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"It's the final call, say scientists, in the most extensive warning yet on the risks of rising global temperatures. Their dramatic report on keeping that rise under 1.5 degrees C says the world is now completely off track, heading instead towards 3C. Keeping to the preferred target of 1.5C above pre-industrial levels will mean 'rapid', far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society. It will be hugely expensive—but the window of opportunity remains open."

It was in these terms that the BBC reported on the latest IPCC health check (Matt McGrath, 8th October, 2018). This IPCC Report (*Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C*) is, as usual, a master class in nuance and diplomacy—it bends over backwards to avoid exaggeration or alarm and every statement is qualified, and preferably quantified, according to the strictest scientific standards. But, as with cancer, the prognosis is a matter of 'how long' has the patient—in this case humanity—got left?

In this Report the scientists, many of whom are based in and around Oxford, have yet again spelt out the already well-established facts of the situation and they are clearer than ever. To reiterate their stark conclusions would be superfluous. In this issue of the *Magazine* we have invited viewpoints from across the whole wide spectrum of alternative disciplines represented in the departments of the University. It is interesting to note that (in our admittedly selected sample) there is nowhere any doubting of the reality of climate change or of the threat it poses. And yet that awareness seems to go along with a form of resignation. After all, the vast majority of intelligent, well-informed Oxford academics must have recognised and acknowledged the situation for many years now. So has anything actually changed?

This prompts the question: when will business as usual switch into crisis/panic mode and what will happen then?

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Reality Looms

This same question lies behind the recent exchange of viewpoints involving George Monbiot and David Attenborough. In an *Observer* interview (4th November) on the occasion of his latest magnificent TV series, *Dynasties*, Attenborough said:

"We do have a problem. Every time the bell rings, every time that image [of a threatened animal] comes up, do you say 'remember, they are in danger'? How often do you say this without becoming a real turn-off? It would be irresponsible to ignore it, but equally I believe we have a responsibility to make programmes that look at all the rest of the aspects and not just this one,"

The goal, he said, was to provide viewers with insights into wildlife that would then motivate them to get more involved.

"You want people to understand the wonder of nature. Some spin-off is that if they appreciate the wonder, then they care about it, and that's when it brings you to your other mission—which is to make people interested, then more likely to care and conserve, and become active in saving the planet."

In 2007 (21st January, BBC One) he had been clear; "Climate change is surely the single biggest issue the human race now faces... We now have the facts... For all of us, it's truly now the time to act." A conversion had apparently occurred in 2005 (as reported in *The Independent*):

INSIDE

CLIMATE CHANGE SPECIAL ISSUE

...and much more

"I was sceptical about climate change. I was cautious about crying wolf... But I'm no longer sceptical. Now I do not have any doubt at all. I think climate change is the major challenge facing the world. I have waited until the proof was conclusive that it was humanity changing the climate."

On 7th November George Monbiot, writing in the *Guardian*, took a very different position:

"His new series, Dynasties, will mention the pressures affecting wildlife, but Attenborough makes it clear that it will play them down. To do otherwise, he suggests, would be 'proselytising' and 'alarmist'. His series will be 'a great relief from the political landscape which otherwise dominates our thoughts'.I have always been entranced by Attenborough's wildlife programmes, but astonished by his consistent failure to mount a coherent, truthful and effective defence of the living world he loves. His revelation of the wonders of nature has been a great public service. But withholding the knowledge we need to defend it is, I believe, a grave disservice".

On present scientific projections Monbiot has every reason to take the position he does. We are at present at a point, as the new IPCC Report shows, at which the Paris agreements are not going to be met and global warming is probably heading for more than a 2°C rise over the next quarter century. The wildfires of California will be wilder—and the norm.

What is less clear is how many of us share in Monbiot's view. Is Attenborough correct in believing that the public is turned-off by talk of the reality of climate change? Or is this a new version of denialism? Do we really have to suppose that our fellow citizens have no concern for future generations? When and how do we reach a turning point at which the sense of urgency prevails and with it a willingness of the public to make the changes to their ways of life necessary to avoid mounting disaster?

B.B, T.J.H

Have your say

Last week an email was sent by Council to all staff headed: "Get involved with the Council self-review process". The aim of this important communication is to invite all the various sections of the University to take an active part in designing improvements in a dimension of our governance that is fundamental: "As Council completes its 2018 self-review it would like to engage with colleagues across the collegiate University on the matter of information flow, communications and dialogue with Council."

The implication is that Council has no preconceived plans for future changes, but that it recognises the failures in communication and dialogue that we have, for example, recently seen over pensions, EJRA and, less obviously, the Strategic Plan. We welcome and applaud the approach that Council is taking in first inviting ideas from the whole University body.

Without in any way prejudging what might emerge through the consultative processes outlined by Council in the email we put forward the following considerations as guidelines that might inform discussions concerning future improvements.

1. Congregation is the supreme legislative body of the University under our Statutes. It embodies our democratic structure. It can overrule Council. Congregation comprises all academic and academic-related staff as of right but stands to represent the interests of all other staff members.
2. Congregation can only work effectively in the determination of important policy decisions if it has been adequately informed in a timely manner on all the relevant issues. In contrast to current practice, this requires that Council agendas (and minutes) are made as fully available to staff as possible—and that staff are helped and actively encouraged to participate in policy making.
3. Given the constraints and formalities, meetings of Congregation in the Sheldonian are in practice best reserved for the most contentious and significant policy issues. There would be considerable advantages to establishing an additional alternative, but less formal, mechanism for concerned Congregation members to consult directly with relevant officers in Wellington Square as well as their elected members on Council. The design of such an alternative mode of operation of Congregation—based on regular information exchange—might be one ideal outcome of Council's self-review.

Theology and Climate Change

JAMES HANVEY

NOT only is climate change a fact, it is also a symptom. It is indicative of the profound impact that human technologies and life styles have on the planet. Although it raises immediate questions about our use of resources and the management of our environments, natural and human, it must inevitably present us with deeper questions about our relationship to our world, its meaning and status. Is our planet (and the universe) the 'gift' of a Divine reality the telos of which is intimately connected to our own? Or is it just a given, something that has come into being without any transcendent cause or purpose other than simply to be? Whether we see the world in an instrumental way, even when we choose to conserve it, or we recognise that it has a different and greater value in its own right, becomes critical for shaping our policies and behaviour. Given the enormous and growing power of human agency in the age of the Anthropocene, these ultimate questions cannot be ignored. As such climate

change and the deeper issues which it surfaces must be the concern of theology.

Climate change and the complex problems which it generates requires us to see it as more than a physical phenomenon but one that goes to the heart of human agency and values. No matter how brilliant our science and its technologies, unless there is a fundamental transformation in how we live and order our relationships to the natural world, solutions will tend to be pragmatic and temporary. Already, we can see that ecological stress caused by human activity exposes the limitations of our current economic, political and legal systems to regulate and reshape our needs to accommodate better the complex material and biosystems within which we live. If we are to move beyond well-meaning exhortatory rhetoric and achieve more effective responses, not only do we need to harness science and technology but our moral and spiritual imaginations as well. Theology is engaged in this task.

Reflection on the nature and meaning of the world and all its life-systems has always been a significant theme in theological thought. Practically, as well as theologically, the Christian churches have not been slow to urge the need to rethink our relationship to the environment and human action cf. for example, The World Council of Churches Conference (1990), “*Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation*” or *Laudato SI*, the letter of Pope Francis on ‘care of our common home’ (2015). When it is engaged in this reflection, theology is not a closed activity. It consciously seeks to learn from and engage with all the sciences and whatever other fields of enquiry that have the capacity to bring knowledge and insight. Of course, theology will enter this community of discourse with its own unique contribution: it not only encompasses rational and philosophical genres of thought but those of symbol, narrative, spirituality and a practice (liturgical and ethical). Always before it is a search for the wholeness of human reality illuminated and grasped within the horizon of the transcendent mystery which it dares to name ‘God’. Christian theology will make an even more audacious claim, one which challenges all our imaginative horizons when it speaks about the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ and his resurrection, the reality of which transforms our understanding of the potentialities of time and matter as well as the future glory of the whole created order. From this perspective, faith does not exempt us from acting to preserve and cherish the earth and all its life-forms, rather, it commits us more passionately to it. As the poet Robert Frost expresses it, ‘...earth’s the right place for love. I don’t know where its likely to go better.’

