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Echo Chambers

The novelist Bret Easton Ellis has been in the news recently for his criticisms of "millennial" culture and attitudes – the former devoid of literary sensibility, the latter replete with emotional and political hypersensitivity. Ellis complained of a tendency amongst younger social media users and commentators to want to erase or mute unpopular or discomfiting comments and voices. "Someone said it about me today, 'Let's cancel Bret Easton Ellis.' The word gets used all the time, 'We're going to cancel this person, she shouldn't have tweeted that, she's cancelled.' [...] "I feel adrift and disillusioned by what's going on. I'm looking at it, I think fairly clearly, and thinking it's just ridiculous."

He continued, in the interview with *The Sunday Times*, to say "I think that shouting about tweets, and taking people down for tweets, is the problem."[1] Elsewhere, in an interview in the US, he stated, "Political correctness is not what I'm railing about. I'm railing about corporate culture and freedom of expression and how the two are intermingling now and how corporations are deciding what people can say and how they can express themselves, whether you're an actor or a comedian or whatever." The result is that, "You are going to have to let the corporation dictate the way you express yourselves if you want to feed your family."[2]

Ellis has a book to sell, and one can't imagine he struggles to keep the wolf from the door. And it is not only – or even – millennials who can be accused such exclusionary tactics. In this issue, Nigel Biggar reflects on the recent controversy at Cambridge, over the offer and subsequent withdrawal of a visiting research post to the University of Toronto psychologist Jordan Peterson, after – in its own words, "the Faculty became aware of a photograph of Professor Peterson posing with his arm around a man wearing a T-shirt that clearly bore the slogan 'I'm a proud Islamophobe'."[3]

For some readers, the case may recall that of Steven Salaita, a US literature professor who had a job offer withdrawn – after resigning his own post – when his institution to-be (and some of its donors) objected to social media messages critical of Israeli military policy and actions.[4] While one might wonder about all stages of the appointment process in the Peterson case, perhaps the best response from those opposed to his views is informed critique, as evidenced by *TLS* reviewer Kate Manne's unpicking of his arguments in a recent book, or the very funny interview with comedian Jim Jefferies.[5]

Both cases speak to the need for considered reactions by institutions, alongside the risks of Twitter and social media as catalysts for over-reactions and intolerance. Those who "cancel" or "shut down" views expressed within the law run the risk of "illiberal liberalism", being selective in their assessment of what can be said or not said on the basis of principles or positions that not all accept. For free speech is almost never absolute, and there are limits in law in this country and abroad on defamation, incitement to violence, as well as threats and intimidation.[6] But terms such as "civility", "collegiality" and that buzz-word "values" are less well defined, and can be used too easily by those in power at the expense of academic freedom. Neither do courts of law or disciplinary panels – as sketched by Alma Prelec in these pages – seem to be fitting venues for discussions of the merits and limits of free speech.

Twitter and other social media can function as echo chambers, in which one hears nothing but one's own

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ideas or variants thereof. In an extreme form, calls for "safe spaces" in universities risk creating environments in which no real debate can take place. And the flipside to the ideological conformity of one's social media feed is the speed with which things can turn nasty, as memorably depicted in Fernando Sdrigotti's recent novella *Shitstorm*. The "pile-on" and the "feeding frenzy", or on a smaller scale the ramifications of an incautious retweet, are noxious side-effects of modern hyper-connectivity.

It may seem odd to link discussions of free speech and liberalism to managerial and administrative practices, but any scenario in which people are exposed only to ideas they already hold should be anathema to the spirit of experiment and openness that universities must espouse. Just as with social media, an organisation can become an echo chamber, in which management only ever hears what it wants to hear. Readers will be amply familiar with criticisms of the BBC, parts of the NHS, and areas of the Civil Service, as well as large corporations, for operating "monocultures" characterised by uniformity of thought and the exclusion of critical voices. The excessive use of non-disclosure agreements to silence employees is but the most egregious symptom of this culture.[7]

In the light of recent developments around Parks College and the Language Centre Library – as outlined in previous numbers and in articles in this issue – there exists a worry that University management hears only what it wants to hear. An echo chamber is yet more dangerous when it belongs to those exercising power. As a recent communication from the local UCU branch about proposals for the Language Centre Library stated, "from our perspective, the decision making process so far has not been transparent or accountable, and questions arise as to whether the decision to close the library, and steps to implement the closure, had already been taken before any consultation took place." Recent examples from wider public life – mega-projects such as HS2 or the Oxford-Cambridge "Expressway", which develop a momentum out of all proportion to their usefulness or popular support – suggest that openness to rational counter-argument is in short supply nationally.

This is the risk too of that popular managerial exercise, the "consultation", often with accompanying "open forums". For consultations to mean anything, there has to be the possibility that those consulting will take a different course of action to that which they are proposing – to pause, even to reverse: to expand instead of cutting, to consolidate instead of building, for example. College governing bodies can be very good at this, when fully empowered in their deliberative and democratic functions. Congregation and Council should be, too.

At the time of going to press we do not know the outcome of the Congregation meeting of 7 May. Congregation may well have awakened from its slumber – as our demitting Proctor put it recently. We hope the University is willing to hear what it has to say. There are only limited signs of such a disposition, as stated in the *Gazette* 25 April 2019 (p370): "However, in this instance it is acknowledged that publishing a formal notice in the *Gazette* in addition to other communications might have been helpful to inform Congregation of the developing plans [for Parks College] at an early stage." Respect for due process would certainly be welcome. So too would a greater willingness to listen, in advance of major policy decisions.

In the 1980s, for a series of lectures delivered at UC Berkeley, Michel Foucault reflected at length about *parrhesia*, the practice of free speech mentioned in the plays of Euripides and practiced by the classical cynics, such as Diogenes of Sinope. *Parrhesia*, sometimes translated as fearless speech, is neither garrulous nor wanton, but rests on the speaker's commitment to the truth, sense of moral obligation, and implicitly inferior (social or political) position, and with it the potential for risk if the addressee does not like what they hear. To tell a friend they are doing something that they should not do, and risk losing their friendship, is to act as *parrhesiastes*. To tell one's managers that they are making a mistake, is to act as *parrhesiastes*. This "value" is one to defend.

[1]Interview by Decca Aitkenhead, *The Sunday Times* ***https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/the-interview-american-psycho-author-bret-easton-ellis-on-why-he-hates-millennials-0zngpx6pq***

[2]"Bret Easton Ellis on Why He Named His First Book in a Decade *White*", Lila Shapiro ***https://www.vulture.com/2018/10/bret-easton-ellis-white-book-interview.html***

[3]***https://www.cam.ac.uk/news/rescindment-of-visiting-fellowship-statement-from-vice-chancellor-professor-stephen-j-toope***

[4]See e.g. ***https://www.haaretz.com/jewish/u-of-illinois-censured-for-rescinding-job-offer-to-salaita-1.5371625***

[5]***https://www.the-tls.co.uk/articles/public/jordan-peterson-12-rules-kate-manne-review/***; and e.g. ***https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QO9j1SLxEd0***

[6]On Peterson's own recourse to the law to allege defamation against his critics, see ***https://www.vice.com/en_ca/article/pa8dyy/free-speech-hero-jordan-peterson-launches-another-defamation-lawsuit*** and ***https://www.thecut.com/2018/09/jordan-peterson-threatened-to-sue-feminist-critic-kate-manne.html***

[7]See e.g. Robert Mendick and Gordon Rayner, *The Telegraph*, ***https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/0/non-disclosure-agreements-everything-need-know-ndas-misuse/*** and Caroline Davies for *The Guardian* ***https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/mar/04/firms-face-ban-on-use-of-gagging-clauses-to-silence-whistleblowers***

B.B

NOTICE

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

Why the University needs a Language Strategy

KATRIN KOHL

As the country grapples with Brexit and the question of its relationship with immediate neighbours and the rest of the world, the national 'languages crisis' is becoming an increasingly pressing issue as under-funded schools reduce provision. The Department for Education has launched initiatives to try and strengthen Modern Foreign Languages and reverse the downward trend that was caused above all by making languages optional at GCSE in 2004. The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Modern Languages has recently developed a National Recovery Programme for Languages; the British Academy has funded several research projects designed to promote language learning, and has now issued 'Languages in the UK: A call for action' together with the Academy of Medical Sciences, the Royal Academy of Engineering and the Royal Society; and the Arts and Humanities Research Council has invested £16 million in an Open World Research Initiative designed to strengthen the subject, an investment from which Oxford is benefiting as one of four universities leading an OWRI project. However, the British Council's annual Languages Trends surveys continue to show steadily falling numbers in schools, and a recent BBC survey confirmed the picture of a downward spiral in provision.

Meanwhile the University is contending with its very own languages crisis – focused on the issue of whether it is appropriate to close the Language Centre's library. This is a red rag to anyone who values libraries, especially at a time when these are increasingly coming under pressure as people turn to online provision. The proposals particularly set off alarm bells for those who teach languages and see the perceived value of language skills and actual teaching provision diminishing by the day as Anglo-centric policy-makers and institutions rely in practice if not explicitly on global English as being sufficient for communication with people across cultures.

In this highly charged context it is important to take a step back and consider both the factors that are driving the proposals, and the long-term implications for the status of the Language Centre as 'an important part of the teaching and learning provision of the University' (Consultation Paper, p. 1). There are two key interrelated factors motivating the proposals: how best to meet the needs of learners with the resources available, and the reduction in financial provision imposed by the University.

Concerning learner needs and use of the available resources, it is undoubtedly the case that these have changed very significantly since the Language Centre was set up in 1980, and indeed since some materials in its library were made accessible for borrowing in 2010. Just as the language labs popular in the 1970s have gradually been replaced by other technologies and learning methods, the resources themselves have changed. This is significant not least with respect to the technologies supporting them – a resource that might have been effective for use with a Walkman is no longer useful for learners looking for digital provision. Freely available language learning courses and materials have burgeoned over the last decade, and the first port of call if one wants to dip one's toe into, say, Tagalog is likely to be an app on a smartphone. Duolingo, for example, is a free language-learning platform that currently offers courses in 24 languages, and others are being developed. Finding out about and accessing such resources has also become very much easier, and there are many forums offering information exchange by learners.

These ongoing developments mean that Language Centres have to be ongoingly responsive to learner needs, and well funded if they are to keep their resources and the supporting technologies up to date and truly useful for their learners. Even in an ideal scenario, however, it is necessarily challenging to work out what precisely should be provided and in what form, and it seems unlikely that an expensive acquisition made in 2019 will still remain useful in 2024. Expert advice on language learning, guidance on online resources tailored to the individual's needs, and targeted funding of digital resources that are routinely updated and can be used by authorised learners may then ultimately be more appropriate than a range of resources sitting on shelves.

Overall, it is clear from the consultation document that the library's existing resources are under-utilised by users other than the Language Centre's teaching staff, who would under the proposals in any case continue to be provided with the materials they require in the languages they teach: Academic English, Arabic, Dutch, French, German, Modern Greek, Italian, Japanese, Mandarin, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish. This looks like a small fraction of the 200 languages given on the Language Centre's website as being represented in the holdings. 51% of catalogued distinct items have never been borrowed since 2011 (for holdings acquired prior to that date) or since subsequent acquisition. Among the borrowed items, a high percentage (39% of borrowings recorded in a March 2019 snapshot) are being borrowed by the Language Centre's teaching staff. This suggests that there may not be much active use of library materials relating to the languages beyond those that are taught by the Language Centre. Relocating them to the most relevant part of the Bodleian Libraries system could therefore make sense, especially since this would provide disabled access. However, it remains unclear whether these holdings would be updated – but then this is not a given if they stay at an under-funded Language Centre.

