intellectual stimulus' and so as to 'increase our power and elasticity'. But 'the Tutorial system' should not be replaced by 'the Professorial system' for teaching the Young as a reform 'of a most mischievous kind' since 'the Tutorial is the true instrument of education' (and he is distinctly unimpressed by the Professorial domination of American and French and German universities with their reliance on 'the facile process of lecture-learning'). That said the College Tutor system can and should be improved to overcome the disadvantages listed above – and so evolved the professionalisation of the Tutors in the ensuing decades (and hence still the (healthy?) creative tension between Tutor teaching of the undergraduate and whatever the Professoriate might contribute to the education process). By the time Pattison submitted evidence to the next Commission, however, and by the time he published '*Suggestions on Academical Organisation*' and a contribution to '*Essays on the Endowment of Research*' he was no longer the stout defender of Colleges and of 'the Tutorial system' – he had spent the 1860s visiting Germany and he was now enamoured of a professorial hierarchy and of a university being committed to research, and so the colleges could become just halls of residence with some ten being the HQs of various faculties into which the University would be divided and where the Endowments of the colleges would be transferred to supporting the University's academic staff expanded payroll: this was his new 'Idea of a University' (Sparrow, 1967, CUP – '*Mark Pattison and the Idea of a University*') and one very different from that of Jowett over at Balliol busy educating a cadre of Oxford graduates to run the Victorian professions and also the Empire.

• *The evidence from Sir Charles Lyall FRS and 'President of the Geological Society of London'*: A plea to reform the collegiate university as 'the best means of restraining extravagant habits' and 'the most effective means of preventing idleness' by curtailing the independence of the colleges and their use of 'the tutorial system'. And the key to starting 'thorough reform' is getting the University 'emancipated from the control of the Colleges' – although a quick win could be achieved by ending the excessive focus on 'the study of Greek and Latin' so as to shift towards 'useful knowledge' (a problem also to be found 'in nearly all the great schools'). Tracking the history of Oxford 1850-2020 might well involve following this power struggle between the University and the Colleges, and the shifting of resources between them – assuming that power enables a resources-grab while getting control of resources means acquiring more power.

* * *

Thus, the 1850s Royal Commission began the era of University Reform – the University academic labour force began to be professionalised and partly funded from the resources of the Colleges, while the College Tutors professionalised themselves; the next Commission enabled the University to tax the Colleges 'for University purposes' so as to raise funds for University academic posts; the early-C20 attempt at further reform consolidated progress to date and sought to professionalise the housekeeping side of Colleges so as to control costs; and the 1960s reforms arising from the internal Franks Commission loaned the taxation power to the Colleges so as to tax some to fund others (the University by then having grown rich on the back of State financing of HE).

If we were to have another go at University Reform, albeit unlikely to be by way of a Royal Commission as opposed perhaps to an internal effort, then, as discussed above, many of the tensions addressed (and ignored – for example, the pooling of the Endowments of the Colleges) in previous attempts at Reform would surely be again scrutinised.

I am, however, not sure which would be worse by way of any radical reform of the colleges – New College ending up, *a la* Pattison's proposals in '*Suggestions on Academical Organisation*' with its Endowment sequestered 'for University purposes' and after some 650 years of independence ending its days as a glorified Hall of Residence or as effectively the Faculty building for a collective of Physics or Law or Philosophy or Economics dondom? Well, actually and thinking about it, I do know which would be the most ignominious ending!