Some theologians have identified three broad theological-ethical approaches to the ecological challenges that face us: Eco-justice, Christian stewardship, and ecological spirituality. In many ways these approaches are combined in Pope Francis’ major essay ‘*Laudato Si*’. It advocates an ‘integral ecology’, the foundation of which is as obvious as it is profound: we all share a common home. This deep sense of ‘community’ is not the product of an eco-romanticism, it stems from the contemplative and metaphysical vision of a participative ontology of inter-dependence. It is combined with a prophetic sense of justice in the use and distribution of the planet’s resources. It sees that we need to break free of the rapacious cycles of exploitation and consumerism, to adopt more sustainable and modest life styles that will promote the good of future generations and safeguard the precious eco-systems of non-human life that also constitute the good of creation. This allows for scientific progress, but one that advances with a responsibility to the whole community of life. To do this effectively requires an epistemic as well as moral conversion. It is nothing less than a selfless love for all living things succinctly expressed by the 8th century Syriac theologian and mystic, St Isaac of Nineveh, ‘as a result of his deep mercy, his heart shrinks and cannot bear to hear or look on any injury or the slightest suffering of anything in creation.’ Here, the theological vision is radical, but it is one that might just save us.

Species death

KATHERINE MORRIS

LIKE many children, I was into dinosaurs.¹ This wasn’t because dinosaurs were ‘big’ and ‘scary’, or anything like that. It was in part because I was, in Iris Murdoch’s phrase, ‘a word child’, one of those annoying children who would chant the letters of such sesquipedalian words as ‘diplodocus’ and ‘stegosaurus’ and ‘antidisestablishmentarianism’ in the playground. But it was also because they were extinct. The sheer poignancy of the fact that these strange and wonderful creatures who had once dominated the planet no longer existed somehow struck me even at a tender age. Later, I would be equally moved when I learned of the demise of the dodo and the passenger pigeon; and much later, by the death of ‘Lonesome George’, the very last Pinta Island tortoise, who died in 2012 (though I was outraged by the trivialising nickname). Other species, as we know all too well, are now on the brink of extinction: the giant panda, the tiger, the blue whale, the Asian elephant, the polar bear...

The death of an individual (and not just a human being), often at least, brings grief to those who survive that individual; but what grief could possibly do justice to the death of a species?

We all talk about ‘the five stages of grieving’ in a manner that fits rather ill with the actual experience of grief.²

I have long thought that there is, at least sometimes, a sixth stage: that which leads someone whose partner has died of a rare disease to set up a charity to research it, or someone whose beloved cat has gone missing to take up work with Cats Protection, or someone whose mother has been killed by a driver talking on his mobile to seek to get the law changed and to increase awareness of the dangers of using a mobile while driving, or someone whose son has been the victim of an apparently random knife attack to try to discover and to remedy the social causes of knife crime.

Well, we know the causes of many species extinctions; although we (probably) can’t blame human beings for the demise of the dinosaurs, the species extinctions over the last few centuries, and the near-extinctions which we are facing today, have directly or indirectly been through the negligence or malign agency of human beings. The passenger pigeon and the dodo were hunted to extinction and the blue whale nearly so; poachers continue to kill elephants for their tusks and rhinos for their horns and tigers for trophies; many species are near extinction due to habitat loss and fragmentation, itself due to human farming and grazing practices, deforestation and

human-generated climate change. Will we, as a species, go on—seriously go on—to the sixth stage of grief?

‘It’s all very well to talk about grief; but most of humanity *doesn’t* grieve for the loss of species, so what are you getting at? It matters “to you”, as we say; but does it *matter* that this or that species disappears?’ How do we answer such a question?

Another glimpse of my strange childhood: when I read, aged about fourteen, about the action of yeast in fermentation—yeast converts glucose into carbon dioxide and ethyl alcohol, until eventually the yeast organisms themselves are killed off by the alcohol—I thought: this is what human beings are doing. (What a precocious little thing I was.) It is not just *other* species which will become extinct if we keep this up.

The *OED* defines ‘tragic irony’ as ‘the incongruity created when the (tragic) significance of a character’s speech or actions is revealed to the audience but unknown to the

character concerned’. Who is the audience, who the character here? (Are the gods laughing?)

‘Tragic’ irony? Would it be ‘tragic’? *Would* the loss of the human species *matter*? How do we answer this question?

¹ Apparently, it’s a ‘near-universal rule’ that ‘kids love dinosaurs’ (K. Morgan, ‘A Psychological Explanation for Kids’ Love of Dinosaurs’, *The Cut*, 6 Dec. 2017: <https://www.thecut.com/2017/12/a-psychological-explanation-for-kids-love-of-dinosaurs.html>). According to palaeontologist Kenneth Lacovara, “I think for many of these children, that’s their first taste of mastery, of being an expert in something and having command of something their parent or coach or doctor doesn’t know,” he says. “It makes them feel powerful. Their parent may be able to name three or four dinosaurs and the kid can name 20, and the kid seems like a real authority” (*ibid.*)

² See Rupert Read’s lovely piece ‘Can there be a logic of grief? Why Wittgenstein and Merleau-Ponty say “yes”’. In O. Kuusela, M. Ometite and T. Ucan, eds., *Wittgenstein and Phenomenology* (Routledge: New York and London, 2018), pp. 176–96.

An historical approach

AMANDA POWER

MANY tendencies and forces in contemporary society are arrayed against effective action on climate change, but one that has passed with little comment is the current state of public historical understanding. The fundamental social role of historians has been to create usable pasts that speak to the concerns of the present and aspirations for the future. Sometimes this has been a fiercely critical enterprise; sometimes less so, but broadly speaking, the principal narrative focus has been on trajectories that lead towards complex states operating in a globalised, urbanised, high-consumption and ostensibly egalitarian modernity. This is often told as the story of human triumph over the dangers and uncertainties of the natural world.

Our undoubted progress in technological expertise has been extrapolated into wider and less justifiable assumptions of advance over time in most aspects of human existence, especially in western and westernised societies. A progressive future must, then, take the form of an intensification of the technological, economic, political and cultural virtues of westernised modernity—even if not everyone agrees about which parts constitute the virtues. This view of history does not offer many alternatives to the ideas and practices that guarantee disaster to humanity, as well as to other living things on our planet. There is, of course, work problematizing every aspect of this picture. The enterprise of decolonising the discipline aims in part to interrogate the system of values on which it is based.

The burgeoning field of environmental history examines human societies in contexts ranging from the planetary scale to the immediacies of local ecologies. The work, begun decades ago, of restoring less heard voices, perspectives and experiences to mainstream historical narratives—those of indigenous peoples, women, slaves, serfs, peasants, working classes, and ethnic and other minorities—enables us to see the human costs of particular kinds of dominion, and to examine possibilities that

were muted in pursuit of the agendas that have predominated. But how might all this, together with other critical historical approaches, be marshalled to speak urgently and effectively to the needs of our time?

Various possible approaches are emerging, although not all are at present speaking directly to climate and environmental issues. Those coming from existing strands of historical enquiry can be broadly divided into studies investigating the causes of the contemporary situation; examinations of how past societies have interacted with nature and local ecosystems; and of their experiences during earlier periods of climate and environmental change. Some of these questions run together in investigations of how and why more ecologically stable systems have been deliberately destroyed by the interventions of expanding or colonising state structures: a phenomenon that can be observed in many places and periods from the earliest grain states to the present day.¹ This is particularly useful because it may help us to have a better idea of the damaging aspects of what seems to be a recurring sense of how the planet should be used and what human progress should look like, and of the corresponding impact of state building and state intensification on humans, animals and environments. Much of this work is being done within existing fields of global history, histories of empire, colonialism, industrialisation and modernisation, environmental history and intellectual history. Even where it is not written with the current crisis in mind, a growing array of studies provides the basis for new histories that are.

Robust interdisciplinarity is crucial to effective historical work of this kind. It would not be unreasonable to suggest that one of the major difficulties in speaking to the overwhelming complexity of the current situation is the disciplinarity that has dominated and circumscribed academic study. Must history be the study of humans alone, or can it be the study of entangled pasts of people, animals, insects, microbes, mushrooms, trees, forests,

oceans, even glaciers and stone?² Can it be the study of the past of a landscape without humans, or must that belong to another discipline? How flexible can we be in our conception of what has gone into the making of our Anthropocene era, and what has been lost? Certainly, histories drawing on earth sciences, geography, archaeology, anthropology, political science, and much else, are able to present a far richer picture of the human past than can be obtained by conventional, principally document-based, study.