Other proposed changes would similarly seem to offer certain advantages. Relocating newspapers and magazines to the ground-floor café area is more likely to ensure that they are read, and would make them accessible for wheelchair users. Repurposing the library space for use by tutors who currently have inadequate office space would solve a problem that cannot obviously be resolved in other ways. And while the library's location on the top floor of the erstwhile Big Game Museum is visually won-

derful, it is not in line with current standards of lighting or heating, so upgrading is essential – again, however, a need that will have to be addressed in any case.

These proposals are in line with the type of changes and upgrading the Language Centre's Director has been pursuing over the last two and a half years. The Consultation Paper suggests that the proposals are underpinned by careful analysis of how best to use the resources available and ensure that the Language Centre can meet the language needs of students and staff across the University in the best way possible within the constraints. The thrust of the proposals is that the Language Centre should be put on a footing where it can focus the available resources on providing effective teaching in the twelve languages for which it employs tutors, providing appropriate materials in these languages which are curated by the tutors with administrative support.

It must however be a major source of concern that a key factor driving the proposals is the University's reduction in real terms of the Language Centre's funding. This is not a new or temporary problem but a systemic one since the Language Centre is deemed a service department and not part of an academic division as one might expect given its teaching and learning remit. Unlike faculties and departments, it is required as a service department in the Academic Administration Division (AAD) to 'strive for a cash flat budget position, absorbing the costs of inflation and salary increments' (Consultation Paper, p. 7). The costs of inflation not only include the rising costs of essential teaching and learning materials and audio-visual equipment but also the rising costs charged by other parts of the University, e.g. for running the building and essential upgrading of IT infrastructure and support. As the Consultation Paper indicates, the Director's only way of making ends meet is to implement cuts in provision.

The downward pressure on funding of the Language Centre and its parent body AAD was already signalled loud and clear when the retirement of the previous Director – who had research expertise in second language acquisition – was used as an opportunity to reduce the full-time post to one that also covered the Directorship of the Oxford Learning Institute. Fortunately the current Director – a classicist – is committed to the value of languages and language learning. However it is notable that the positioning of the Language Centre in AAD some three and a half years ago has left it isolated. This was not helped by Education Committee's regrettable abolition of the sub-committee that had been designed to provide oversight, advice and involvement of expertise from other parts of the University. An equivalent body should certainly be reinstated.

It would be counter-productive in this context to tie the Language Centre's hands and force it to keep running a library that lacks the means of making significant and continuously updated provision for languages beyond the twelve languages covered by its teaching staff. However, the concerns raised by the Consultation should be taken as an opportunity for the University to address the role of languages in its education and research mission, and consider whether a minimalist approach to meeting staff and student languages needs is appropriate for a university that prides itself on its global reach and world-class teaching and research.

The 'Vision' the University sets out at the beginning of its Strategic Plan 2018-2023 is 'to provide world-class research and education […] in ways which benefit society on a local, regional, national and global scale'. The Strategic Plan that came to an end in 2018 did not mention the word 'language' once, reflecting an invisibility of languages that is characteristic of an Anglophone society which has come to assume that the whole world speaks global English. The current Plan has at least progressed to stating that 'We will maintain our commitment to in-depth study of the world's societies and cultures, supported by the outstanding breadth of our expertise in languages, ancient and modern'. It is now time to give the Language Centre a central role in that mission rather than confining it structurally to an academic limbo, and starving it even of the financial platform that would enable it to generate the types of funding other university language centres are able to attract, e.g. by running credit-bearing modules or (much-needed) large pre-sessional Academic English courses.

It seems reasonable to expect a world-class international university with a global mission to be sufficiently well resourced to offer expert advice and appropriate online resources for learners who need or wish to learn a language for which no classes are available, or where the classes are not available at a time that is compatible with their academic commitments. Learning a language – especially one of the many Asian and African languages that are gaining importance in a less Eurocentric world – requires significant support and guidance. An inappropriate course selected from a bewildering wealth of available materials on the basis of unrealistic expectations will not just waste the learner's time and fail to equip them for international work but discourage them from learning languages altogether.

English native speakers are increasingly leaving school without any qualification in a foreign language, and a spell at university is their last chance to gain confidence as language learners. Even in colonial times, it was considered necessary for an educated person to have gained some knowledge of a language other than English. The nation is now in effect encouraging young people to assume that global English is enough for engaging with the world, and that the onus is on other cultures to accommodate themselves to an Anglophone mind-set. Oxford is currently doing little to dispel that view. Conversely, there is too little provision for international students to develop their 'Oxford English' to the level they are entitled to expect. They need to be provided with more systematic and extensive tuition in the highly complex skill of using Academic English than can currently be provided by an under-resourced Language Centre and the hard-pressed academic tutors and supervisors who read their work.

In the UK as a whole, 'languages for all' provided by university language centres are the one area of language learning and provision that is thriving – partly because of a perceived need to make up for the national deficits at secondary level and partly because international students have an appetite for extending their range of languages. This provision is also often integrated more closely with other parts of the university that engage in language teaching. Oxford needs to be more ambitious about turning its strategic claims into a language-rich reality for all its students and staff.

The Language Centre Library – of librarians, books and online resources

NICK HEARN and SVENJA KUNZE

The idea that books are outmoded and can be phased out en masse together with the librarian and replaced with digital resources is a dangerous chimera, above all for a Language Centre Library. It might be thought that one book/electronic/online resource is like another but each item has a different part to play in the learning process and enters into a whole number of interrelationships with other books and other electronic items in the collection which in turn enters into an interrelationship with the learning and teaching processes themselves. Crucially, of course, it is books and electronic resources working fruitfully together that place the Language Centre Library at the very centre of the language learning process. The librarian has an important role to play in making sure that each language learner is put in touch with the right book and electronic or online resource depending on his or her level, depending on the kind of skill they are trying to practice, or the examination that they are working towards, and depending on their interests, background, strengths and weaknesses.*

Books and online resources in a language centre library cover a wide and varied range of complex interrelationships, levels and grammatical structures. Just as there is not one kind of language-centre book, so there is not one kind of dictionary (for example). It may be necessary for the librarian to back up the teacher by gently suggesting to students that they move away from bilingual dictionaries and start using monolingual dictionaries. Learning vocabulary is not just about looking words up in dictionaries. It involves looking at all kinds of different sense relations such as antonyms, hyponyms, synonyms. There will be specialized dictionaries for each of these different sense relations which map onto the ways in which language is organized in our brains.

Who but the librarian is that constant presence in a library who can offer advice and who can, in consultation with readers and with teaching staff, make sure that the best specialized dictionaries are bought? The same case could be made for language-learning readers, grammars, grammar exercise-books, language course-books – and the argument should most definitely be applied to online resources too.

The librarian is the one best placed to guard against the dangers of a too optimistic reliance on the online and digital. 'Don't worry there is an app for that' - fatal last words. 'All that glitters is not gold', especially with those 'free apps'. As with so many so-called 'free' materials on the web, advertisements start to appear resulting in fragmented learning. Learners are constantly interrupted by the many distractions offered by their mobile phones and find themselves in an isolated learning environment. Moreover, in the context of less commonly taught languages, finding suitable good quality online materials for self-directed learning is even more difficult, as there is no guidance available from teaching staff. Here, materials from traditional language publishers (Routledge, Teach Yourself, Colloquial) are still the first port of call as learning resources offering more comprehensive and advanced learning than any free online resource.

Netflix has been spoken of as the new Eldorado for language learning tapping into its subtitled foreign films, but closer examination reveals the poor quality of those subtitles. Netflix France has a whole blog dedicated just to this. It is hardly a surprise however, as it seems more or less anyone can become a 'translator' for Netflix.

Online language-learning packages make big claims for themselves but language teachers and specialist librarians will tell you that very few learners gain a good language level using only these kinds of software. For one thing, many online language learning resources such as Netflix only practice one skill. There are, however, accompanying materials to language courses in the form of online packages that can be integrated into a VLE (Virtual Learning Environment). Who better placed to negotiate the licences for these according to student and tutor numbers than the language centre librarian?

Copyright is a minefield, especially in the context of multimedia materials coming from all over the world. However tempting it might be to think that one can exploit the vast resources of the internet, copyright places severe constraints on what one can actually do. How nice it would be to put all the library DVDs and CDs online! Technically, this is possible. Legally it would mean opening up the University to multiple legal challenges. Yes, it is true there are many educational videos on Netflix but they are for private accounts and cannot legally be shown in class.

Yes, the web has a lot to offer, the open source and creative commons movements are wonderful resources for finding authentic and contemporary language learning materials, and there are reference websites such as Omniglot created by a true polygot, Simon Ager, but learners need to be told about them. There is also an impressive collection of e-books available from SOLO, yet, due to copyright restrictions, some of those books are only available to consult in a Bodleian reading room, at times with images removed, and with no sound, once again due to copyright restrictions. The end result, at present, is actually a smaller offering than what is available as physical objects for language learning on the library shelves. Once again it is the librarian who firstly will have the awareness and then the experience and knowledge to provide orientation and advice in the complex digital and online environment.

Even in an age of virtual learning environments, apps and online streaming, the Language Centre Library and a specialist librarian remain crucial in the language learning process, and consequently to the success of the Language Centre. A modern language learning library provides an integrated service, by facilitating access to print and on-

line materials, by advising on suitable learning resources from textbooks to apps, and by building and developing collections that are both coherent and diverse, reliable and up to date.

This, of course, requires qualified and experienced staff, and it requires funding, and most of all, it requires long-term planning. Above all, it should not be forgotten that a library is a social space. It gives students and self-learners a place where they can study, browse and feel part of a community

With this in mind, we would now like to address a few of our concerns about the future of the language centre library. First of all, we wonder to what extent alternatives were considered *before* the decision to make specialist staff redundant and to disperse the collection was taken. Was there a business case made in defence of the library or did the Language Centre management just passively accept that cuts had to be made? How much of a case was made to the University authorities for preserving and actually enhancing the library, and treating this unique learning resource as an asset for learning, teaching and public engagement?

If, as the business case for restructuring the library suggests, the current library space and facilities are no longer suitable, was there any planning for a more adequate home for a dedicated, fully staffed and equipped language learning library, an updated and upgraded '2.0' version even which would integrate printed resources and digital/online materials? This could perhaps have been included in the plans for the ROQ Humanities Library? Or in a refurbished, extended Language Centre, that houses up-to-date classrooms, workspaces for tutors *and* a library?

Before dismissing these options as too expensive, surely serious attempts must have been made to seek external funding and to approach potential donors interested in helping the survival of an institution they might have greatly benefitted from. Or perhaps not?

Surely the argument that language learners no longer want and need a dedicated library space with physical resources would have been validated in a full and detailed consultation with all stakeholders well in advance of a library closure being considered, to at least partly make up for the advice and scrutiny which would have been provided by the Committee for the Language Centre before its disbandment in 2017 (see Robert Vanderplank's article in *Oxford Magazine* No. 407, Noughth Week, Trinity Term 2019).