Albert Londres's *'Chez Les Fous'* – The Good, The Bad and The Ugly

STEPHEN WILSON

Albert Londres was a pioneer of investigative journalism. His sympathy was with the wretched of the world, misfits, outcasts, unfortunates, victims of social injustice, colonialism and governmental maladministration. His view of his calling is best summarised in his own words:

> *'I remain convinced that a journalist isn't a choirboy and his role doesn't consist in leading processions with his hand plunged in a basket of rose petals. Our professional duty is not to give pleasure, nor to do harm, it is to dip our pen into the wound.'*

Travelling across France in 1925, Londres managed to gain access to a variety of institutions housing the mentally ill, sometimes using subterfuge, often against official resistance. And he reported his findings in a series of newspaper articles, leavened by his highly ironic style and illustrated by Rouquayrol. They were later published by Albin Michel (1925) in book form under the title '*Chez Les Fous*'.[1]

'*With the Mad*' can be understood in two senses, "being among the mad" and "being on the side of the mad". Londres was both. He was determined to hear the voices of those who had been effectively gagged and equally intent on exposing the abusive behaviour to which they were often subject and highlighting society's lamentable response to their condition. Although nearly a hundred years old, Londres's findings regarding the limits of psychiatry, the stigma attached to mental ill-health, and the use of compulsory detention and restraint remain sadly relevant today. However he also encountered instances of enlightened care.

* * *

The Good: The Department Stores' Supplier

Philippe, painter on silk, at Saint-Charles (Gironde).

This much is clear, we're in front of a tradesman's address. His name is Philippe, he paints on silk, he lives in the region of Saint-Charles en Gironde and his commercial registration number is 244. It's to the right, in the corner with his invoices.

Saint-Charles isn't a town, it's an asylum. Philippe who paints on silk is a madman, and his business outlet is situated in his hut. This hut isn't a hut, it's a room which communicates with another room: success having arrived, the Maison Philippe had to enlarge…

In the beginning Philippe was on his own. He sent his samples to the *Galeries Lafayette*, and *Bon Marché*.

Good work! said one of those illustrious bazaars, moreover the price is very reasonable. It wrote to M. Philippe:

> *'Send us fifty model A cushions.'*

Fifty! Philippe didn't lose his head. He went to find the physician superintendent, who rightly was of the Dide school.[2]

– Philippe, said the psychiatrist of the Dide school, you're asking for two workers, choose from among your colleagues in Saint-Charles. And here are five hundred francs in advance to buy your raw materials.

Two days later the other illustrious bazaar responded:

> *'Send us a hundred model B cushions.'*

– Take, Philippe, take workers, said the psychiatrist.

Philippe employed four more residents.

Four, plus two, plus Philippe himself, that made seven madmen in the place.

The workers prepared the cushions and Philippe painted them.

That was a year ago.

Today they are fourteen, and Philippe pays taxes.

– You must be joking! I said.

Philippe opened his cash-drawer and showed me his receipt from the tax collector.

– Even in a madhouse, one can't escape him!

At the back of the workshop a piano can be seen, and a violin is resting under the instrument's cover. It's Philippe's violin and the worker, Richard, accompanies on piano. The concert doesn't take place during periods of recreation, but when the music daemon grabs them. Then Philippe and Richard get up and go to their instruments, and the atelier becomes ecstatic, working in harmony.

– Ah! sighs a charming fool, if only we had some factory girls!

Why did Philippe become a manufacturer?

He explains:

– I had to get a million, as I wanted to save the world. It was a question of unmasking Shackleton's piracy. No doubt you think, like the rest of the world, that the explorer Shackleton is dead? He's alive, that bandit! The announcement of his trespass is a new English ruse. Shackleton was given a secret mission by England to stop terrestrial evolution. And here's the plan: he's waiting for a propitious moment to go and implant a gigantic platinum antenna on the South Pole. What will it do? My

contemporaries' ignorance! It will simply cause the earth thus immobilised to stop rotating, and half of its surprised inhabitants, then upside down, will be precipitated into the abyss of nothingness.

Get to work! my friends, he shouts into the workshop. Help me to save the earth which mustn't stop turning.

And the cushion makers, given new heart, feverishly get back to their job…

In that strange workshop it was pleasing to think of the *Bon Marché* and *Galleries Lafayette* stores, serious businesses. I thought I could hear a department head, one of the finest frock coats in the shop, calling upon a poor narrow-shouldered clerk guilty of some fantasy, in order to boot him out.