For example, it is becoming clear that much can be added to our understanding of the old problem of why the Roman empire ‘fell’ when complicated and inter-related climatic and environmental factors are taken into account. Rome was an empire built during what is known as ‘the Classical Optimum’, a period of 600-800 years when global conditions were warmer and more stable, with drier summers and moderate precipitation in the winters. These supported the expansion of grain and wine economy of the Mediterranean into new regions.³ Conditions began to change between 300CE and the disastrous volcanic eruptions of 536CE, with a shift to colder, wetter, and less stable patterns, and a series of devastating epidemic diseases. The climate change was experienced globally, and in the same few centuries, the complex states of the Han in China, Gupta in India, the Maya in Mesoamerica, Nasca and Moche in Peru, and Teotihuacan in Mexico also ‘fell’.⁴

Historians have tended to be concerned with the fortunes of powerful states, partly because even when these do not leave extensive written records, their footprint is heavy enough to leave a lasting record in the regions that they dominated. It is also the case that in narratives of the triumph of human ‘civilisation’, the process of state-building and the reasons for setbacks to this process are of the greatest interest—especially to those who hope to continue the former and avoid the latter. However, when the focus of historical enquiry moves to a more general consideration of humans living and dying amid shifting conditions, and in non-state spaces, the advance and retreat of coercive state power and exploitation of the resources in its grasp comes to seem a far more ambiguous phenomenon. This is of course amply confirmed by the far better evidenced studies of the impact on peoples and ecologies of both the European empires of the post-1500 period, and the industrialising and interventionist states of modernity.

Life was undoubtedly harder in particular ways during the ‘Early Medieval Cold Period’—once known as the ‘dark ages’—that followed the ‘Classical Optimum’, but those who survived seem to have been healthier than in any subsequent period prior to the twentieth century; the epidemic diseases of the preceding years virtually disappeared; the landscapes of Europe recovered from some of the damage inflicted by their intensive cultivation; biodiversity improved; and people lived in ways that were better adapted to their local conditions. They may have been less hierarchical, and with reduced resources and less capacity for population growth of the kind required by expansive states, perhaps less sharply unequal, both in terms of social groupings, and in gender terms.⁵

It is neither realistic nor useful to take a nostalgic view of this or any other period of state retreat, but a view of the past that does not see such periods as episodes of unmitigated failure that punctuate a grand narrative of

civilizational advance is of obvious advantage in our present circumstances. If we are looking for less subtle lessons from this history, we could observe that unequal societies with acquisitive and unaccountable elites often prosper—or at least, expand their hegemony over surrounding populations—in beneficial climate conditions, but on the surviving evidence seem ill-equipped to act with resilience at the onset of less benign conditions. We could examine, as far as is possible, the strategies adopted by societies that did show particular resilience, or appear to have addressed existential threats in more humane ways.⁶ While for many obvious reasons, these cannot be templates for future action, they do once again underline the fact that humans have and can adapt, adopt radically altered lifestyles, expectations, aspirations and standards of living, and need not always aspire to more of the same thing that we have at present.

Most public discourse around climate change and other environmental challenges has been based on reactions to the findings of scientists. Those working in the humanities have, perhaps, understood their main role to be the communication of these ideas in culturally accessible forms. It seems fair to suggest that the invention of fictional dystopias produced by environmental, climate and biological disasters has been the most prominent and popular manifestation of this enterprise to warn widely of the shapes of societal collapse. It is now time to ask much more insistently in the humanities the question of what happens once the science is accepted as beyond doubt—as it now seems to be even by those who nonetheless refuse to be guided by it.

What should be the roles of scholars with expertise in studying the long centuries of human habitation of the dynamic environments of this planet? Historians can show the course of the slow development of what have become the fundamental values and assumptions of contemporary modernity, which are so profoundly ingrained in our patterns of thought that when people notice them at all, they regard them as merely self-evident and rational. It is by recognising the historicity and then questioning the validity of these premises that we are likely to be able to think radically as a society, rather than following our present course amid a failure of imagination.

¹ See James C. Scott, *Against the Grain: A Deep History of the Earliest States* (Yale University Press, 2017).

² E.g. Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *The mushroom at the end of the world: on the possibility of life in capitalist ruins* (Princeton University Press, 2015); Julie Cruikshank, *Do glaciers listen?: local knowledge, colonial encounters, and social imagination* (University of Washington Press, 2005); Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Stone: An Ecology of the Inhuman* (University of Minnesota Press, 2015).

³ For Roman exploitation of environmental resources, see Lukas Thommen, *An Environmental History of Ancient Greece and Rome*, trans. Philip Hill (Cambridge University Press, 2012).

⁴ As outlined in John N. Brooke, *Climate change and the course of global history: a rough journey* (Cambridge University Press, 2014).

⁵ Summary based on Richard C. Hoffmann, *An Environmental History of Medieval Europe* (Cambridge University Press, 2016).

⁶ Dagomar Degroot, *The frigid golden age: climate change, the Little Ice Age, and the Dutch Republic, 1560-1720* (Cambridge University Press, 2018).

Telling our Climate Change Stories

MARÍA DEL PILAR BLANCO

HURRICANE María made landfall in Puerto Rico, where I am from, on Wednesday, 20 September 2017, just 13 days after Hurricane Irma skirted the north of the island. The rest, we could say, has been a history that continues to unravel: an island in blackout for months (and, in some regions of the country, over a year); entire towns without clean water or any running water at all; 16 deaths that then turned into 3,000, and counting; a US president who treats such news from his country's colonial territory as fake concoctions of the opposing political party. In the days and months since Hurricane María thousands of Puerto Ricans moved to the US mainland, leaving their homes behind. Some of them have returned, but this pattern of migration has translated into another great diaspora of islanders. It is the largest displacement of Puerto Ricans since the 1950s.

In the years immediately preceding Hurricane María, the island was relatively safe from hurricanes. This storm made up for these years of comparative safety from the elements with a gross vengeance. It would be easy to explain this event as a mere accident of nature, the way that my grandparents used to speak to me about storms from the early twentieth century. Our cognition of seemingly historically distant disasters rests on a notion of sublime inevitability, making it difficult for us to reconcile them with the political ideologies of nations. Natural disasters are, we may think naively, out of our control. And yet, as I summarise above, the prehistories and futures of such catastrophes are intertwined with dramatic social realities—breath-taking death tolls, mass migrations being just two of them.

Scientists have been reminding us in recent decades that natural disasters are not so natural, and not so out of our control. Just to take Hurricane María as an example, in the months that have followed this catastrophe, we have been reminded time and again of the extent to which current weather patterns are induced by human behaviour. It has been an indelible reminder of our location in the Anthropocene. Oliver Milman reported in an article from 7 August 2018 in *The Guardian* how “[r]ising temperatures and increased precipitation caused by climate change is strengthening hurricanes... even as the overall number of storms remains steady”. As a result, the leaders of Caribbean nations that are most exposed to such powerful changes in weather patterns were calling on President Donald Trump to change his stance on the Paris Agreement. Puerto Rico's colonial status vis-à-vis the United States makes the reluctance of the current administration to acknowledge the effects of climate change even more urgent, as the unwillingness to make significant alterations in the attitudes of this superpower could very clearly signal the devastation of a whole society—one that is paradoxically still a colony in the post-colonial age—in a not-so-distant future.

Thanks to a grant from the Rothermere American Institute (RAI), I organised a symposium in Oxford in June 2018, *Puerto Rico After Hurricane María: Culture, Politics, Place*, to discuss the deep political roots of a catastrophe that some would like to write off as an accident of nature. My hope for this symposium was to gather people—Antonio Carmona Báez (political theory and history), Eduardo Lalo (novelist and artist), and Sarah Molinari

(cultural anthropology)—who could bring the different analytical strengths of the Humanities to bear on an analysis of what is happening in Puerto Rico now. Moving from discussions of human mourning to a critique of the cryptocurrency millionaires who have landed there in the wake of María, the speakers reflected on the island's multifarious history of disaster. Lalo offered these words to describe our situation as islanders: “A Category 4 hurricane produced by the rise in the temperature of the oceans caused greatly by the Industrial Age, levelled a living political fossil of reiterated conquests, a recurring colony that, for more than 500 years, has been a pawn in the world's political chess [game]”. The picture that Lalo paints here is one of intense resignation in the face of a political-natural landscape mired by inequality.

In a book I published on ghosts and haunting some years ago, I worked with a concept I called “landscapes of modern simultaneity”, which I used to describe the way in which the acknowledgment of simultaneity (that feeling that, as Benedict Anderson writes in *Imagined Communities*, comes about with the modern experience of newspaper reading) is, in essence, the experience of being haunted by the existence other subjects that are physically distant from us, but that we know are nevertheless living on as we live on. As I write this, Californians are dealing with wild-fires that are destroying lives and livelihoods across the state. An astounding photograph posted on social media showed migrant workers continuing to pick fruit under a red sky in a California farm while fires advanced nearby. A *New York Times* photo-article published on 15 November 2018 carries the headline “Your Children's Yellowstone Will Be Radically Different”. My island's story and these stories are simultaneous events that describe the complex tapestry of a singular global phenomenon. Such news items from our contemporary moment narrate not the illusion of natural stasis but the observation of an accelerating change to our landscapes, everywhere, at the same time. As our landscapes undergo such transformations, so too do our stories.