All this though would require a will actually to have a language learning library, and to plan for it in the long term. The timescale of only five months from the first 'business case for restructuring the library' in February, to library closure in June makes the whole venture look very much like a very short-sighted money-saving exercise. (This is assuming that the closure was not actually agreed on, and prepared, long before the business case was made and any consultation started.)

Just supposing the library closure goes ahead at the end of Trinity Term, as proposed by the Language Centre management, and we very much hope that this does not happen, a significant number of books and other items will have to be integrated with the collections of other libraries, such as the Taylor Institution Library and the Oriental Studies Library, over the summer and into the next academic year. Most probably, the lion's share if not all of the physical resources will be sent to the 'closed stacks' of the Bodleian Book Storage Facility in Swindon, joining the material that can be ordered to Bodleian reading rooms, from where it may or may not be possible for it to be borrowed for use in classes or at home.

This comes at a time when the Bodleian faces many challenges in terms of collection access and storage, provision of study space and reader support. The Radcliffe Science Library is scheduled to be converted into a new college and a large proportion of the resources there will have to be absorbed by other libraries or be transferred to Swindon (see Gigi Horsfield and Isabel McMann's article in *Oxford Magazine* No. 407, Noughth Week, Trinity Term 2019). We see an acute danger that this would reduce the attention, space and resources given to Language Library material that is supposed to be dispersed between libraries and closed stacks even further.

This is quite apart from the fact that these books will be cut off from their vital interrelationship with other books and online materials in the language centre library and will be existing in isolation without the expert guidance and collection development remit of the language centre librarian.

One thought to end on: the proposals to 'restructure' (read: close) the Language Centre library derive from the rationale that books, libraries and librarians are becoming redundant in the digital age, that they are an anachronism and a nostalgic luxury at best, a financial burden and liability at worst. The library is the soft belly of a teaching institution. It is the first to go whenever savings have to be made (it is happening in state secondary schools too). So, if this is the mantra, which library will be up for 'restructuring' next?

*The authors would like to thank a number of unnamed contributors without whom this article would not have been possible. The Language Centre Library petition is available at ***https://www.change.org/p/save-the-language-centre-library***.

NOTICE

The Editors of the *Oxford Magazine* regret that they cannot publish any material submitted to them anonymously. If the author requests publication on the basis that the author's name and university address be withheld from the readership, the Editors will consider the reasons given and in their discretion may publish on that basis; otherwise the material will be returned to the author.

Park College: the Fellowships

G.R. EVANS

'The teachers (Official Fellows) will be Research Professors (RSIVs) or Associate Professors/Senior Research Fellows (grades 9 and 10), who do not currently have a college fellowship. Early-career postdoctoral researchers will be Research Fellows of the society, and Associate Fellows will bring fresh perspectives from other parts of the University and outside.'[1]

This is puzzling. 'Research' academics do not have contracts which require them to teach. And the proposed Regulations for Parks College which Council will 'make' on approval of the creation of the Society by Congregation sit oddly beside those for the two existing Oxford Societies, St. Cross and Kellogg which, like the proposed Parks College, are not autonomous corporations but departments of the University. The Fellows of the Societies are solely University employees, as was emphasised in the Reply to the Congregation Question published in the *Gazette* on 25 April.

The Regulations of St. Cross set the rules for its own Fellowships in some detail:

'The governing body may elect to Official Fellowships at the college, on terms and conditions determined by the governing body and approved by Council, the holders of university appointments who are entitled to fellowships under the provisions of any statute or regulation, or who will become so entitled if their university appointments are confirmed to retiring age.'[2]

For historical reasons St. Cross also has some Pusey Fellowships. The governing body may also:

'elect suitably qualified persons to other categories of fellowships approved by Council, on terms and conditions determined by the governing body and approved by Council.'[3]

Kellogg's Regulations are also set out in detail. Because Kellogg grew out of Continuing Education:

'The governing body shall offer to elect to a Fellowship of Kellogg College every University Lecturer in the Department for Continuing Education whose office is tenable to the retiring age, or who has been appointed for a limited period on the basis that he or she is eligible for reappointment after that period to the retiring age.'[4]

In addition:

'the holders of university appointments who are entitled to fellowships under the provisions of any statute or regulation, or who will become so entitled if their university appointments are confirmed to retiring age'

and:

'any other member of Congregation, so long as the total number of fellows elected under this paragraph shall not exceed one-quarter of the total number of fellows who constitute the governing body.'[5]

Kellogg Fellowships may not be held simultaneously with a Fellowship elsewhere:

'In no case shall a Fellowship of Kellogg College be held concurrently with the headship of or a fellowship (other than an Honorary or Emeritus Fellowship) in another society or any college, Permanent Private Hall, or other designated institution.'

Junior and Senior Research Fellowships are provided for:

'The governing body may also elect suitably qualified persons to Junior Research Fellowships and Senior Research Fellowships on terms and conditions determined by the governing body and approved by Council,'

and Professorial Fellowships are permitted:

'The governing body may elect to Professorial Fellowships at the college, on terms approved by Council, university professors, university readers, and holders of other university offices which are declared by any university statute or regulation to qualify the holder for a Professorial Fellowship.'

However, continuing employment by the University to retirement age is a requirement:

'Any Fellow of Kellogg College who ceases to hold the post by virtue of which he or she was elected to a Fellowship of Kellogg College shall immediately vacate that fellowship.'[6]

The proposed Regulations for Parks College are sketchy by comparison:

'7. The governing body may elect to Official Fellowships at the society, on terms and conditions determined by the governing body and approved by Council, suitably qualified persons who are employed by the University.
8. The governing body may elect suitably qualified persons to other categories of fellowships approved by Council, on terms and conditions determined by the governing body and approved by Council.
9. Official Fellows will be appointed for a period of five years in the first instance, with re-appointment for successive five-year terms, subject to satisfactory performance of their society duties.'[7]

The plans for Parks College Fellowships seem to include holders of posts which may be on externally-funded fixed-term contracts and will not continue to retirement age. They do not appear to exclude those who already hold college Fellowships who may be permitted to transfer to Parks College Fellowships or it seems hold Fellowships in a college as well.[8] For Official Fellows the proposed Regulation (7) stipulates only 'suitably qualified persons who are employed by the University'. The 'qualification' is not defined. The innovative 'outside' Fellows planned for Parks College will not even be University employees and they will therefore not be subject to the Statute XII.

They will merely have an undefined 'association' with the Society but they will be allowed the title of Fellow.

So what would a Fellowship at Parks College actually mean for the holder? He or she will not be a corporator in an independent corporation with its own royal charter, merely a University employee with a five-year right to add 'Fellow of Parks College Oxford' to a business card. Even the protections of the University's Statute XII for those who are University employees will depend on the appointment by the Registrar of an 'alternate' where the procedure 'specifies an action or role to be carried out by a particular officer that does not exist in or for Parks College'. 'No revisions to Statute XII or dependent regulations are deemed necessary' says the Reply to the Congregation Question.

Entitlement

Calls for the creation of Societies in the University of Oxford since the 1960s[9] have consistently been driven by the call to provide the coveted college Fellowships for an expanding academic staff deemed to be 'entitled' to them by holding a qualifying University appointment, but in circumstances where the Colleges simply could not afford to take them in. For a Fellowship costs a College money. It is a separate employer of its Fellows and it may provide at least partially for room and board.

On I June 1965 Congregation defined 'entitlement' to a Fellowship as including academic and research staff appointed by the University to retiring age.[10] It had begun to be realised that the profile of academic posts across the University was changing. The Harrison Committee was a sub-committee of the committee appointed by Council in Hilary Term 1961, 'to consider various matters affecting the relationship of the University and Colleges'. The Harrison Report on the relationship between the University and Colleges was 'off the secret list' in January 1963. The *Oxford Magazine* then reported that it had addressed a 'problem which must be the result of the continued growth of research departments'.[11]

The profile of academic appointments has since changed significantly and still further in that direction, with many senior scientists now on a series of externally-funded contracts and not secure of employment by the University to retirement age should the funding come to an end.[12]

'Joint appointments'

In April, 1963, 17 members of Congregation, including Lord Franks, Chairman of the Franks Commission, signed a General Resolution:

> *'That this House instructs Council to submit legislation forbidding the filling of any post carrying 'entitlement' unless an associated fellowship is offered at the time of appointment.'*[13]

This established the principle that all future academic appointments should be made jointly by the University and a college. The Franks Commission *Report* commented that as a result 'in this University almost all members of the [academic] staff hold two posts and serve two masters'.[14]

It proved difficult to honour this principle because the autonomous colleges controlled their own choice of Fellows and there was no means of insisting that they took their share. Council approved a joint appointments proposal which was circulated to colleges in November 1973 and came into effect on 1 January 1974. Under it, job advertisements were to include only the statement that 'the appointment may be accompanied by a fellowship'.

The creation of Societies

When the Harrison Committee reported, 560 members of Congregation were Fellows of Colleges and 426 were non-Fellows. It suggested that 'at least two new graduate colleges would be needed to find places for them all'.[15] Fifty Fellows were elected by colleges in 1964 and in 1965 Iffley (which became Wolfson College) and St Cross were created as Societies. The two new societies were to have about seventy Fellows though it was recognised that that would probably not be enough.[16]

By 1970 colleges were becoming nervous that an expectation that they would keep expanding their Fellowships would adversely affect those who were already Fellows. They were 'not willing to accept an open-ended commitment to provide fellowships for all those appointed to university posts in future'.[17] '*Some* steps would have to be taken to recognize the facts that over 40 per cent of the members of Congregation were not fellows of colleges, and that this percentage would shortly pass the 50 per cent mark as the University increased the number of its staff'.[18] The 'two new societies could not indefinitely expand without becoming something quite different in kind from any existing college', and they 'could not indefinitely be required to confine their elections, largely if not exclusively, to…persons already employed by the University whom no other college had elected to a fellowship'.[19]

'Southgate': the Society Congregation rejected

In 1972 the creation of a new Society was proposed. It was to provide Fellowships but it was never to be allowed to proceed to independence as a true College. Lord Franks insisted fiercely in debate that any additional Society must have 'the hope of becoming a college'. It was also suggested that a Fellowship at 'Southgate' thus constituted would not prove attractive to the 'entitled'.[20]

Concerns were also expressed about the cost to the University of more Societies, both to create and to maintain them. The University was reluctant to put its hand in its pocket, preferring to throw the costs on the colleges, and perhaps unable to do anything else. A *Communication* to the Colleges set out the calculated costs and 'what contribution the University itself might make' subject to the rules of the University Grants Committee, for at that date its rules constrained the University's spending of its own money on a project of this sort. The *Report of the Committee on Entitlement*[21] was summarized in the *Gazette* on 3 May 1972,[22] stressing that Council would only 'promote such legislation on the understanding that the capital and recurrent costs of the scheme were to be financed from the College Contributions Fund'. A Resolution proposed 'establishing a new society on the lines recommended in the Report of the Committee on Entitlement' providing that

the new society shall be eligible to receive grants from the College Contributions fund.'[23]

There were also going to be difficulties about providing buildings for any new Society. The proposals involved 'allocating Cherwell Edge to Linacre College and the St. Aldate's Building now occupied by Linacre to the new society'. Making 'use of so valuable a central site and buildings' had its loud critics.[24]

The *Gazette* of 16 May 1973 published the verbatim report of the Debate on Entitlement to Fellowships.[25] T.H.Ashton of Corpus was scathing. 'Twelve years of careful discussion and debate', he said, had produced this 'tightly-controlled, much-limited, and emasculated new society','so unlike a real college'.[26] He insisted on the need for definition to 'tackle the precise nature of the new society'.[27]

He commented on the difficulty the form of the Resolution presented to those who wished to frame amendments to the proposal. His suggestion was a revised Preamble, to make it 'possible under the procedures of this House, for the kind of substantial amendments I have in mind to be put at the legislative stage'. He suggested a formula which would incorporate into the legislation a statement about its purpose, so that it might read:

> *'Whereas it is expedient for the better implementation of the University's legislation on entitlement to fellowships, to establish a new society, THE UNIVERSITY ENACTS AS FOLLOWS'*

The Resolution was lost on a Division and Southgate College was never created. Meanwhile there were still not enough Fellowships. It would be instructive to have an insertion after 'expedient' in the Legislative Proposal for Parks College, to state clearly why it is 'expedient'.