– Sir, this high-up of the clothing industry was saying, on giving him notice, Sir, you should know that we don't work with madmen here…

The Bad: Isoard is Better

Isoard is better. This morning, he's leaving the asylum. Stunned by his freedom he stops at the gate and looks at the avenue in front of him.

For eight days Isoard has been accustomed to seeing me around his establishment, he knows me well.

– I'll take you to lunch, I said.

He replied:

– I'm not dressed very well.

We left.

Isoard is strong. He went off to war 'without anything'.

– So I'm going back to my village. I was a farrier. I was about to get married when I fell into the sadness. I couldn't get myself out of it. I was frightened of everything. If the postman brought me a letter I wouldn't open it. I assumed there was bad news inside. It went on for two months. Then, one day, I wanted to defend myself. I thought the whole world was lying in wait in order to do me harm, and I hit a friend as hard as I could. I can see it all very clearly now. They were right to confine me, I could well have killed.

– A long time ago?

– Well! Just about two years.

– And what did you do in the asylum?

– I waited to get better for one year, and I waited to get out for another year.

I sat down to eat with Isoard in the Dôme restaurant.

– Perhaps I no longer know how to behave at the table, he said.

– And when you were cured, what did they do with you in the asylum?

– They left me among the madmen. I said to the doctor: 'That's going to make me ill again!' He replied: 'I need to observe you.'

Oh! He was kind enough. It's he who got me out. Here's his certificate. It says right here that I'm completely normal.

Isoard hadn't handled a knife and fork in two years and he contemplated those instruments with relief.

– It's proof that I'm free, he said.

And concealing nothing of the simplicity of his soul, he added:

– That really gives me pleasure.

Isoard had to catch a train at three o'clock to get back home.

– I'll come with you, I said, if you don't mind?

It's sixty kilometres from here?

We arrived at his village.

– Here's my forge, he said, stopping in front of a building.

Someone else was forging there. He knew him well.

– Well! Hello! he said to him.

The blacksmith put down his hammer on the anvil.

– Ah! Is that you? he said. They've let you out?

They cure you there?

– I'm fine now.

– So you're going to see your mother?

– Of course! I'm going home.

We continued on our way.

– Hello! Isoard said to another villager.

The other replied: Hey! I thought you were dead.'

Here's his house. We go in. The mother's doing washing in the yard.

– Hello! Isoard says.

The mother turns around, lets go her beater.

– I'm so happy you're back now.

So those gentlemen have given you a good certificate?

– I have the certificate.

– Well! So sit down, and the gentleman who's with you. Has he also come from the county asylum?

I went into the village. The news had already spread. The blacksmith asked me:

– Since he was mad, why has he been released?

I followed the blacksmith to the inn.

– Have you heard Isoard's back? declared the man.

– And why has he been let out? said those fine people.

– First of all, he won't be able to work now. You're not going to give him your forge are you, Monchin?

– Even if he came here to get shod, I wouldn't have him.

The mayor was among the drinkers.

– But he's cured, I said, he's just like you others. It's I who brought him!

Then the mayor proclaimed:

– We don't want madmen in the village. There are *speshal* places for them, so why isn't he kept there? The first time he lifts a finger, I'll send him packing. That's it!

There you are!

The Ugly: Making A Mockery Of Pinel

Agitation can be completely calmed or diminished.

One doesn't ask which the patient prefers. If there isn't time to completely calm him, one simply reduces it. When it's sufficiently reduced, occasionally, we can proceed to eradicate it. We stew it like a pot roast.

In some cases on the men's side, reduction takes place

using the sole of a boot. It's not a treatment prescribed by doctors. It happens mainly at night.