Concerned as they are with humans' ways of grappling with the world and how they remember, narrate and use them, the Humanities are crucial for an understanding of how we got to this point, what echoes we can find with our past, and what connects us across cultures. The symposium I describe is one small example of how this can happen at our university, and beyond: with the help of modern technology, the symposium was followed around the globe.

But there is much more that we can do. With the tools offered by a Humanities education, we learn what it is to be human and, one hopes, how to be humane. As migration continues to describe our landscapes of modern simultaneity, the Humanities can also inform and shape our ethical obligations to those who are displaced. One good example is the formation of new programmes that are helping to bring academics living in war-torn countries to the UK. It would seem crucial to consider now how we can similarly help those affected by climate change, how to collaborate with them, and that way bring about the kind of change that reflects our responsibility to all of humankind, everywhere.

The Challenge of our Generation: Solving Climate Change

FELIX HEILMANN and RUPERT STUART-SMITH

PRESIDENT Obama famously said that his generation is the first to experience the impacts of climate change, but the last that could do something about it. This carries a remarkable implication, if true: then we—young students at this university—would be the second generation to experience the impacts of climate change, but it would be too late for us to do anything about it.

In fact, as the latest report from the world's climate scientists assembled in the IPCC makes clear, limiting climate change to 1.5 °C and avoiding its worst impacts requires eliminating net emissions of carbon dioxide by mid-century: a task for the first three decades of our working lives. Having led, for over two years, the Oxford Climate Society, a student-run society dedicated to carrying the debate about climate issues into the student body and to informing the next generation of climate leaders, we know that many of our peers are committed to confronting this challenge. And we do believe that young people—not only at Oxford, but around the world—can indeed have profound impacts, both now and in the future.

Our experiences from engaging with students from a wide variety of backgrounds show, however, that the truth about the youth's attitudes and commitment toward climate action is not as straightforward as it is sometimes presented. Neither are all students self-centred hedonists who only care about material goods and social media followers, nor are all students fully committed climate activists driving the necessary progress on tackling climate change. Some students fit into one of these two boxes, but most do not. Realising this is important for anyone who wants to talk to and engage our generation on climate change.

We are enthusiastic and optimistic about the work that is done by all those students who take action against climate change, in this university and beyond—but this article will not be about preaching to the converted. Despite our disappointment and frustration with the small minority of others who remain apathetic to the realities of climate change and its relevance for their lives, we will not be side-tracked into giving them undue attention either. Instead, we want to talk about those that, we believe, make up much of the student body: students who—regardless of their political orientation—accept that climate change poses a serious threat which demands a robust response, but that have little history of being actively involved in climate action themselves. We want to share three insights on how this large part of the student body is engaging with, and can be engaged on, climate issues, based on our experience both as students at this university and at the Oxford Climate Society.

First, the awareness and acceptance of climate change as a serious issue is increasing. This is great news, and a crucial first step. Today more than ever, students are looking for jobs and internships in the renewable energy sector, are discussing how climate change is affecting our future over lunch and are attending public events on climate change and solutions. However, increased awareness does not automatically lead to students taking more action. The fact that the number of students interested in the issue has risen quicker than those actively involved in campaigning on the

issue is both a challenge and an opportunity to all those who think about, and fight for, climate action.

Secondly, it is crucial that discussions about climate issues are accessible to those who begin to think more about climate change but may not be seasoned thinkers on the topic. Accessible, in this context, means, firstly, that the language used needs to be easily understandable. This means, for example, talking less about uncertainties and COPs and more about tangible climate impacts such as the heat summer of 2018 and the ground-breaking climate action taken by actors across the world. We must also ensure that the suggestions given to those with which we engage are suitable for the respective audiences. It is, after all, unlikely that anyone will change their lifestyle or political convictions overnight. It is thus vital to create avenues for engagement, showing people why climate change matters through their own values and lived experiences. Every single contribution to climate action, whether it is in terms of personal behaviour or political engagement, is of great importance—precisely because no individual will be able to solve this problem on their own it is crucial to speak to everyone and engage them in the way that's most suitable for them.

Thirdly and lastly, it is important to recognise that not every student will become a climate activist—and not everyone has to be. Students have a broad range of interests, ranging from creating the digital economy of the future to fighting for social justice—or even just having an interesting career that allows them to collect interesting experiences. And this is far from being a problem: for a safe future, every sector of our economy must be decarbonised. Successfully tackling climate change is less about evangelising everyone into climate change activism, and more about centralising it as a consideration in all walks of life. Whatever professional path today's students may ultimately choose, they must recognise the importance of climate change and embed it in any decision-making they are involved in in the future.

The trends that we described above are mirrored in our experiences in running the Oxford Climate Society. When we first joined the Society, in October 2016, around 50 people attended its events, which were held in a small room above a popular café in central Oxford. Today, over 100 students from a variety of backgrounds regularly crowd lecture theatres to hear about a broad range of topics and how they relate to climate change, in addition to participating in the various projects that the Society runs. We hope that all attendees learn from these events and that they leave them inspired to become agents of climate action themselves, no matter which career path they choose. Changing how the issue is perceived, and the seriousness with which it is perceived, can trigger changes both on the individual and political level, and thus influence a large number of students—and that is needed, because if we are to achieve effective action for a safe climate, it is going to take everything that we have got as a society.

Climate Change:

The Ultimate Challenge for International Relations

KATE GUY

THE issue of climate change was understood as an international challenge from the moment scientists first published their predictions about the dangers of the greenhouse effect from fossil fuel emissions. It was abundantly clear, even from the early climate studies of the mid-twentieth century, that since both the causes and effects of anthropogenic climatic change would be global in nature, its solutions must be equally international.

What followed was an evolving political recognition that climate change posed such a threat that new methods of global coordination would be necessary to stave it off.

As early as 1969, US President Richard Nixon pushed for the establishment of the Committee on the Challenges of Modern Society within NATO, for the purpose of studying environmental threats to security, including the greenhouse effect. The World Meteorological Organization hosted the first World Climate Conference in 1979 and established the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 1988, for the purposes of feeding better scientific research to international policymakers. And by 1992, world leaders deemed the issue important enough to convene an Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, where they affirmed the urgent need to work together as a globe to mitigate the risks of climate change.

But despite the relatively swift uptick in global attention to the issue over the past fifty years, climate change has made up a surprisingly small subsection of the international relations literature over this same period. Traditionally more focused on the global balance of power and geopolitical struggles between great powers, the international relations academy was slow to recognize the force it could play in helping the world craft solutions to climate change. Studying the intersection of climate change and global governance has generally been relegated as a subsidiary discipline, while the field remains focused on more traditional questions of war and peace. Research on climate change is most likely to be found only in topic-specific journals, and in concluding textbook chapters on abstract “threats of the future.”

Contrary to this aversion, fundamental questions of international governance and power are indeed at the very heart of the global community’s response to climate change. Ensuring a safe global climate represents an immense collective action problem, and the large societal changes required to do so threaten to shift power structures and markets. Mitigating this threat necessitates a degree of international cooperation the likes of which the world has never seen.

Those scholars who began following the topic discovered evolving international norms, institutions, and diplomacy ripe for methodological thought. For realist thinkers—when and how might the interests of great or rising powers expand to include combatting climate change? For rational theorists—what incentives, and what costs, would cause countries to actually constrain

their economic output to rein in emissions? For liberal institutionalists—how have institutional innovations around climate change fared, and what feedback can be given to influence their design in real-time? And for constructivists—how have the interests and agendas of non-state actors shaped the realm of global climate governance?

Over the past twenty years in particular, a small band of climate-focused international relations researchers broke the academic mould to begin answering these and other pressing questions. These scholars have pushed boundaries between otherwise siloed natural and social science disciplines by working in networks with climate scientists, economists, ecologists, meteorologists, and sociologists alike. They’ve connected directly with global policymakers to provide guidance in fraught international negotiations, and were often able to achieve that most elusive of academic goals, real-world relevance.

International relations thinkers were more instrumental than many may know in the design of the groundbreaking 2015 Paris Climate Agreement, for example. Tapped by governments and the United Nations for their expertise in the design of global institutions, academics lent their analyses to some of the thorniest questions complicating the global negotiation process. They focused primarily on designing new hybrid models to construct a treaty with legally-binding force, and yet still diverse enough to enjoy rapid ratification across all states without perceived threats to their sovereignty. Academics also turned their attention to innovative mechanisms for ratcheting up country commitments over-time, adjusting course to stay on track with the latest climate science, and integrating non-state actors in a broader, networked climate regime. In doing so, these academics helped reshape what the field of international relations can and should look like. Rather than existing in the ivory tower of esoteric and theoretical debate on the nature of global order, climate governance scholars are using their unique institutional methods to better craft creative solutions to one of the world’s most pressing global threats.