From Rewley House to Kellogg College

Iffley College became Wolfson College and got its royal charter in 1981, and with it its independence, so that it ceased to be a department of the University which could be required to admit to its Fellowships. That left only St. Cross as a non-incorporated Society of the University.

Matters rested there until a group of non-fellows asked a Question in Congregation in June 1984 about the number of entitled persons then without fellowships.[28] The Reply included a reminder that Congregation had rejected the legislation seeking to establish 'Southgate College' which would have had an obligation to offer fellowships to those not taken by other colleges. The 'entitlement' statute remained in force but could not be honoured.

The University sought a legal opinion, which was that the University might face litigation by the 'entitled' disappointed of their reasonable expectation of Fellowships. The Colleges were begged to create enough Fellowships to avert this danger for the moment. It was thought a rota might ensure that colleges would meet the need in turn as it arose and there was agreement in 1987 to try that, with a committee of three to decide the 'allocations'. That inevitably sometimes ran up against the autonomy of colleges.

Continuing Education was now developing in a direction which encouraged a bid to turn it into a Society. Rewley House, now Kellogg College, was created in 1989-90 as a new Society, with the Chancellor of the University conferring the positions of President and Fellows at a ceremony on 11 May.[29] The 'President and Fellows' were constituted as the Society,[30] though it was not and is still not incorporated. It had the benefit of a building (Rewley House itself) already functioning well for the delivery of Continuing Education. It was funded at first by the University, which was already maintaining the building and paying the salaries of the academic employees and other staff providing Continuing Education.

Kellogg and St. Cross are still doing their share of providing Fellowships. However, nowhere in the published discussion of the purpose of the proposed Parks College does there seem to be any discussion of the contribution it might make to the continuing need to offer Fellowships to those who lack them. Nor is it yet clear whether Parks College would be able to address the difficulty of providing Fellowships for the many research staff without employment security. The Financial Statements for 2017-8 list 5,665 'Research staff' but without breakdown of the proportion not appointed to retirement age, or rehired as fixed-term RSIV employees after leaving a permanent post under the EJRA.

Perhaps a statistical breakdown by categories could be published so that Congregation could take an informed view of the scale of the problem. The Programme Board's Flysheet for 7 May admitted that Parks College 'will not of course be able to offer a Fellowship to all' those who may be entitled. This has significant implications for the role of the colleges in the society and economy of the University. Meanwhile the proposals for Parks College barely scratch the surface. They offer short-term Fellowships in name only within a narrow range of ('inter')disciplines, and manifestly not enough even of these poor relations of real Fellowships to make a dent in the number of the University's academic staff who might welcome a real College. It was, after all, another 'College' not a 'Society' which the Strategic Plan undertook to add to the University.

[1] *Gazette*, 21 March 2019.

[2] ***https://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/statutes/regulations/517-122.shtml***

[3] ***https://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/statutes/regulations/517-122.shtml***

[4] ***https://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/statutes/regulations/516-122.shtml***

[5] ***https://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/statutes/regulations/516-122.shtml***

[6] ***https://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/statutes/regulations/516-122.shtml***

[7] *Gazette*, 21 March 2019.

[8] *Gazette*, 21 March 2019, Regulation 7 stipulates only 'suitably qualified persons who are employed by the University'.

[9] Three chapters of the *History of the University of Oxford* (Oxford 1994), Vol.VIII, contain material on the creation of Societies: Keith Thomas, 'College Life, 1945-70', *History of the University of Oxford* (Oxford 1994), pp. 189-215; Brian Harrison, 'Government and Administration', *History of the University of Oxford* (Oxford 1994, Vol.VIII, pp. 683-719 [pp. 713-5]; Michael Brock, 'The University since 1970', History of the University of Oxford (Oxford, 1994), Vol.III, pp.739-774 [pp.742-4].

[10] *Gazette* (27 May, 1965), p.1222, Statuta Tit. XXIV, 1.

[11] *Oxford Magazine* (31 January,1963, p. 146).

[12] In such circumstances the University is able to terminate the employment even of staff whom it has employed for many years. See Statute XII, 13.

[13] *Gazette* (26 April, 1963).

[14] Franks Commission of Inquiry, *Report* (Oxford, 1966), Vol. I, p. 132.

[15] *Oxford Magazine* (31 January,1963), p. 146.

[16] Franks Commission of Inquiry, *Report* (Oxford, 1966), Vol. I, pp. 132-4.

[17] J.H.E. Griffiths, *Report of the Committee on the Long-Term Problem of Entitlement* (Oxford 1970), Supplement No.8 to *Gazette* (June, 1970), p.3,

[18] J. H. E. Griffiths, *Report of the Committee on the Long-Term Problem of Entitlement* (Oxford 1970), Supplement No.8 to *Gazette* (June, 1970), p.4.

[19] J. H. E. Griffiths, *Report of the Committee on the Long-Term Problem of Entitlement* (Oxford 1970), Supplement No.8 to *Gazette* (June, 1970), p.5.

[20] Michael Brock, 'The University since 1970', *History of the University of Oxford* (Oxford, 1994), Vol.III, p.743.

[21] Supplement no.5 to *Gazette* (May 1972), an asterisked item, listed but not circulated with *Gazette*.

[22] *Gazette* (3 May, 1972), pp. 785-6.

[23] *Gazette* (3 May, 1972), p. 787.

[24] *Gazette* (16 May, 1972), p.867.

[25] *Gazette* (16 May, 1973), pp.863-873.

[26] *Gazette* (16 May, 1973), p.867.

[27] *Gazette* (16 May, 1973), p.868.

[28] *Gazette* (21 June, 1984), p. 812.

[29] *Gazette* (14 December, 1989), pp.394-5; *Gazette* (1 February, 1990), p.518, adding to Statuta (1987), Tit. VII, s.v.

[30] Whereas it is expedient to establish the President and Fellows of Rewley Huse as a Society of the University.

Cambridge and the Exclusion of Jordan Peterson

NIGEL BIGGAR

The facts are these. Jordan Peterson is a fully paid-up and tenured professor of psychology at the University of Toronto, who, earlier in his career, taught at Harvard. In a letter of 19 February he was offered a visiting fellowship by Cambridge University's Divinity Faculty, which had been formally approved by the Faculty's Research Committee.

The following month, on Monday 18 March, Peterson referred to the offer on his YouTube channel. Two days later, on Wednesday 20 March, news that the Faculty had cancelled the fellowship was first published on Twitter by the Cambridge University Students Union (CUSU) at 5.55am, followed shortly by the Faculty at 5.58am. The Faculty did not communicate the decision to Peterson himself until 9.01am, when it sent an email, which simply announced that "the Committee which offers visiting fellowships has reconsidered your application with care. After further deliberation the Faculty has decided to withdraw the offer of a visiting fellowship". No explanation was offered.

Later that day, the *Guardian* reported a comment on the decision by a University spokesperson, saying that "[Cambridge] is an inclusive environment and we expect all our staff and visitors to uphold our principles. There is no place here for anyone who cannot". On Monday 25 March, the University's Vice-Chancellor, Stephen Toope, made a formal statement, explaining that "early last week, the Faculty became aware of a photograph of Professor Peterson posing with his arm around a man wearing a T-shirt that clearly bore the slogan 'I'm a proud Islamophobe'. The casual endorsement by association of this message was thought to be antithetical to the work of a Faculty that prides itself in the advancement of interfaith understanding". And he added, "Robust debate can scarcely occur … when some members of the community are made to feel personally attacked, not for their ideas but for their very identity".[1]

These facts reveal two remarkable things. The first is that the Faculty communicated its decision to CUSU, and tweeted it abroad, before it wrote to Professor Peterson. What this suggests is that the Students Union was the source of pressure to rescind the offer, and that the Faculty was so eager to appease them that it was willing to behave in a grossly discourteous, indeed humiliating fashion to a Canadian colleague. It's also worth noting that, while it confidently claimed that Peterson's "work and views are not representative of the student body", CUSU itself has little claim to be representative: like student unions throughout the country, it occupies the attention of only a small minority of students and commands the political loyalty of even fewer.

The second remarkable feature is the reluctance of the University to back its decision with reasons, for which it could be held accountable: it gave none at all to Peterson himself, offered the press only a vague reference to the fuzzy norm of 'inclusiveness', and then – a full week later – appealed to a single, ambiguous photograph. Of all institutions, universities should model the giving and taking of reasons, offering well considered rational explanations, exposing them to criticism, and either rebutting it or yielding to it. Cambridge's reluctance to be rationally accountable was a betrayal of its vocation.

What's more, the poverty of the reasons it did eventually give do little to uphold its reputation as one of the premier institutions of higher education in the world. 'Inclusiveness' might look nice and play well, but it barely

survives a moment's scrutiny. To begin with, it's not indiscriminately welcoming. Indeed, in the case of Jordan Peterson it was used to exclude. So in order to know what to make of it, we need to know the criteria of discrimination.

Enter the Vice-Chancellor with his distinction between ideas and identity: all ideas and identities are welcome, except those that make people feel personally attacked, threatening their identities. But this doesn't really work either. Certainly, no one should have to suffer intemperate contempt or gratuitous insult, and especially not just because of their skin colour or place of birth or social status or the orientation of their sexual desire. But identities are more than that: they're not just accidents of fate, but involve choices. Not every homosexual chooses to be 'gay' (in the sense of 'out and proud'). Not every person of non-white hue chooses to identify themselves with ancestral victimhood. Not every citizen of the United Kingdom chooses to call themselves 'British'. Not everyone born a Christian or Muslim chooses to remain a believer. Identities involve interpretations of facts, interpretations involve ideas, ideas are chosen, our choices are accountable to reason, and what's accountable is fair game to criticism.

For sure, lots of us are personally invested in our chosen identities, and deeply attached to the ideas they involve. As a self-consciously Anglo-Scottish Briton, I lost nights of sleep in 2014 worrying about the prospect of losing my identity to Scottish independence. And as a Christian, I find the lazy contempt of ignorant atheists very irritating. But that doesn't mean that my identity as a Briton and a Christian should be beyond criticism, does it? So the fact that some students are upset by certain views, become indignant about them, or even feel existentially threatened by them, is not a reason to exclude those views. Rather, it's a reason to teach the students the virtues of courage, self-restraint, patience, and critical openness necessary to cope with alien ideas liberally and responsibly – which is a university's most important civic duty. No doubt some members of CUSU are really irked by what Jordan Peterson has to say, but that's hardly a reason to exclude him. Besides, judging by his packed reception at the Cambridge Union in November of last year (as at the Oxford Union the previous May), thousands of students find his views interesting, convincing, and indeed exhilarating.