The disturbed person screams, thrashes about, and annoys the attendant. The man's already in a straightjacket, he's given a few good whacks with the master-key, just for good measure. The broomstick's also used. But the boot is the preferred method. The attendant climbs onto the bed and kicks him in the ribs. Next day the patient bears the bruises. These people are always knocking themselves against the walls!

It's the clandestine method.

Officially, it doesn't exist.

Doctors control agitation by use of the straightjacket, by tying to the bed and by seclusion and the wet sheet.

The wet sheet is a psychiatric conquest. The method comes from the Egyptian Pharaohs. Only the Egyptians waited for their clients to be dead before employing it. And they cut the sheet into small pieces called burial cloths. We, we use the whole extent of the sheet, binding it tightly at each turn with the aid of a knee….Eventually the result is achieved: the patient ceases to scream, he expires.[3]

1 *With The Mad* (2022) Amazon Trans. Stephen Wilson

2 Maurice Dide (1873-1944) Psychiatrist and betrayed French resistance fighter who died in Buchenwald

3 Londres died on the 16th May 1932, at the age of 47, in horrendous circumstances. He had spent three months in China covering the second Sino-Japanese war, and was on his way home. He boarded the liner *Georges Philippar* in Shanghai. When the ship reached the Gulf of Aden, fire broke out and she sank. He was last seen alive trying to escape through a porthole in a cabin where he was trapped.

The Word

the word felled the children like an axe
their heads bowed on the kitchen table with
all the gold and curls as in prayer
do not kiss them after saying that word

Titanium marker

It's the breast you used to kiss
Long ago. The titanium, as small
"as a grain of rice"—

(and here I am a child again
Throwing grains of rice after
Midnight on the New Year

To wish a rich harvest
To grandparents, parents,
And neighbors, my rewards

Kisses on the forehead
And coins, sometimes
Banknotes to store for January.)

"The marker for the surgeon,
And if all is benign, to keep an
Eye on the area with magnetic

Imaging." (And now I am
Inside the clamorous machine
On a metal bed, thinking

Of the children's faces
As fluttering angels
On shut eyelids.)

I grow aphorisms
Inside the breast that once
Fed our children,

This year when I learn to
Live without love as the exile
Comes to live with a wound

No one can see, regardless
Of how it is intimated, then
Entrusted to silence.

Carmen Bugan

Carmen Bugan's new and selected poems, *Lilies from America*, was published in 2019, and her latest collection, *Time Being*, in March 2022. She is also the author of three other collections of poems, a critical study on Heaney and East Europeans, and the memoir *Burying the Typewriter: Childhood Under the Eye of the Secret Police*. Her book of essays on politics and poetics, *Poetry and the Language of Oppression*, is published by Oxford University Press. She lives in Long Island, NY, and teaches at the Gotham Writers' Workshop in Manhattan.

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REVIEWS

Infinity squared

Katherine Rundell, *Super-Infinite: The Transformations of John Donne* (Faber & Faber, 2022). £16,99.

Katherine Rundell won a prize fellowship at All Souls, home, as she says, of the 'incurably bookish'. Her bookish tendencies are on view in a *Guardian* interview of 6 January 2018 when she says, 'the only time that kids understand the word they inhabit is when they read.' Here she is up on the roof, with one of Hawksmoor's towers on the right.

Katherine Rundell on the roof of All Souls: 'a short, a giddy, a vertiginous walk' (Donne Sermon CXIV) (Preached at Denmark House (which later became Somerset House) 26 April 1625).

Don't suppose many Fellows go up there, except once in a hundred years in pursuit of a mallard *imaginaire*. The next outing is 2101, so unless some chymique gets the elixir in the next few years she won't be able to participate. When the ceremony took place in 2001 *The Guardian* reported, 'Oxford dons go Quackers'. Well it would, wouldn't it. Still, she can take pleasure in joining in the singing of the duck song at Gaudies.