These innovations in the field couldn’t have come at a more important time. Despite the best intentions of the few academics donating their research hours to the practice of global climate politics, the world has yet to effectively deploy an architecture that can successfully bend the curve of global emissions. And, as our partners in the natural sciences are ever more forcefully telling us, we are running out of time. The world has already witnessed about 1°C of warming since 1850, and the looming effects of climate change are now beginning to take hold. Climate change-fueled disasters and environmental shocks are happening with increased frequency and intensity, and scientists can predict with ever greater accuracy how these threats will upend our ecological systems

into the future. These impacts, based on how harshly they strike which geographies, are poised to put pressure on regional conflicts, spark massive migrations, and enflame already tense security situations.

And so, the role of international relations scholars in the study of climate change has never been more paramount. If we are to have any hope of effectively handling one of the biggest global challenges of the present, the field should look with a wider lens for innovative means of approaching the governance problems at the heart of addressing climate change. Alongside that cause, they must now also turn an eye to how we reconstitute our governments and our societies to better adapt to its effects.

With its current pace and trajectory, climate change stands to upend global institutions, markets, and bal-

ances of power at the most fundamental level. In this slide towards greater global insecurity, climate change threats are growing so large that even traditional “balance-of-power” thinkers would find it hard to resist examining their effects. It’s high time for the discipline to learn from some of its most innovative researchers and bring the study of climate change more central to its scope. No longer can international relations scholars turn a blind eye to the threats of the future, choosing to focus only on unraveling past histories of war and peace. If they do, they’ll be missing one of the greatest opportunities for scholarly innovation and real-world impact yet seen, with devastating consequences for the very world they hold so dear.

Oxford Today

LIZ FISHER

LAW, in the form of legislation, treaties, and case law, plays a fundamental role in societies addressing climate change. It ensures that action is legitimate, consistent with existing principles of justice and fairness, and integrated into the legal order. As the IPCC’s recent report *Global Warming of 1.5 Degree Celsius* makes clear, ‘rapid and far-reaching transitions in energy, land, urban and infrastructure (including transport and buildings), and industrial systems’ are needed to mitigate global temperature rises. Law at all levels and in all arenas of governance plays an important role in catalysing and enabling these transitions. But with that said, law is not a magic wand. It cannot ‘solve’ climate change, although it is very tempting to think it can. Climate change is a problem too embedded in how societies operate for that to be the case.

More significantly, law has not developed with polycentric, dynamic, and global problems like climate change in mind. As an environmental problem, climate change requires legal imagination to address it. This involves sophisticated, rigorous and creative legal thinking from lawyers in all areas of legal practice and scholarship*.

Not surprisingly then a rich and wide-ranging body of law and research about such law is emerging across the world. Academics are charting these developments (a challenging task as they are so numerous), making sense of them, and mapping future legal directions.

Oxford University legal scholars are leading the way in this scholarship. Some of this work concerns international law. For example, Professor Catherine Redgwell (Chichele Professor of International Law) has contributed much to international law discourse around climate change and energy law, particularly in regards to geo-engineering. Other research explores how national and supranational legal systems respond to climate change. My own research is on the role of the courts in relation to climate change and dealing with the legal disruption caused by energy transitions. Dr Sanja Bogojević works on the use and conceptualisation of ‘environmental rights’ in climate change adjudication, the role of markets in climate change law, and the intersections between

climate change law and public procurement. As such, this work explores both private and public law aspects of climate change law and the interlinks between the two. Her work in this area, particularly her 2013 book, *Emissions Trading Schemes: Markets, States and Law* (Hart, 2013) resulted in her achieving the Nils Klim Prize in 2016.

Other scholars in the Faculty are exploring specific regulatory areas. Professor Sue Bright researches the rules around how flats are owned and managed, and how those rules affect the installation of energy efficiency and renewable energy improvements. This research has led her to work in interdisciplinary teams and has an important comparative angle. Dr Josephine van Zeben works on the interaction between national, regional, European and international efforts to mitigate climate change, particularly through the use of different types of regulation, including economic mechanisms. Scholarship in the Faculty is also covering areas such as energy law, business law and human rights. Professor Angus Johnston focuses on (mainly EU) Energy Law, which is increasingly driven by climate and environmental imperatives. His work covers emissions trading and the promotion of renewable energy, and their often complex and contested interaction with the EU rules on trade, competition and liberalisation in energy markets.

There are a range of research students also doing important work in this area on a wide variety of topics. Given that climate change is caused by and affects a wide range of human activity this is important.

A universal feature of the scholarship taking place in the Oxford Law Faculty is that it is taking the substance of law, in all its complexity, seriously. Law is not just an instrument for solving climate change but a complex set of principles, institutions, rules and doctrines that can evolve to help develop robust and legitimate responses to climate change. By doing that, legal imagination can be strengthened and future directions for robust legal approaches to climate change can be developed.

* (E. Fisher, *Environmental Law: A Very Short Introduction* (OUP, 2017)

Social Psychology, Anthropology and Climate Change

ROBIN DUNBAR

HUMANS are not natural scientists. We find complex scientific arguments difficult to evaluate, not least because we naturally think in simple dichotomies (big versus small) rather than continua. We find processes that involve multiple causes and feedback loops difficult to think our way through. Moreover, we are inclined to discount the future rather strongly: because the future is (as examples like the global financial crisis of 2008 forcefully remind us) unpredictable, we prefer to focus on doing the best we can in the immediate present. If we can at least get through the present, the future will look after itself—an attitude known in conservation biology as the “poacher’s dilemma”.

Perhaps because working things out for ourselves is hard work, we tend to inherit our views mainly from opinion formers such as parents, friends and teachers. This collection of views provides us with a framework that helps us make sense of a complex, ever-changing world and gives us simple rules of thumb for making decisions about what to do. At one level, this is not unreasonable: the ideas and explanations inherited from our cultural community have been tried and tested over many—sometimes thousands of—generations. Learning these views by social transmission rather than laboriously working them out one by one for ourselves is clearly much more efficient.

Such views are often extremely robust in their transmission across generations. Compared to genetic traits, which have a transmission reliability (technically, ‘heritability’, the proportion of variance in a trait due to genetic inheritance) that is around 20-40%, many cultural traits, like religion or moral and political views, have parent-to-offspring heritabilities of 50-70%. This is probably quite adaptive: after all, you don’t want to waste time chasing every trivial will-o’-the-wisp of an idea you come across, since most of them will turn out to be wrong.

Most of our ideas about the world are acquired from people we trust. That sense of trust is mainly engineered by personal contact, with the degree of trust directly related to the frequency of interaction. This reflects the natural structure of our personal social networks, which take the form of a series of embedded circles of progressively increasing size (i.e. number of individuals) but decreasing trust. Even so, the number of people involved is in the few hundreds at most. Beyond this modest handful of personal contacts, there are just a few charismatic individuals whose views we give more than average credence to—commentators, politicians, celebrities that we regard as trustworthy because we see them so often on public platforms.

The trust that supports these relationships is based on shared beliefs, shared attitudes, and shared backgrounds—our worldview as it is known in anthropology. I have termed this set of cultural dimensions the Seven Pillars of Friendship because they distil down into seven core dimensions. In traditional small scale societies, these would identify people from the same small community, almost all of them family. We continue to use these dimensions as proxies that identify ‘people who think like us’,

people we can trust. On the larger scale, these differentiate between members of our in-group and those from the out-group.

It is this same social process that is responsible for the infamous ‘echo chamber’ effect that has increasingly bedevilled our politics—the fact that we are only willing to listen to people who agree with us. Its prevalence in the contemporary world is, of course, largely a consequence of the internet and the way this allows us to circumscribe the individuals we engage with. In the pre-Digital Age, we would have converged on the village pub or a club and have been forced to engage with people who held different views and opinions. We would have been forced to argue and debate, and perhaps even learn. In the digital world, we can simply pull the plug if we don’t like what someone says because it challenges our preconceptions.

Given what seems to be the natural design of the human mind, it is perhaps not surprising that issues as important as climate change very quickly become polarised. Combine this with the fact that the flow of information is impeded by the highly structured nature of our social networks, and it is perhaps no surprise it is unusually difficult for complete consensus to emerge across a population. That slowing of the process of transmission of knowledge gets worse as the community gets larger, if only because the population is broken up into ever more clusters that rarely talk to each other. That is why we end up with dozens of different religions, political views and even opinions about open-and-shut scientific matters like climate change.

It is difficult to see how we can solve this. Simply generating mass media coverage is not the answer, since we choose our opinion formers to suit our own views and no one charismatic leader will tick everyone’s box. In many ways, the problem is the same as that which bedevils our political system: it is too remote, too disconnected, too party political rather than representative, and based on constituencies that are far too large (they have hardly changed since Anglo-Saxon times, despite a more than tenfold increase in the population).