But what about that photograph? What about the damning evidence that was supposed to explain how Peterson had violated the norm of inclusiveness – namely, by casually endorsing Islamophobia? One question this raises is how exactly 'Islamophobia' differs from criticism of Islam, since it's a common ploy these days to dismiss any criticism as 'phobic', just as many Zionists dismiss any criticism of Israeli government policy as 'anti-semitic'. But that question doesn't need tackling until we've first established that Peterson did indeed endorse Islamophobia – whatever it is. And that needs establishing, since he himself was not wearing the T-shirt. So what was the context? Had Peterson just finished giving a rabble-rousing speech to the New ZeaIand Society of Muslim-haters, for example? No, the banal truth is that the photo was just one of 30,000 taken with fans at live events in the past fifteen months. Angela Tilby's description seems on point: "The picture showed a glazed eyed Jordan weakly smiling for the 100th time as his misguided fan preened for the camera" (*Church Times*, 5 April, 2019). Did Jordan even have time to take in what was on the T-shirt? Or did he see it, realise the danger, make a sharp intake of breath, decide not to make a fuss, and grit his teeth? We don't know.

Of course, if we did know that Peterson had a record of expressing indiscriminate hatred and contempt toward Muslims, then we could reasonably infer that his momentary physical association with the T-shirt was also an endorsement of its message. So does his record damn him? Not as far as I can tell, and certainly not as far as the University of Cambridge has shown. Had a member of the Divinity Faculty's Research Committee googled 'Jordan Peterson Islam', as I have just done, they would have discovered, seven items down the page, an article written by Bilal Muhammad and published in August 2018 by the Berkeley Institute for Islamic Studies. Muhammad is critical of Peterson's lack of nuance, but nevertheless reports that "when asked about Islam, Peterson humbly clarified that he had not done much research on the topic and would be open to dialoguing with 'moderate Muslims'". He also reports that Peterson has inadvertently acquired something of a Muslim following.

So Stephen Toope had no good reason to infer from a single, ambiguous photograph that Jordan Peterson endorsed 'Islamophobia'. He failed to ask the obvious questions that any fair-minded observer would have asked. He, along with his colleagues, rushed to judgement. But why?

The full significance of Cambridge's reaction in this case only becomes clear when related to an earlier one. This occurred in December 2017, when my 'Ethics and Empire' project attracted three online denunciations, one of them led by Dr Priyamvada Gopal, Reader in Cambridge's Faculty of English and a Teaching Fellow at Churchill College. Dr Gopal's earliest tweet ran thus: "OMG. This is serious shit"... "We need to SHUT THIS DOWN"[2]. This was then followed by others that described me as a "racist" and a "bigot", and whatever came out of my mouth as "vomit". All this in reaction to my modest view that 'empire' can mean a variety of things, is capable of good as well as evil, raises ethical questions worth thinking about, and requires sophisticated moral evaluation.

Incontinent abuse on Twitter is, sadly, so common as to be unremarkable. But this was remarkable, since its author is a senior academic at one of Britain's most prestigious universities. So in January 2018 I decided to write to the relevant heads of college and faculty. I had no complaint about being at the sharp end of criticism, for that comes with the academic territory. Besides, in this case there was none to complain about: criticism requires an objection supported by reasons, but these tweets didn't rise above the level of spitting hatred.

No, my complaint was about the uncivil manner. I held that this was an inappropriate way for one academic colleague to express disagreement with another, and, more important, that it was an appalling example to set students. I could have added that, if a university teacher is seen to treat an academic peer with such hissing contempt, then students are likely to be intimidated and discouraged from speaking their dissenting minds. So what did the two heads plan to do about it?

Nothing. Neither could bring themselves to say that the Twitter conduct I reported was wrong. Dame Athene Donald, Master of Churchill College, managed to admit that it wasn't "as temperate as one might hope for". Peter de Bolla, Chairman of the Faculty, kept safely clear of any moral judgement, arguing that such speech is simply con-

ventional for its medium, albeit in tension with "accepted manners or styles of address" in more traditional contexts. Neither touched the issues of a teacher's responsibility to model behaviour. And both upheld their colleague's legal right to behave as she did, invoking "freedom within the law".

Later, in April 2018, after Dr Gopal had come under severe criticism in the press, Professor Martin Millett, Head of the School of Arts and Humanities at Cambridge came to her defence, stating that "The University upholds freedom of speech as one of its primary values, as we have already made clear in response to media enquiries about Dr Priya Gopal. We would also add that we abhor personal attacks of the nature currently being directed at Dr Gopal".

The fact that the issue was not one of freedom of speech, but rather of its abuse, somehow seems to have escaped every one of these institutional leaders at Cambridge. And the fact that Dr Gopal's behaviour appears to have violated their university's own Social Media Guidelines seems to have bothered them not at all. Those Guidelines state that "digital communications by staff should be professional and respectful at all times", that staff should "be respectful to all parties … [and] express opinions … in a balanced and measured manner", and that "unacceptable conduct (e.g., defamatory, offensive, harassing content) will be considered extremely seriously by the University of Cambridge". But evidently not in the case of Dr Gopal and her like.

When one puts Cambridge University's serial inaction in the case of Dr Gopal alongside its precipitate action in the case of Professor Peterson, what is revealed is this: the University does in fact discriminate on the unjustifiable grounds of race, gender, and above all morals and politics. If you're non-white, female, and aggressively 'woke', then you'll be accorded maximal benefit of doubt, given a pass on official norms of civility, and let free to spit hatred and contempt on social media. However, if you're white, male, culturally conservative, and given to expressing reasoned doubt about prevailing mores, you'll be given no benefit of doubt at all. And, should you do so much as appear to transgress ill-conceived norms of inclusiveness, you'll be summarily and rudely excluded.

The implications are grim. Students or academics who are thinking of applying to Cambridge for a place on a course, a teaching or research post, or just a visiting fellowship, should either scrub their records clean of anything that might appear transgressive of the reigning orthodoxy, or turn elsewhere. And if they do get to be included, then they should take care to suppress their doubts, bite their critical tongues, and go into Inner Exile.

I take no pleasure at all in saying all this, since in talking about 'Cambridge' I'm also talking about friends and colleagues. But the conduct of University's institutional leaders in the Gopal and Peterson cases has done serious damage to the cause and substance of intellectual freedom – and thereby to its own reputation. If that damage is ever to be repaired, it will require the University to become alert to its own lack of moral and political diversity, to the distinction between accidents of fate and idea-infused-identities, to another distinction between disturbing criticism and abusive manner, and to the fact that woke members of CUSU are not the only ones watching. Then, when the penny has dropped, it needs to muster the courage to issue a public apology to Jordan Peterson.

[1] See; *The Times*, April 4th 2019 ***https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/cambridge-has-double-standards-on-free-speech-7cl2d6qgr***; The *Article*, 2nd April 2019.

[2] See; '"Ethics & Empire" and Free Speech – some home truths', *Oxford Magazine*, No. 391, 0th Week, HT 2018.

Power Politics on Campus

ALMA PRELEC

Laura Kipnis' *Unwanted Advances** is not a (literary) safe space. What it is, however, is a testimony of sorts; where Kipnis, a Professor and cultural critic based at Northwestern University, outlines her experience as the target of two *Title IX* sexual harassment complaints, following the publication of an article criticizing the law's broad implementation on North American university campuses. Kipnis situates herself within a larger debate concerning the increased power of administrators in higher education, in what the author designates as the 'Dear Colleague' era.

Title IX, an American civil rights law, was originally formulated in 1972 to protect women from discrimination in university sport programs. In the past few years, it has morphed to cover broad categories of sexual harassment, leading to investigations of sometimes clear, and sometimes murky, retrospective allegations. In 2011, the new, expanded terms of the law (whose applications can range from rape accusations to the prohibition of consensual relationships between faculty and students) were sent to universities by the OCR, the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights. This set of guidelines is known as the 'Dear Colleague Letter' – hence the brave new world to which Kipnis refers.

In response to the new *Title IX* environment, Kipnis wrote *Sexual Paranoia Strikes Academe*, a piece published in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* in 2015. In the article, she deconstructs the new paradigm of campus dating politics ('The Great Prohibition', she calls it). Though Kipnis also touches on affirmative consent and campus drinking culture, her central topic of concern in the article and in *Unwanted Advances* is that *Title IX* infantilises adults (read: women), particularly with respect to the professor-student taboo. The right to engage in illicit relationships is an unusual bone to pick in these tense, post-#MeToo times, particularly for a self-declared left-wing feminist; but it is also one that provides Kipnis with plenty of material to explore what one senses is the real power-dialectic that bothers her: the 'bad romance' between administrators and faculty.

In a surreal series of events, a group of students protested against Kipnis' publication, claiming her article had a 'chilling effect' on them. Subsequently, Kipnis became the subject of two *Title IX* accusations herself. Academics reading of this situation – a university professor implicated in a sexual-harassment complaint by virtue of writing an essay – will probably also be chilled, though in a different manner, one imagines, than the protesting students. Kipnis employs the reaction to her article and to her subsequent investigation as the backdrop to *Unwanted Advances*. This backdrop then allows for a focus on the case of Peter Ludlow, former Professor of Philosophy at Northwestern, whom Kipnis uses as a case study to explore the life-altering consequences of *Title IX* excess. The text closes with the author's own views on sexual normativity on campus, on the limitations of consent workshops, and on the political ramifications of *Title IX*, with respect to both academic free speech and contemporary feminism.

If an uncomfortable yet unacknowledged truth is the proverbial elephant in the room, *Unwanted Advances* presents the reader with a veritable zoo. Thus the title, which on first glance would appear to refer to sexual improprieties, more accurately refers to growth in university administrative systems and changes in feminist thought (advances which Kipnis believes to be retrograde). On this first note, Kipnis outlines how vast amounts of federal funding contingent on *Title IX* enforcement have left professors at the mercy of a group of administrators whose salaries effectively depend on *Title IX* overreach. In other words: no complaint, no payday. Deference to funding in higher education is a topic worthy of its own book, but Kipnis is able to cover a fair amount of ground in the chapters devoted to the phenomenon, expositing how investigating these cases can cost universities hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Kipnis further argues that *Title IX* fails to account for the messy and often ambivalent nature of sexual desire. It is not necessary to refer to Foucault (though Kipnis does) to understand that power is fluid; that every relationship – on and off campus, platonic or otherwise – will inevitably betray a hierarchy. Rather than acknowledge the ambiguity inherent in all human interaction, *Title IX* offers its own dangerous message to women, creating a system that Kipnis argues is 'devoted to persuading a generation of young women that they're helpless prey' (p. 90). At this point, it becomes evident that Kipnis is less interested in the faculty/student relationship per se (nor does she exhibit any sort of sentimentality in this respect), but rather on the feminist implications of suggesting that an adult woman is incapable of saying no to a workplace senior or colleague – even when, as is often the case, this colleague has no grading power or career influence over her.