Super-Infinite is a very readable and engaging book. Rundell writes well and vividly, such as, 'like everything in our rusty-hinged, slow-moving world, it happened in pieces.' She explores Donne's mind as it is revealed in poems, letters, essays and sermons. We have greater access to his mind than Shakespeare's, who, as Arnold says, trod the earth 'unguess'd at'. She keeps reiterating the point that he matters:

> *'His work is protection against the slipshod and the half-baked, against anti-intellectualism, against those who try to sell you their money-ridden version of sex and love. He is protection against those who would tell you to narrow yourself, to follow fashion in your mode of thought.*
>
> *To read him – to read all of his love poems together – is to feel yourself change, for his is a passion which acknowledged the strangeness you are born with.*
>
> *'The Sun Rising' …[is] a love poem you would eat your own heart for.*
>
> *Donne suggests that you look at the world with both more awe and more scepticism: that you weep for it and that you gasp for it. In order to do so, you shake yourself out of cliché and out of the constraints of what the world would sell you….. His startling timelessness is down to the fact that he had the power of unforeseeability: you don't see him coming.'*

You'll guess from these extracts that she is a votaress in love with him, although to be in love with someone who died four hundred years ago is to be on a hiding to nothing. This book is a worthy protest against the counter-culture wallahs, who haven't got onto Donne in a big way yet, but they will, as their Stalinist diktats unroll, obliterating history, art and language itself. One compares her study with John Carey's *John Donne, Life, Mind and Art* (1981) (also Faber and Faber), although it is sketchier than Carey: her chapter on Death, for instance, does not take one into such elaborate profundities as his. I have just re-read Carey, and it is even better than I remember it.

As an undergraduate I went to hear J. B. Leishman lecture on Milton in St. John's College Hall, the fire flickering in the grate. He also wrote a book on Donne called *The Monarch of Wit* (1951). He stressed that the critical endeavour was all about capturing the *haeceitas* (thisness, a word loved by Gerard Manley Hopkins) of a poet, the way in which he or she was like no other. Rundell does this splendidly for Donne, and shows the way, to quote Hopkins again, in which he was a 'clearest-selvèd spark'. Paradoxically although he was highly individual he valued being a member of the English community, difficult at first since his family was so strongly associated with Roman Catholicism. Rundell is good on sex. *Pace* Philip Larkin sexual intercourse began in 1633 rather than 1963.

Donne is known as a 'metaphysical poet', and Rundell informs us that you can buy mugs with 'let's get metaphysical' on them – going one better than Olivia Newton-John who in 1981 sang 'let's get physical'. In some ways that is a misleading term, since it etymologically suggests 'beyond nature', meaning that Donne pays little or no attention to the visible world. You'd never guess, reading 'Twickenham Garden' (long disappeared), that it was laid out to imitate the Solar System, but that was no part of the argument of the poem; it was an exploration of what I once called 'reverse transubstantiation' (May 1982).

John Carey cites his poem 'Good Friday, 1613. Riding Westward', which charts a journey from Sir Henry Goodyer's Polesworth Hall (just east of Tamworth, demolished alas in 1870) to Montgomery. Rundell does not mention it. He would have passed the Wrekin going up Watling Street (now the A5), have seen Wenlock Edge and Caer Caradoc on his left, then turned south after Shrewsbury, going through Chirbury just before reaching his destination. It's a journey of about 80 miles, so , presumably would have taken two days. Could he have stopped in Shrewsbury to write the poem? Carey says of his journey through Warwickshire, a bit of Staffordshire and Shropshire, 'for all he noticed of the countryside he rode across, he might have been travelling on the surface of the moon.' True, but there is sometimes visual intensity in Donne. As I write this I am looking at seven great tits in a nesting box in our garden, broadcast to a television screen. They are ten days old now, and sprouting feathers cased in waxy sheaths on their limbs, preparing to raise themselves on crossed wings, and I realise that Donne took in the same miracle in 'The Progress of the Soul', when he observes:

> *'a small blew shell, the which a poore*
> *Warme bird orespread, and sat still evermore,*
> *Till her enclos'd child kickt, and peck'd itself a dore.*
> *Out crept a sparrow, this soules moving Inne,*
> *On whose raw armes stiffe feathers now begin,*
> *As childrens teeth through gummes, to breake with paine,*
> *His flesh is jelly yet, and his bones threds,*
> *All a new downy mantle overspreads.'*

Rundell says that no one reads the poem, but John Carery did, and noted that we had to wait until Ted Hughes for anything similar. Sometimes one feels that Donne's fancies are coming round again: the phenomenon of the exchange of blood in 'The Flea' received a reprise the other day when Matt Rudd reported in *The Sunday Times* (8 May) that when Megan Fox got engaged to Machine Gun Kelly 'they drank each other's blood', suggesting that they were 'on a metaphysical and/or spiritual level or something.' He concludes, 'I give them a year'.

In the history of English poetry Donne is part of a movement to do with colloquialism, taking in Chaucer, Wyatt, Pope (sometimes), Byron, Clough, Browning, Hopkins, Yeats (sometimes) and

the Modernists. Byron seems not to have known Donne, but 'And so – for God's sake – hock and soda-water' is not so far removed, sonically, from 'For Godsake hold your tongue, and let me love.' It is an attractive tradition, and opposes what is adversely called in *As You Like It* the poetical. Writing to Mervyn Peake T. S. Eliot said, 'You speak in several poems of singing, but I think the first thing a poet needs to learn is how to talk.' Very true. There is a roughness in this tradition, which some tried to smooth out, either in hefty editing, which is what happened to Wyatt in *Tottel's Miscellany* (1557), or wholesale translation, which we see when Dryden rewrote Chaucer and Pope and Parnell rewrote Donne. To read Chaucer's *Wife of Bath's Tale* in Dryden's translation is not to read it at all. Rundell is critical of Pope and Parnell (not indexed). Looking at these ill-advised versions concentrates the mind on the specific character of authentic originals.

Rundell throws in a lot of incidental information, such as the fact that Puttenham perhaps kept a seventeen-year-old girl locked up for three years (I didn't know that), and that Sydmonton Court is now owned by Andrew Lloyd Webber. I'm surprised that when she mentions Mal Fitton she doesn't tell us that she makes a cameo appearance in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* as one of the now arcanely incomprehensible and insufferable allusions. There are plenty of tart observations along the way: she says that Anne Boleyn looks like 'an unimpressed headmistress' and that the Countess of Bedford 'has a look of scepticism powerful enough to burn rubber.' The men don't get off either: Rundell agrees with Elizabeth Stuart that James Hay had a 'camel face'. She says that Donne thought that ladies who objected to his portrait of Elizabeth Drury should 'fuck off and die.' A lot of this does not sound like scholarly discourse, but it is none the worse for that, and it is, after all, published by Faber and not OUP. She is scornful of those 'who believe that female pleasure was not considered until Clarke Gable cracked his first half-smile', and compares William Cokayne with Richard Fuld, the 'gorilla of Wall Street'. At one point she mentions 'one Agnes Paston', but she was not any old Paston, but a member of the famous Norfolk family whose papers from the fifteenth century have been an important scholarly resource.

Donne was at once like us and different from us. A big difference is his ardent religious faith. He was, in many respects, a sceptic, and that led him into startling contradictions. He anticipated Walt Whitman: 'Do I contradict myself?/ Very well then I contradict myself,/ (I am large, I contain multitudes).' The way in which he tackled the problems connected with the resurrection of the body is an example. How can a body be resurrected if it contains atoms which have previously circulated in other bodies? Is the soul separated from the body at death? What happens to the bodies of those who are alive on the Day of Judgement? `Such a free operation of the investigative mind seriously undermines faith – so why didn't he go the whole hog, in private at least, and conclude that religion was a vast man-created delusion, or a supreme fiction, if one wants to be less aggressive? He just couldn't. It's at this point that we recognise him as a seventeenth-century figure. At other points though he seems close to us, and Rundell quotes Proust on this:

> *'People of bygone ages seem infinitely remote from us. We do not feel justified in ascribing to them any underlying intentions beyond those they formally express: we are amazed when we come across an emotion more or less like we feel today in a Homeric hero.'*
>
> *(Les gens des temps passés nous semblent infiniment loin de nous. Nous n'osons pas leur supposer d'intentions profondes au delà de ce qu'ils expriment formellement; nous sommes étonnés quand nous rencontrons un sentiment à peu près pareil à ceux que nous éprouvons chez un héros d'Homère.) (Le Côté de Guermantes, Part III)*

I should have thought that in this context 'emotion' does not quite translate 'sentiment'. Considering the many set-backs Donne endured he is commendably free from self-pity, but occasionally regret and complaint breaks out. Here is an example: 'The pleasantness of the season displeases me. Everything refreshes, and I wither, and I grow older and not better.' It's not unlike Hopkins's complaint in 'Thou art indeed just, Lord':

> *'See, banks and brakes*
> *Now, leaved how thick ! laced they are again*
> *With fretty chervil, look, and fresh wind shakes*
> *Them; birds build – but not I build; no, but strain,*
> *Time's eunuch, and not breed one work that wakes.'*

If I had been writing this book I wouldn't have been able to resist the temptation to slip in John Earle's description of St Paul's Walk in *Microcosmography* (1628), which is closer to Donne's time as Dean than the quotation cited from Dekker's *The Gull's Hornbook* (1609):

> *'It is the land's epitome, or you may call it the lesser isle of Great Britain. It is more than this, the whole world's map, which you may here discern in its perfectest motion, justling and turning. It is a heap of stones and men, with a vast confusion of languages; and were the steeple not sanctified, nothing like Babel. The noise in it is like that of bees, a strange humming or buzz mixed of walking tongues and feet: it is a kind of still roar or loud whisper. It is the great exchange of all discourse, and no business whatsoever but is here stirring and a-foot. It is the synod of all pates politick, jointed and laid together in most serious posture, and they are not half so busy at the parliament. It is the antick of tails to tails, and backs to backs, and for vizards you need go no farther than faces. It is the market of young lecturers, whom you may cheapen here at all rates and sizes. It is the general mint of all famous lies, which are here like the legends of popery, first coined and stamped in the church. All inventions are emptied here, and not few pockets.' [There's more]*

But one can't get everything in. Incidentally, Inigo Jones erected the most monstrously awful Baroque west front for the cathedral in the 1630s – fortunately swept away after the Great Fire.

Who is this book for? Possibly not for anyone who knows absolutely nothing about Donne. It's perhaps ideal for someone who knows just a bit, but doesn't particularly like him or approve of him or understand him. It would convert him or her, and make that reader go away and read more, though not necessarily *Pseudo-Martyr* in the early stages. I am prompted to go and read *Ignatius his Conclave*, which I am ashamed to say I have never read. Could score points in that humiliation game in David Lodge's *Changing Places* (1975!), though not as many as Howard Ringbaum who has not read *Hamlet*. I'm ashamed to say I have never heard of Opicinus de Canistris (1296-c.1353), whose maps superimposed on human figures are fantastically weird. It would have been nice to have illustrations of them, more worthwhile than some of the other illustrations. There's such ignorance around that it's hard work presenting the past. I understand that in a recent survey, as reported in *The Daily Mail* (6 May), only half of the age group of 18 to 30-year-olds in Britain have even heard of Marilyn Monroe. So what hope is there for Donne? Even less for Agnes Paston. Kilroy says in Tennessee Williams's *Camino Real* (1953), 'It shows you are getting old when you remember Jean Harlow.' It's that process of collective amnesia.

BERNARD RICHARDS

CONTENTS

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