Given the evidence suggesting that communities of around 150 are more stable because they are based on personal relationships, we might do better to restructure our entire political system so as to have groups of 150 electing one of their number to represent them at a local level council, and these in turn each electing one of their number to represent them at a regional level, who in turn elect some of their members to represent them in a very much smaller Westminster where business can be done face-to-face by discussion rather than polarised shouting. That way, we would at least have a sense of direct personal input into the electoral system, and if these elected representatives are the most charismatic members at each level, they will have more downward influence on their constituent’s views because of that direct chain of persuasion.

Geography and Climate Breakdown

DANNY DORLING

GEOGRAPHERS are able to combine complex statistical data analysis with a human sense of real problems in the here and now. Geographers have a sense of the practical and the immediate. And they are adaptable. Their academic subject has transformed completely in the space of just one hundred years.

Geography was founded as a discipline in Oxford to teach young men what they needed to know to both run and expand the British Empire. That is why the chaps had to know all about maps, rivers, where different crops came from, how cities could be managed and whole peoples subjugated. With the demise of the Empire the discipline needed a new focus.

When I was a schoolboy physical geographers taught me that the next ice age was coming. It was coming imminently they said. When I was at university they used to climb mountains to measure glacier advancement, and were shocked to find that the glaciers were retreating—we forget how recently the large majority of us learnt that the ice age was not then just beginning—what only a tiny number suspected in the more distant past.

When the almost certain inevitability of disaster is finally realised by elites then, and only then, is action taken. It takes the work of millions of others to convince those elites. The folly of holding nuclear weapons was understood before 1945, but it took 40 years to begin to disarm the world of nuclear weapons. Now, almost ninety percent of what were held in 1985 are gone. Enough remain to annihilate us many times over. But this reduction shows what is possible.

Human geography can find many lessons from many places of how often change is generational. The next generation can behave remarkably differently from the last.

Stan Openshaw, my PhD supervisor in Newcastle University, was among the first to calculate that as many as thirty million people would be dead or dying within weeks of a nuclear attack. Until those calculations were published the British government was still quietly planning for a survivable nuclear war. Soon after publication they secretly decommissioned the vast majority of Britain's bunkers in the early 1990s.

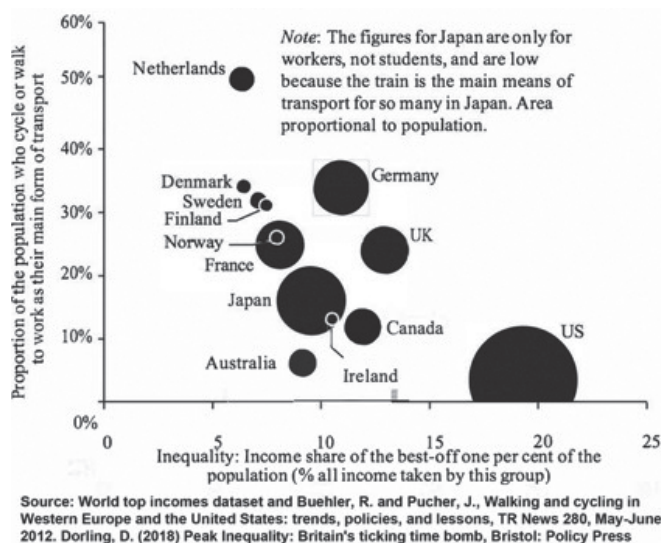
Old problems never go away, they are just superseded by new problems and even greater potential threats.

Thanks to yet more careful current calculations we now know the top 10% of people by income pollute the atmosphere dramatically more than the rest. We also now know that in countries with more equitable income distributions everyone, including the rich, behave far better and consume and pollute far less. Reducing economic inequality is key to facing up to climate breakdown. If everyone in the world behaved as they behave in the USA, we would need four planets. If we all behaved like Japan we would need two. Still one planet too many, but dramatically different. By far the fastest way to reduce carbon pollution is to reduce income inequality. Income inequality is now falling in more countries than it is rising, including in the major-

ity of OECD countries. The international peak of income inequality worldwide was reached in 2013.

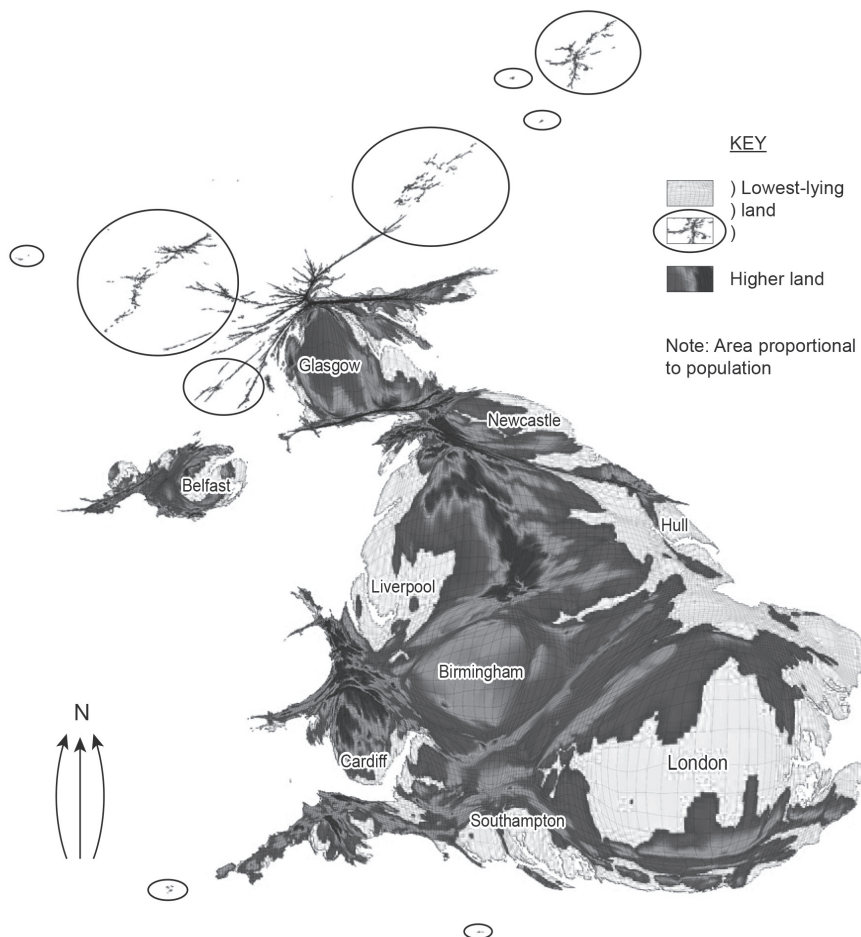
There is so much to be done. The vast majority of people in the world who need to be convinced to eat no, or less, meat live in just a few affluent countries: mostly in the USA, Europe and China. There are almost no vegetarians in China now. But within a generation revolution is possible. The Chinese know this far better than the British (who have never been very good at revolution). We are very fortunate that meat is not very good for any of us to eat. But we only recently learnt that too.

Where countries find themselves now is often a product of circumstance and past activism. To know what is possible geographers can highlight the best and worst examples to be observed and studied. The United Provinces, part of what is today the Netherlands, were one of the richest places on earth before the rise of the British Empire. Take a look at what the Netherlands achieves now when it comes to green transport, and how inadvisable it is to try to emulate the economics and politics of the USA (figure below):



Within the UK, Oxford is fortunate to have been constrained by a very tight greenbelt. This means that it is now possible, if there is a will, to transform Oxford into the UK's greenest city, using examples from the Netherlands. Oxford could expand its population and reduce its reliance on cars at the very same time if it built around the edge of the city and reconfigured its transport system towards walking, or cycling and in favour of buses and, eventually, trams. It could be the Freiberg of the British Isles. Freiberg is home to roughly 75,000 more people than Oxford is. It shows how Oxford could expand sustainably (see <http://www.danny-dorling.org/?p=6932>).

Alternatively we could support the building of the first quarter segment of the outer M25—otherwise known as the Oxford-Cambridge 'expressway'. This



is not a terribly hard one to call, but currently the University's stated position is in favour of the expressway. Clearly human geographers are not working hard enough to help explain why this is such a bad idea. A new train line to Cambridge is fine. A new motorway is folly, it will encourage car-dependent building in the countryside and even greater pollution than we have now, out of the urban heat islands.

If you draw a map where area is proportional to people you can see how many people are affected when you

raise the sea level (adjacent figure). You get a very different picture on a human geography map, in place of the traditional physical one you saw at school, where only a few small areas are affected. Sea level rise may only affect a few areas, but a huge number of people live in those areas. The rise might be inevitable but we can reduce its effects.