There is an old witticism that academic gossip is the glue that holds universities together. If this is true, Kipnis has given higher education a lifeline. And yes, *Unwanted Advances* is funny; the Ludlow case is lurid and fascinating at the same time, like a motorway accident or a bad soap opera. It is difficult not to side with Kipnis when she presents the political intricacies of bureaucratic overreach, the faculty members (and graduate students) employing *Title IX* to avenge old feuds, and the absurdity of the modern-day university system, all-too-often operating in *loco parentis*. These are all topics which are touched upon by the author with a considerable amount of humour and irony. But, as with many jokes, there is something more serious at stake here. In this respect, *Unwanted Advances* is not so much about *Title IX* as it is a reflection on the price (both literal and symbolic) of deferring questions of agency and sexual autonomy to a nebulous paternalistic organization with questionable financial motives and a distinct distaste for nuance. Can such a shift in power-politics really be considered feminist? Kipnis doesn't think so, and makes a compelling – if uncomfortable – argument to this effect.

* Laura Kipnis. *Unwanted Advances* (London: Verso, 2018), pbk £12.99.

Turning a blind eye

DAVID PALFREYMAN

In '*The Diversity Bargain: and other dilemmas of race, admissions and meritocracy at elite universities*' (University of Chicago Press, paperback edition 2019) a Harvard associate professor, Natasha K. Warikoo, lifts the stones covering immoral practices around undergraduate admissions to the US Ivy League. Her interviews of students are mainly from Harvard and Brown, but unusually for an American academic writing on HE she shows awareness that universities exist beyond the USA and here has some material concerning our very own Parish.

While it is well known that the pampered children of the American privileged classes are helped into such places as Harvard, Stanford, Princeton, and Yale by their well-heeled parents (often alumni) making timely and sizeable donations to the relevant institution, there has been little written about how these kids see that process. It is a process that, I think, most of us in Oxford would find a tad distasteful if not downright immoral, both on the part of the family and also of the university – although the Bursar in me can see how the 'sale' of places in this way could rather helpfully swell the Endowment!

And that the bulging Endowment of an Ivy League Harvard or Yale, of course, duly pays vast salaries to the faculty at such elites perhaps explains why the academics seem somewhat silent on this matter, turning a blind eye to their institution's immorality – when, since they are otherwise generally pretty 'woke' and lefty, we might have expected them to be protesting about this 'thumb-on-the-scale' or 'legacy admissions' affirmative action process for privileged whites. At

the time of writing we have also now heard of shady practices becoming positively illegal as the FBI arrest some 50 bods – including parents – accused of being involved in both a SATS cheating ring and also using the crazy US university's fixation with athletics as a route to smuggle in their decidedly unathletic offspring through chunky bribes to the University Coach in tiddlywinks or whatever.

Over here the route through to our No. 1 Uni and No. 2 Uni is via middle-classness, the family buying independent school education or affording housing in the catchment area of a posh comp. Hence Oxford admits a politically unacceptably high number of its Fresher customers from some half-dozen 'top' schools with unbelievable fees. It remains to be seen whether over the next few years the increasing pressure being applied to both universities by the OfS and the Access Tsar will see, say, 250-300 such places *p.a.* shifted to, say, a half-dozen inner-city academy schools as we discover effective outreach, diversity, and inclusion – and as such academies get better at preparing their under-privileged students for our admissions process, in the same way that the independents coach and prep in return for those stonking fees.

If such a measurable change were actually ever to begin to happen, I do wonder whether all the alleged support for greater social inclusion – even within the Conservative Party – would hold up as Middle England realise that their precious ones, in whom so much by way of school fees has been invested, might not thereby have a golden ticket to Oxbridge because the bus is full of other sorts of applicant. And, since elite universities are colonised the world over by the children of elite socio-economic groups wanting to acquire the scarce positional good of putting the Ivy League or Oxbridge or the Grand Ecole on the CV, one might expect a bit of a back-lash: including from Labour MPs and champagne socialist Labour supporters who also buy their way out of perceived State school squalor.

Anyway back to those interviews with those privileged students at Harvard, Brown, and Oxford. The author gets the concept of 'The Diversity Bargain' from interpreting the students' comments as follows, bearing in mind that some of the US elites do have a very clear (and at present legal) positive discrimination policy re admitting blacks:

> *'In the United States we have seen the "diversity bargain" at work, in which white students supported affirmative action as long as it benefited them, namely through exposure to new perspectives [having moved from an overwhelmingly white neighbourhood/school to the more ethnically mixed campus on 'going to college']. This led them to expect black and Latino students to integrate with their white peers and that affirmative action should not go "too far", such as whites begin to feel disadvantaged by it.'*

While over in Oxford...

> *'The British diversity bargain was different. The students we spoke with in Britain did not support affirmative action, whether by race or by class [in the weak form of contextual admissions that helps with the former, let alone if ever Oxford went for lower entry-grades and even quotas in relation to the latter dimension as the rather limited concept of 'positive action' that can be lawful under the Equality Act 2010]. One benefit of this perspective was that [in contrast to their US counterparts] they did not question the deservingness of their peers on campus [to be there at all if admitted by way of affirmative action in the name of achieving the desired diversity of the Freshman class as at some US Ivy Leagues – although a pending court case and recent actions by President Trump may well undermine the legality and practicality of such positive discrimination as (re-)upheld by the US Supreme Court only a few years back...].'*

And she adds in relation to Oxford that 'students imagined no role for Oxford in changing the pattern of minority and working-class underenrollment and left it to the broader British society and education system to address the problem.' – indeed Oxford students see 'underrepresentation as an important social problem but not Oxford's problem'. These interviews, however, were conducted some five years back and one assumes that the 'no role' line would not now be taken, or at least not by JCRs and OUSU (whatever some individual students might still feel). Thus, Warikoo concludes:

> *'So white students in both countries [well, at three elite universities] adopted a race-related 'diversity bargain' with respect to their views on inclusion and admissions...'.*

David Palfreyman is a Member of the OfS Board but does not here express any OfS policy or thinking, and is rightly barred as conflicted from any Board discussion of Oxford University as now an OfS registered 'Higher Education Provider'.

Lenny 'n' Liz

BERNARD RICHARDS

Leonardo da Vinci died 500 years ago last week. He is one of the three or four greatest of the Renaissance artists, and the most intriguing. It would be impossible in this short article to justice to his wide-ranging achievements. I want to concentrate on one aspect: what impact did Walter Pater's famous evocation of the Mona Lisa in *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry* 1873) have on Richard Burton's when he first encountered Elizabeth Taylor ?

Pater's passage on the Mona Lisa was recycled as poetry by W.B. Yeats, and is the first poem in his anthology *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse* (1936) – the version given here:

She is older than the rocks among which she sits;
Like the Vampire,
She has been dead many times,
And learned the secrets of the grave;
And has been a diver in deep seas,
And keeps their fallen day about her;
And trafficked for strange webs with Eastern merchants;
And, as Leda,
Was the mother of Helen of Troy,
And, as St Anne,
Was the mother of Mary;
And all this has been to her but as the sound of lyres and flutes,
And lives
Only in the delicacy
With which it has moulded the changing lineaments,
And tinged the eyelids and the hands.

When in 1953 Richard Burton first met Liz Taylor at Stewart Grainger and Jean Simmons' swank house in Bel Air his response was under the aegis of Shakespeare's Dark Lady of the Sonnets and Pater's view of the Mona Lisa as a *femme fatale*. It is described at length in *Meeting Mrs. Jenkins* (1966). This cryptic title refers to the fact that Burton's birth-name was Jenkins.

'I was enjoying this small social triumph, but then a girl sitting on the other side of the pool lowered her book, took off her sunglasses and looked at me. She was so extraordinarily beautiful that I nearly laughed out loud. I didn't, of course, which was just as well. The girl was not, and, quite clearly, was not going to be laughing back. I had an idea that, finding nothing of interest, she was looking right through me and was examining the texture of the wall behind. If there was a flaw in the sandstone, I knew she'd find it and probe it right to the pith. I fancied that if she chose so, the house would eventually collapse.

I smiled at her and, after a long moment, just as I felt my own smile turning into a cross-eyed grimace, she started slightly and smiled back. There was little friendliness in the smile. A new ice cube formed of its own accord in my Scotch-on-the-rocks.

She sipped some beer and went back to her book. I affected to become social with the others but out of the corner of my mind – while I played for the others the part of a poor miner's son who was puzzled, but delighted by the attention these lovely people paid to him – I had her under close observation. She was, I decided, the most astonishingly self-contained, pulchritudinous, remote, removed, inaccessible woman I had ever seen. She spoke to no one. She looked at no one. She steadily kept on reading her book. Was she merely sullen ? I wondered. I thought not. There was no trace of sulkiness in the divine face. She was a Mona Lisa type, I thought. In my business everyone is a type. She is older than the deck chair on which she sits, I thought headily, and she is famine, fire, destruction, and plague, she is the Dark Lady of the Sonnets, the onlie true begetter. She is a secret wrapped in an enigma inside a mystery, I thought with a mental man-to-man nod to Churchill. Her breasts were apocalyptic, they would topple empires down before they withered. Indeed, her body was a miracle of construction and the work of an engineer of genius. It needed nothing but itself. It was true art, I thought, executed in terms of itself. It was smitten by its own passion. I used to think things like that. I was not long down from Oxford and Walter Pater was still talked of and I read the art reviews in the quality weeklies without much caring about the art itself, and it was a Sunday morning in Bel Air, and I was nervous, and there was the Scotch-on-the-rocks.

Like Miniver Cheevy I kept on drinking and, in the heady flow of the attention I was getting, told story after story as the day boozed slowly on. I went in swimming once or twice. So did she, but, lamentably, always after I'd come out. She swam easily and gracefully as an Englishwoman would and not with the masculine drive and kick of most American girls. She was unquestionably gorgeous. I can think of no other word to describe a combination of plenitude, frugality, abundance, tightness. She was lavish. She was a dark unyielding largesse. She was, in short, too bloody much, and not only that, she was totally ignoring me.... Eventually, with half-seasoned cunning and with all the nonchalance of a traffic jam, I worked my way to her side of the pool. She was describing – in words not normally written – what she thought of a producer at M.G.M. This was my first encounter with freedom of speech in the U.S.A., and it took my breath away. My brain throbbed; I almost sobered up. I was profoundly shocked. It was ripe stuff. I checked her again. There was no question about it. She was female. In America the women apparently had not only got the vote – they'd got the words to go with it.

I was somewhat puzzled and disturbed by the half-look she gave me as she uttered the enormities. Was she deliberately trying to shock me? Those huge violet-blue eyes (the biggest I've ever seen, outside those who have glandular trouble – thyroid, et cetera) had an odd glint in them. You couldn't describe it as a twinkle.... Searchlights can not twinkle, they turn on and off and probe the heavens and so on.

Still I couldn't be left out. I had to join in and say something. I didn't reckon on the Scotch though. I didn't reckon that it had warped my judgment and my sense of timing, my choice of occasion. With all the studied frenzy of Dutch courage I waded into the depths of those perilous eyes. In my best chiffon-and-cut-glass Oxford accent I said: 'You have a remarkable command of Olde-Englishe.'

There was a pause in which I realized with brilliant clarity the relativity of time. Aeons passed, civilizations came and went, brave men and cowards died in battles not yet fought, while those cosmic headlights examined my flawed personality. Every pockmark on my face became a crater of the moon. I reached up with a casual hand to cover up the right-cheeked evidence of my acne'd youth. Halfway up I realized my hand was just as ugly as my face and decided to leave the bloody thing and die instead. But while contemplating the various ways of suicide and having sensibly decided, since I had a good start, to drink myself to death, I was saved by her voice which said, 'Don't you use words like that at the Old Vic ?' 'They do,' I said, 'but I don't.'

This extract is a curious mixture of Welsh *hwyl* and aesthetico-decadent pretentiousness. I suppose Burton learnt about Pater from his Exeter College tutor, the latter-day aesthete Nevill Coghill. 'Older than the deck chair on which she sits' – clearly an allusion to Pater. This is a good example of the way in which experience is often directed and mediated, even in the process of reception, by a hoard of cultural preparation. The rest, they say, is hysteria.

Before becoming a don I thought I might be a historical advisor in the film industry, and had an interview at MGM at Boreham Wood while Cleopatra was being propelled along its rocky road. A director (whose legs rested on a leather-covered pouffe under his knee-hole desk) told me, 'My dear boy, what you must realise is that the film industry is an inverted pyramid, perched perilously on Elizabeth Taylor's nose.' Which put me off rather. I wouldn't have survived very long in the film industry, because I would have been telling them that 'flash in the pan' and 'the end of the line' were not the kind of phrases Julius Caesar would have been using. Not right either for the young Caesar to talk about 'crossing the Rubicon'.

I really ought to have sent in a long scholarly article on Leonardo's drawing of the ferry across the River Adda, done while he was a guest at his pupil Francesco Melzi's villa near Milan, and now in the Royal Collection (Melzi 133). Leonardo is credited with the invention of the 'reaction ferry', which takes advantage of the current of the

river. It's not the same principle as the cable ferry – the type at our very own Bablock Hythe ferry across the 'stripling Thames' (now gone alas) and the one that used to cross the Cherwell in Christ Church Meadow (anyone remember that ?). There is a 'reaction ferry' at Hampton Loade on the Severn, and there used to be one down-stream at Arley until 1972, when it was replaced by a spectacularly ugly metal bridge. The Leonardo is only a sketch, but much preferable to that kitschy $450 million concoction. I'm afraid this envoi is an example of apophasis. The classic case is in David Hare's *Plenty* (1985), when Susan Traherne (Meryl Streep) says she is not going to talk about Suez.

In the Tree

MARK LEECH

Winter light on Christ Church Meadows seems horizontal, illuminating half of everything and leaving the rest in chilly shadow. The walk along the Cherwell is full of intricately sharp lines, except where the water lies between the banks. Ripples interchange the blue of the sky and the yellow of the sun.

On the path side the mature trees are grand, venerable and widely spread, as though performing some arboreal tai chi at an infinitesimal pace. Their lines and their textures can be individually admired. Each can be gazed up into, as if into great constellations.

On the far bank, everything is scrubbier. Trees and bushes are elbow close. In summer, they are a busyness of leaves, but on a still November day they eye become lost drawing lines up and down and through the space.

That's not to say that there are no individuals here. Tall trees rise above the shrub line, extending towards the thin white clouds. Their colours are more various than the greys below in the bushes: lichens and mosses form collars and sleeves enhanced by the bright sun. And also up there, there is movement.

It's often the ears that convey the message first – cheeps, whistles and the rattle of twigs striking twigs as they sway under a bird's weight. Corners of the eye are also snared by flits and flickerings, entirely different from the more contemplative motions of the river.

One afternoon, between Headington and south Oxford, and tempted into a meander on my route, I stood opposite a bare tower, distracted even from my diversion by the crowds overhead. It was the goldfinches at first, rushing from branch to branch, always talking. One would skip a metre or so, a small bowl of a bird, then peck and bob excitedly for a second or two before its companions made their own small swoops – a momentary formation lit up by the sun. They were too far up to see clearly but I knew their calls and could easily imagine their bright red masks and the gold bands on their wings.

The jackdaws were altogether more sombre, sitting in ones and twos, strong silhouettes against the blue. They were waiting for something, it seemed, with a committed air. Occasionally one would shift position with a stern unfolding of wings, and the others would chak-chak-chak for a while. Then they would return to stillness. No doubt there was much looking from one pair to another up there, tilting of heads and other subtle communication among those intelligent birds. But to me, they were mostly as still as I.

Between those two species, in size and in activity, was a blackbird – a male, judging by the plumpness of his silhouette. He dropped from branch to branch, descending some way and then working back up, a note exploring a musical stave.

Like strange globes suspended in the tree by a conceptual artist, sprouts of mistletoe glowed a yellowish green. Some of the goldfinch activity focused on those uneven baubles, making them swing and shudder.

One more piece of gold met my eye in that long pause on the riverbank. As I watched the bustle above me, a bird with frantic wings arced into sight, went into a lopping dive, then burst into a flap to regain height before renewing the downward swoop. I recognised the size and the shape – a stocky frame, a dagger bill. It was a great spotted woodpecker, not an uncommon bird but a spectacular one. The sun flickered like strobe on its feathers as it continued its radio-wave flight through the tree and towards another.

Time passed without counting while I stood there. But at last two people came by talking and broke the spell.

REVIEWS

The First Days of Hitler

The Order of the Day: Eric Vuillard, 2018 Picador, £12.99.

This is a short–just 129 pages–book which deals with large scale and horrific 20th century themes–the outbreak of world war, the scheming and pusillinamity of politicians and industrialists, and the fate of Europe's Jewish population before, during and after the conflict.

Vuillard's original French text, translated into commendably free-flowing idiomatic English, is divided into 17 short chapters: one reviewer recommends taking the whole book at one gulp. The first two chapters describe a meeting in February 1933 which Vuillard signposts as the trigger for the whole ghastly business, attended by two dozen pin-striped German industrialists, Herman Göring and Adolf Hitler. That meeting, Vuillard writes, guaranteed the political, industrial and financial support of the 'twenty-four suits' for the Nazi programme–elimination of Communist, trades union and other opposition, *anschluss* with Austria, and the sweeping aside, scarcely worth mentioning, of protestations from other weak-kneed European (or American) governments.

By the end of the book, Hitler has met his end, his last days famously recorded in a different (but equally readable) sort of book by one of Oxford's more flamboyant 20th century historians. By then, too, Göring, Ribbentrop, the Austrian puppet Seyss-Inquart and others have faced the Nuremberg tribunal and been turned off by the British hangman John C Woods who, Vuillard alleges, liked to boast of having hanged 347 convicted criminals.

Small beer, of course, compared to the millions of Jews, gypsies, deviants and other undesirables beaten, shot, tortured or–probably the biggest killer of them all–starved to death in the aftermath of that 1933 meeting of sharp-suited businessmen and politicians. Vuillard's account ends, like Eliot's poem, not with a bang but the 1950s whimper of the industrialists, Krupps; they could, they said, no longer afford go on paying compensation to those who had survived wartime ill-treatment and their families: the money, Krupps said, had simply run out or, as Vuillard puts it, 'the Jews had cost too much.'

CHRIS SLADEN

Despite Adversity

The Afghan Women's Orchestra Oxford Residency.

It is not often that one can hear 'Greensleeves' played on a sitar or a full symphony orchestra performing Afghan songs in Oxford. It is even rarer to hear this music expertly delivered by a group of teenage girls from Kabul. But the musicians in Ensemble Zohra are used to being 'the first' in everything they do. Formed in 2015 by students at the Afghanistan National Institute of Music (ANIM), Zohra is the first all-women's orchestra in the country. With 30 girls aged 12–18 and two female conductors, Zohra represents remarkable progress in a country where, less than two decades ago, music was banned and women were prevented from getting an education. Many of these girls are the first women in their family to leave their villages, attend school, and study music despite governmental, and sometimes even familial, pressures. Half of Ensemble Zohra, having left their homes in the provinces, live in an orphanage in Kabul just to pursue their studies. Even in the city, they continue to be harassed by religious conservatives who target them online and even on their route to school. These threats of violence became even more potent after a 2014 bombing of a school concert took the life of one person and nearly killed the institute's director.

However, no traces of fear or intimidation could be found in the open and welcoming demeanour displayed by Ensemble Zohra during their week-long residency in Oxford this March. Following a series of concerts in Sweden, Zohra continued their tour with five public concerts, two school concerts, three conducting masterclasses, six rehearsals with different collaborators, and a well-attended panel discussion. Few professional musicians would be able to keep up such a schedule, but these girls conquered back-to-back 16-hour days with energy to spare—all while being 3,500 miles away from home. Highlights include packed concerts at the Sheldonian Theatre and Holywell Music Room as well as performances in the British Museum and Lancaster House in London.

Dr. Cayenna Ponchione-Bailey, assistant conductor of the Orchestra of St. John's and Junior Research Fellow at Somerville College, spent the past year finding a way for Zohra to visit the UK and work with as many local ensembles as possible. She certainly found many willing participants: during their residency, Zohra collaborated with renowned ethnomusicologists John Baily and Veronica Doubleday, the Orchestra of St. John's, Oxfordshire County Youth Orchestra, Harrow Young Musicians and Community Gospel Choir, Somerville Choir, and many OU musicians.

In attempting to connect English and Afghan cultures, the Zohra residency prompted numerous conversations on how to effectively blend these two sonic worlds. As is so often the case, the noblest ideals can often be foiled by pedestrian limitations. For example, bringing musicians from Afghan and Western traditions together in a single ensemble sent a strong message of unity, but what repertoire can such a group perform? Similarly, seating these diverse instruments alongside one another counteracts the overwhelming marginalisation of traditional music in classical genres, but if the winds and brass drown out the Afghan instruments' plucked strings, the resulting sound conforms to a long legacy of Western oppression and silencing.

Luckily, Ponchione-Bailey considered nearly every detail to make this integrated orchestra run as smoothly as possible. The girls selected the tunes which were then orchestrated by ANIM woodwind instructor and Oxford Alumna Lauren Braithwaite (MsT 2016) before being sent back to Oxford for distribution. Once the orchestra arrived and rehearsals commenced, Ponchione-Bailey created as hospitable an environment as possible, allowing tuning time for the instruments' collective 100+ strings and finding the most optimal way of amplifying an Afghan rubab.

However, despite Ponchione-Bailey's best efforts, the institutions and infrastructure of classical music in Oxford did present larger hurdles to her otherwise seamless concert series. The Zohra residency illuminated just how few music venues in the city can support a concert of Afghanistan's predominantly participatory music culture. The strict divide between performer and audience in the Sheldonian, Holywell, and the Wesley Memorial Church did not facilitate a particularly communal music-making experience. During performances at all three venues, audiences were invited to clap along to the pieces, a level of participation which was, at best, hesitantly entertained.

Similar moments of intercultural discomfort arose during joint rehearsals between Zohra and their British partners. While music is commonly touted, erroneously, as a 'universal language' and an 'equalising force', the power structures and hierarchies of a symphony orchestra

are anything but democratic. Coordinating responsibilities between section leaders, concert maestros, and conductors for two orchestras is a strenuous process for any two ensembles, but these groups also needed to traverse other divides, including age gaps of 20+ years, gender divides, varying degrees of musical ability, cultural differences, and language barriers. Who controls the beat in this mix-tradition orchestra—the conductor or the tabla player? Which concertmaster's interpretation is the authority? Who sounds the tuning note for a group with fourteen strings, nine woodwinds, and seven traditional Afghan instruments?