For example, it is a good idea to build a flood relief channel to the west of the Oxford city centre, as we are currently doing, to move water further down the Thames when there is too much flowing into Oxford. But it is also essential that we ensure that the fields further up the Thames and Cherwell catchments are not drained so quickly into those rivers, so that these flood events become rarer. Farmers' fields need to hold more water when there are downpours, like they used to. If we don't do this, then once the channel is in operation Abingdon and then Reading will simply flood more. Later, settlements downriver of Oxford will then get their own flood relief channels and all the water will head at even greater speed and volume towards London, perhaps just at the right time to meet the spring tide coming up the river Thames.

Could we have avoided all this if only a few more people had studied geography at university, and so many geographers had not become bankers upon graduation? All this is a long way from rocket-science. And all of it is possible. Oxford could be the greenest city in the UK, even in Europe. It is just a case of knowing your geography.

The illustrations in this article appear in colour in Dorling, D. (2018) *Peak Inequality: Britain's ticking time bomb*, Bristol: Policy Press and can also be seen for free here: <http://www.dannydorling.org/books/peakinequality/>

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Literary Editor

Lucy Newlyn at St Edmund Hall

The New Wave in the Economics of Climate Change

CAMERON HEPBURN, SUGANDHA SRIVASTAV and FREDERICK VAN DER PLOEG

ECONOMICS has a very important role to play in analysing the impacts of climate change and the attractiveness of different strategies to limit the damages that it will cause. The concepts of a “public good” and an “externality” help us understand why and what government action is required. They provide the economic rationale for feed-in-tariffs for renewable energy (to help reduce costs) and for carbon pricing (e.g. emissions trading scheme or carbon tax), which has now been adopted by 45 national and 25 subnational jurisdictions.¹ But the contributions of economics go further to include insights from growth and development theory, innovation, macroeconomics and financial stability, trade and jobs, market design (including auction mechanisms) for a net zero emissions world. Behavioural economics shows how modest ‘nudges’—such as a 5p tax on plastic bags—can have an outsized impact by encouraging consumers to be more environmentally conscious, and so on. Indeed, almost all of economics is relevant to climate change in some way, and vice versa.

Economic theory has itself had to ‘adapt’ to climate change. One of the 2018 Nobel laureates in economics, Professor William Nordhaus of Yale, recognised that growth models should take into account the impacts of climate change.² Nordhaus developed a simple model which demonstrated how the economy and the earth system interact. Such ‘Integrated Assessment Models’ (IAMs) have been used to provide a very broad picture of the overall costs and benefits of addressing climate change. This has been helpful, but such models can also be misleading.

The challenge with IAMs is that they are only as good as their assumptions, and they can be misleading if the assumptions are dubious or they omit key variables. For instance, for simplicity, some economic IAMs assume relatively simple interactions between the climate and economic systems, when in fact it has been shown that such interactions can be complex, systems can collapse after threshold levels of warming, and the economic damages from climate change may spiral out of control in a non-linear fashion. Some IAMs embody the assumption that the future doesn’t matter very much, represented by high “discount rates”. Unsurprisingly, climate change emerges as a low-priority issue when the future is heavily discounted.

More detailed and careful econometric work, and more careful philosophical thinking, provides valuable caveats to the broad results from IAMs: for instance, philosophers have considered approaches that place reasonable weight on the future,³ and such approaches have, on the advice of economists, been picked up and implemented by several national governments.⁴ Economists have shown that worker productivity declines in a rapid, non-linear fashion as temperature increases.⁵ Others have shown that so-called “damage functions”

are not sensitive enough,⁶ and that the existence of tipping points demand much tougher climate action.⁷ A new programme at the Oxford Martin School (OMS) goes further still, using complexity science and previous research⁸ to explore “sensitive intervention points” in the socio-political-economic system that might accelerate our transition to a post-carbon world.⁹

The OMS programme of work leads to questions about a key assumption often embedded in IAMs: namely that there is an inherent trade-off between economic growth and emissions abatement. The advent of cost-competitive renewable energy already calls this notion into question, driven by surprisingly predictable technological progress.¹⁰ If such trends continue, advances in materials science and other technologies, coupled with learning from deploying such technologies, lead to cheaper, cleaner and more efficient energy-intensive processes and energy storage. Economists are finally starting to stress the significance of understanding such directed technological change to delivering a post-carbon society¹¹ and are thinking more carefully about designing policy instruments that would deliver such innovation.¹²

This new generation of economists is collaborating with climate physicists, ecosystem scientists, statisticians, historians and psychologists to truly understand the interdependencies and nonlinearities of human and natural systems. Collaboration with philosophers and political scientists is crucial too, since most of the economics of climate change has abstracted from the need to get political acceptability of policy proposals. At Oxford, scholars within the Economics department are working with those at the Smith School of Enterprise and the Environment and the Oxford Martin School to unearth new insights from combining methods and knowledge from across disciplines. Not only is such interdisciplinary ‘combinatorial’ collaboration important for future economic prosperity,¹³ it could be vital for the future of human civilisation.

¹ World Bank, 2018. State and trends of carbon pricing 2018. World Bank Publications, US: Washington DC, May. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/29687/9781464812927.pdf?sequence=5&isAllowed=y>

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⁹ For more information, see <https://www.oxfordmartin.ox.ac.uk/research/programmes/post-carbon>.

¹⁰ Lafond, F., Bailey, A.G., Bakker, J.D., Rebois, D., Zadourian, R., McSharry, P. and Farmer, J.D., 2018. How well do experience curves predict technological progress? A method for making distributional

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¹² Hepburn, C., Pless, J. and Popp, D., 2018. Policy Brief—Encouraging Innovation that Protects Environmental Systems: Five Policy Proposals. *Review of Environmental Economics and Policy*, 12(1), pp.154-169.

¹³ Weitzman, M.L., 1996. Hybridizing growth theory. *The American Economic Review*, 86(2), pp.207-212.

The 'Now' Shown

DANIEL SCHARF

In 2016 *Oxford Magazine* published my *Climate Lament* that concluded with the proposition that Oxford was not alone in lacking the actions proportionate to the existential threat posed by climate change but, given the scale of the awareness and knowledge about both the problems and opportunities, might be the place with the least excuse.

In 2014 I had already written in similar terms and chose to exclude the Oxford Martin School from the general criticism due to its publication *Now for the long term Oxford Martin Commission for Future Generations* (28th October, 2013) that I now understand has been accessed more than 1 million times online. At the launch, the then Director of the School, Prof Ian Goldin, expressed the wish that this would be one report that did not gather dust on a library shelf. It would be surprising if the combined thoughts of innumerable academics and 19 international leaders, plus the reputation of the Martin School itself, did not at the time represent the most up-to-date appraisal of the various mega problems facing the planet. I believed then that it was reasonable to rely on its findings and to repeat the particular claim that it was no longer possible to argue that 'we' did not know what should be done, but that the focus needed to be on the reasons why necessary action was not being taken.

So 5 years later we find the Martin School at one side of town providing a new definition of the word 'now' to that found in the dictionary produced by the University Press at the other side. The dust has well and truly settled, the climate has well and truly warmed—thousands of species have gone extinct.

On 29th October this year the Martin School invited Christiana Figueres to speak at the Sheldonian to the title 'What now?' *Next steps on climate change*. So almost 5 years to the day we were again invited to consider what is to be done 'now'. She had been the leading figure working with the UNFCCC at the 2015

Paris COP agreeing to keep global warming between 1.5 and 2 degrees and was *now* telling an Oxford audience that in the last three years the 1.5 degree rise should be taken as an absolute maximum. Ms Figueres was keen to distinguish between the older members of her audience who might be more set in their high carbon ways (e.g., car ownership and use) and the younger elements with the energy to climb the stairs to the galleried seats who are managing without personalised motorised transport and who have a longer future to contemplate or see cut short.

On leaving I carried out a small survey of these youngsters and found a common thread. They understood that some progress was being made by individual countries, some even overachieving on their pledges made in Paris (that collectively would still result in about 3 degrees of warming) but did not aim below 1.5 degrees. Coal was on its way out due to adverse costs, and oil was about to follow. Apparently, what they had come to find out, and had not gathered from the talk, was 'what steps' they, personally, should now be taking. Limited sympathy should be shown to this curiosity from a highly educated elite given the relatively well known impacts of the many human activities in which they could be playing a part. In fact the impacts of eating less (or no) meat was explained at the lecture, as were the benefits of eschewing the joys of aeroplanes, cars and woodburning stoves.