But the Zohra residency was not just about embracing the friction produced by these musical exchanges. In many ways it was also an opportunity for these teenagers to take a holiday from a country plagued by instability. The girls and their chaperones were able to partake in all that English culture had to offer, including locating Harry Potter filming sites, posing for pictures in front of the Radcliffe Camera, tentatively trying a full English breakfast in Somerville's hall, and singing along to a running soundtrack of Adele. Weary after a day of playing concerts and discussing women's rights in Afghanistan, we ate cheese pizza and listened to their favourite artists, Ahmad Zahir and Taylor Swift.

My time with Ensemble Zohra reminded me what a true privilege it is to have music in my life. These girls face significant adversity to be able to practice their craft, yet they do so with an impressive amount of self-possession and love for their art. I feel very lucky to have met these inspiring individuals, and I look forward to seeing where they go next.

ROSE CAMPION.

Through the Lens of Protest: Mexican Feminist Photography

Mexican Feminism in Protest: The Photography of Ana Victoria Jiménez, 1964-1990. Curated by Monica Lindsay-Perez.

On the 28th of February 2019, an exhibition opened in Wadham College antechapel. It traced the protest photography of Mexican feminist, Ana Victoria Jiménez. Not only was this the first exhibition of Mexican feminist photography in the University of Oxford, it was also the first UK exhibition of the photographs of Ana Victoria Jiménez.

Ana Victoria Jiménez was born in Mexico City in 1941. After joining the Communist Youth League of Mexico City, she became one of the founding members of the National Union of Mexican Women (Unión Nacional de Mujeres Mexicanas) in 1964. Emerging during a period of complex political instability, the Union followed Communist ideologies, arguing that feminism should be a class war rather than a gender war. Jiménez would go on to participate in many of the most important feminist movements, collectives, and protests in Mexico City between 1964-90. Her photographic archive is one of the largest feminist archives in the world. It illuminates and complicates histories of the Mexican Feminist movement.

The curator, Mónica Lindsay-Pérez, is an art historian from the University of Cambridge who is currently completing a Master's in Gender Studies at the University of Oxford. She met Ana Victoria Jiménez while working for the NGO *Fondo Semillas* in Mexico City last year. Since then, Jiménez and Mónica have met at the Iberoamericana University of Mexico City, where Jiménez's photographic archive is located, to discuss some of the most pivotal moments in Jiménez photographic career.

The ten themes of the exhibition included: Feminism and Communism, Feminism and Motherhood, Feminism and Fatherhood, Clashing Feminisms, Miss Universe, International Feminism, *Las Costureras*, A Wedding with Democracy, Race Day, and Abortion. Each theme concerned one of the major protests that Jiménez photographed in her life, from the Mother's Day protest of 1972, which criticised the conservative history of the holiday in Mexico, to the 1988 democracy protests that took place after the famously fraudulent election of the same year.

At the exhibition opening, a documentary was shown in which the curator interviewed Ana Victoria Jiménez. Jiménez elaborated the complex relationship between Mexican Communism and Mexican feminism. Originally interconnected movements, these ideologies separated in the 1970s, according to Jiménez. During her time with the UNMM, Jiménez campaigned for solidarity with Cuba and Vietnam. In the documentary, Jiménez explained that her mother had been a fanatic of Fidel Castro, leading Jiménez to become involved in the Communist Youth League of Mexico City, and eventually to become one of the founding members of the UNMM. Yet, by the 1970s, Jiménez says that Mexican feminist movements began forging their own paths, free from constricting partisan politics.

In the documentary, Jiménez, explains that they did not use the word "feminist" in the 1970s, preferring "feminine" or "women's" instead. "Was it seen as an imperialist movement?" asks the curator. "It was seen as a movement for white women, able-bodied women, educated woman, women already in power," says Jiménez. The documentary and the exhibition exposed the fraught relationship between Mexican and American feminists. While many women's movements in Mexico City remained local, seeing their causes as too different to be aligned with the American feminist movement, Jiménez tried to breach the gap later in her career. In 1979, she worked with American feminists Suzanne Lacy and Judy Chicago to stage the "International Dinner Party" in Mexico City.

The exhibition was fantastically complex, historically broad, and aesthetically beautiful. The photographs were hung on metal iron railings, hanging from industrial clips. The curator explained that the unusual set-up was due to the fact that the antechapel walls were too old to be used for hanging pictures. The end effect was striking, as the old stone walls could be seen through the rails, and lights placed below the rails lit up the metal contraption.

Exhibition opening guests moved from the ante-chapel to the candle-lit chapel to watch the documentary, which was displayed at the altar on a projector. It was overwhelming to realise that everyone was watching a film about feminism and seeing photographs of abortion protests in a religious space. It was a radical gesture of acceptance, topped off by the closing of the documentary, when Jiménez urged people to look "beyond official history textbooks" in their search for knowledge.

RACHEL ROBERTS

The Wonders of US HE

The Johns Hopkins University Press churns out more on the governance and management of (US) HE than any other publisher globally. Here are some brief remarks on just two of the latest.

Dean O. Smith, '*University Finances*' (2019), covers all the dreary stuff and gets strategically interesting only right at the very end: Gosh, US research focussed universities lose money hand over fist on their R-activity just like UK ones, the former recovering just about 70% of the overheads incurred. So, as in the UK, they need to subsidise that R part of the business from other sources of income – in the UK mainly via the profit made from charging hefty fees to International students, and in the US similarly from 'tuition' (fee income) but also in many instances from having endowment that is generally lacking this side of the Atlantic.

So, why bother with all that R? – it is all about the pursuit of prestige in that the R metric drives the global rankings and establishes the global brand at institutional level, while for the individual academic it defines their sense of professional value/purpose and governs career progression. Smith notes that the rest of the university's 'missions' will suffer from the distortion

of resource allocation involved in propping up R – from neglected maintenance to neglected undergraduate teaching. But, hey, it takes a while before ill-maintained buildings kill or maim their occupants and the poorly taught graduate whose employability has been enhanced by having the Top-Uni brand stamped upon them is hardly likely to shout that the Emperor lacks clothes.

Is it then the task of Government (perhaps, say, via a new HE regulator acting in the students' interest, acting for students) to seek to provide consumer protection for the paying punter? – by perhaps hoping belatedly to rebalance the distortions caused by a REF, say through obliging institutions to face a TEF?

Next we have the 2019 third edition of J.R. Thelin's excellent '*A History of American Higher Education*'. The author struggles hard in a new confused and confusing end chapter to justify the issue of a third edition only eight years after the last one. So we get coverage of US HE 'failing to heed storm warnings of deep campus schisms', exploring 'this myopia' on the part of HE governance and management as a 'leadership void' of bods 'depleted in vitality and saturated in obsolete strategies and worn-out leadership styles'.

The range of problems inadequately recognised, poorly assessed, and hardly faced includes: the astonishing diversion of effort and finances towards the crazy competitiveness of intercollegiate athletics; the over-expansion and over-paying of the management folk; the vast and fast-growing student debt mountain; the mess that is admissions policies; the distortion of donor-driven projects within fund-raising and endowments; over-powerful presidents suffering from 'arrogance and insularity'; campus over-building of glitzy infrastructure; squabbles over 'monuments and memorials' that leave 'the campus in conflict' and subject to 'internal combustion'; and professors as an 'imperilled profession'.

Yet the final paragraph is then a rather incongruous hymn to the wonders of US HE ('a model and a marvel'), replete with 'committed faculty and staff' making 'a concerted effort' to provide the 'going to college' bit of the American Dream – with its 'promising future in American life'.

DAVID PALFREYMAN

TO THE EDITOR

Lanuage Centre Library Closure

Sir – I write to deplore the proposed closure of the Language Centre Library, the dishonest manner in which the closure is being "spun" in the recent press-release, and the spurious "consultation" which the Centre's managers are pretending to engage in. It is quite clear that they wish to close the Library, and no contrary opinions will make any difference to that decision; their "consultation" is merely a façade, so that they can say, after the closure, that the library's users and supporters "were fully consulted" before the decision was made.

Let us look at the motives for closing the Library stated in the press-release. The "low and declining usage of the library" is based on statistics gathered by managers. As you know, such statistics can be manipulated, misread and misrepresented to show anything the manipulator wishes to show.

The "increasing availability of online learning materials" is the contemporary canard, the excuse for library closures in every quarter; it is true that more books, journals, manuscripts and course-materials are available on-line than ever before, but this data neither replaces hard-copy material available in physical libraries, nor does it make physical libraries obsolete as centres for access to and consultation of the totality of resources available, both hard-copy and digital. Neither does it obviate the need for professional librarians to act as gatekeepers to those resources.

The "need to increase efficiency" really means "the desire to save money". Where once responsible managers saw the intellectual and educational value of the stock and resources they managed, and of their front-line staff, now they see only a financial burden. Many of the current generation of library managers are not custodians of wisdom but mere bean-counters.

"Locating the relevant library resources in the Bodleian libraries would retain them for language study in Oxford, and preserve the diversity of language materials that has been built up" is a classic example of managerial weasel-wordage. What it means is that such resources would still be available, and would not be destroyed (the threat of such destruction as the alternative to our accepting the closure of the Library is implicit), but simply not in the library which now contains and provides access to them. These words seek to conceal the loss of the Library by spinning the transfer of its holdings as a benefit to the language community of Oxford.

"Better disabled access to the resources would become possible, and the resources would be accessible for longer opening hours than at the Language Centre." Here again I hear the voice of the weasel. The closure of the Library is being spun into a triumph by drawing attention to senses in which the central Bodleian accidentally, and inevitably, scores more highly than the Language Centre Library does. Of course it has better access for disabled readers (though that could be improved to the same level at the LCL if there was the will), and of course it has longer opening hours (though not in the Weston Library, which is open for shorter hours than was the case with the New Bodleian before 2012). This applies to many Oxford libraries outside the Bodleian -- should they all be closed and the stock transferred thither to "increase access"?

"The Language Centre is the University's hub for language learners, and we are committed to ensuring it continues to provide a high-quality service for students, staff and other learners. Part of the proposals focus on increasing investment in areas where there is strong current demand, for example for offering further teaching in Academic English, improving the AV facilities in the classrooms and providing sufficient well-equipped working space for our language tutors." Expenditure on teaching, AV and "working spaces" for tutors is all very well – but the Language Centre is making a grave mistake to spend money on these aspects of its work at the expense of its Library, which should be, and could continue to be, the heart and mind of the Centre. Any clear-sighted academic or student would, I think, view a "hub" without a Library as a body without its heart and mind, merely a mechanism.

Yours sincerely

PAUL W. NASH

Bodleian Libraries

History Library move

Sir – Not for the first time, G. R. Evans refers to the eviction of the History Faculty Library from the corner of Catte Street and Holywell to make way for the Oxford Martin School. But does she not remember the no less scandalous intrusion of the History Faculty Library into the building created for the Indian Institute, a scandal recalled every time one visited that library by the Sanskrit inscriptions at the entrance?

Yours sincerely

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