Clearly the audience for a climate change event was not typical of the Oxford population or student body. I have since learned that of the 315 students enrolled on the Masters course at the Said Business School 40 have joined its 'sustainable development society', which begs the question of what 275 other students are thinking and doing? At a lecture on 'culture and climate change' there were only 10 of the 130 members of the student Geographical Society, compared to 70 that turned out to hear about Brexit. Is the end of EU membership seven

times as important to young people/geographers as the prospect of runaway climate change? A full house of about 120 students and public attended a recent event held by the Oxford Climate Society that raises a similar question about the interest of the many thousand others not hammering on the doors.

Ms Figueres had concluded by addressing the upper galleries, saying, “How much your future will be affected by climate change is being determined now”, (a comment also reported by John Simpson on BBC radio a few days after the event). Chairing the session, Sir Charles Godfray summed up by saying that Ms Figueres had provided lessons for both Oxford and the Martin School. I am not holding my breath.

The need to show extreme urgency in reducing carbon emissions *now* is explained in the report of the Intergovernmental Committee on Climate Change (that has a number of Oxford people in the working groups) published in October 2018. Carbon and equivalent emissions must be halved by 2030 (ie 40 to 20 billion tonnes) and brought down to a ‘sustainable’ 500 million tonnes from 2050. The emission reduction process must start now: to achieve the same effect one tonne saved in 2018 is worth ten saved, with far more difficulty if not trauma, in 2030.

Nobody should need reminding that during this critical decade the UK Government is proposing to increase runway capacity, to build more roads, continuing the freeze on fuel duty (see the 2018 Autumn Budget with no mention of climate change), and to create a world leading gas fracking industry, aided by removing the need to apply for planning permission. At national level the disparity between policy and climate science could not be greater; the end of both support for hybrid cars and the Feed-in Tariff from domestic PV, and next to nothing for carbon capture and storage pleaded as essential by the Committee on Climate Change. Tidal power is seen as too expensive and nuclear is in a precarious state.

The fact that the transport sector has seen emissions increase, largely due to car traffic, has not prevented the Government proposing an ‘expressway’ between Oxford and Cambridge as part of the road building programme (supported by the Local Enterprise Partnership and the University). This road has the nominal support of all 6 of the constituent local authorities. The Government decision to require/support/stimulate the building of 300,000 dwellings per year has not received any dissent from the local authorities, each of which seems to have bought the line that the 1 million houses being allocated to the arc or corridor between Oxford and Cambridge will reduce house prices and maintain the economic growth based on the knowledge industries.

Not only must transport emissions come down, but so must those attributable to buildings. The zero carbon homes target was removed before the point when it was meant to take effect in 2016, as has the Code for Sustainable Homes. The ‘Green Deal’ (versions 1, 2 and 3...) is the stuff of history. But even were all new homes built to net zero direct carbon in use, as they must if national and international carbon targets are to be met, there seems to be complete denial (or failure of understanding) about the 50% of indirect carbon emissions that arise from the building of houses and the associated infrastructure up the point of substantial completion and before occupation (see, *Whole life*

carbon assessments for the built environment, RICS 2017). The University, and a number of colleges, could use their influence as landowners and developers to insist on net zero carbon housing, following a good, if not perfect, example of a development currently being carried out by Cambridge University.

Very few people have joined the conversation (e.g., in the making of development plans and the decision-making on planning applications) about how all the new dwellings and infrastructure could and should be built from low/zero carbon materials and low/zero carbon construction methods. Oxford City is actually ahead of its neighbouring councils in terms of carbon mitigation, requiring more than central Government policy in terms of reducing carbon emissions from buildings. However, all opportunities should be taken to remind all the Oxfordshire authorities that whole life carbon assessment includes both direct or indirect emissions.

The Minister given most responsibility for addressing the challenges of climate change is Claire Perry MP in the Business, Enterprise and Industrial Strategy. She has written to the Committee on Climate Change asking what the Government should be doing to be consistent with the IPCC Report and the reduced target to 1.5 degree of warming. The CCC has been given until March 2019 to respond. The 6 months is in the context of the 12 years in which effective action must be taken, and the period when the Oxfordshire councils’ local plans will be extant.

The year 2018 has been notable for some other climate related ‘events’. The National Forest Garden Scheme held its AGM which explored the contribution their preferred form of forestry planting can make to carbon sequestration (as well as many other benefits). Climate Outreach continued to lead the debate on the implications of climate change on migration. Oxford Bioregion Forum was established to explore the ways in which landuse planning at the bioregional scale could supplant the current planning system, with its obsession with housing and economic growth.

Five years of research by several research consortia has culminated in the nomination of Oxford University’s Environmental Change Institute as the hub for the newly formed Centre of Research on Energy Demand. Hopefully some of the research will be about why so little is happening ‘now’ rather than what could and should theoretically be done in the future. Could it be that the required actions are seen as too difficult? It is undoubtedly true, after another 5 years of research, that even those ‘difficult’ actions are likely to be insufficient.

While David Attenborough is afraid that climate truth might ‘scare the horses’, the options for those who starting to believe that, “...drastic planetary overheating is a done deal.” (*The end of the earth*, Franzen, 2018) are becoming increasingly limited. Extinction Rebellion, with its Oxford contingent, is a growing movement that sees Government policy and the lack of proportional response to the existential threat of climate change to *Homo sapiens*, amongst other species, as an incitement to civil disobedience. Non-violent direct action was exercised in protests against the nuclear weapons deployed as a strategy of Mutually Assured Destruction. It should be no surprise if the MADness of climate change starts to elicit a similar reaction.

Are Friends Electric?

BEN BOLLIG

OVER the summer, Oxford's Saïd Business School hosted an electric vehicle (EV) "summit", convened by the City Council. There has been increased interest in the use of such technology in the city, given the serious problem of air pollution, in particular from harmful NO_x emissions, and the need to prepare for a future in which fossil fuel use is greatly reduced. As reported on these pages, the City Council plans to introduce a Zero-Emission Zone, with petrol and diesel vehicles banned from the centre of the city, in an area that will grow steadily in the coming decades. Fully electric—and possibly some hybrid—vehicles would be permitted in this area. In its official response to the City Council's consultation, the University stated that while it was important to tackle poor air quality in the city, it "did not know" whether the proposed zones were appropriate: what amounts to support in principle, but doubts on the detail.

The City Council has invested in an impressive electric fleet. So far this includes seventeen electric vehicles, nine electric bikes and 22 hybrids.¹ According to a recent press release from the City Council, it has secured close to £200,000 funding from DEFRA's (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) Air Quality Grant 2017/18 to purchase electric delivery vehicles and install charging points for Covered Market traders. These efforts are aimed at preparing the Covered Market and its businesses for operations after the introduction of what it has begun to refer to as the "Zero Emission Zone": two electric light goods vehicles and three cargo bikes for use of Covered Market traders, and three electric vehicle charging points in Market Street. The City Council has ear-marked £3.25m in preparation for the Zero Emission Zone, with projects including 19 electric vehicle charging points for taxis; upgrading five sightseeing buses to fully electric, and 78 local buses to become ultra-low emission; as well as installing 100 electric vehicle charging points for residents across Oxford as part of a research trial.² On top of this, the city has been awarded £474,000 for a trial of so-called "pop-up" on-street charging points;³ the council announced last August that some 100 charging stations would be built on residential streets.⁴ The County Council, in contrast, has no electric vehicles.⁵

The City Council is responding to the many perceived potential benefits of electric cars: smaller carbon footprint; reduced exhaust emissions (especially Nitrous Oxide emissions); and other collateral gains, such as reduced noise pollution. In a study for the European Climate Foundation, Aurélien Schuller and Christina Stuart outline some of the positives around EV usage, first and foremost that "shifting to electrified vehicles does on average significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions compared to internal combustion engine vehicles." Worth bearing in mind, however, is that "there are significant differences between countries, the national electricity mixes being a determining factor responsible for the level of carbon advantage." Schuller and Stuart add that, "On average small battery electric vehicles (BEV)

produce just half of the greenhouse gas emissions of an average European urban petrol car and a large BEV produces 75% of the emissions of an average European diesel sedan." But the figure varies, and of course the key factor is how electricity is produced:

*"In countries where coal is still part of the energy mix, like in Italy, the climate benefit of BEVs compared to ICEVs [internal combustion engine vehicles] is 20% lower on the small segment (they produce 40% less CO₂ than ICEVs). Although still cleaner, large BEVs do not produce substantial climate benefits in countries where coal fuels a substantial share of the domestic energy demand."*⁶

The controversy over the rise of electric cars and the much touted "death" of the internal combustion engine has played out on the pages of specialist and general publications in recent years. For the European Climate Foundation, "the challenge of tackling climate change will require a transition to vehicles powered by alternative energy sources, such as electricity, hydrogen and low-carbon liquid fuels." But just changing vehicles is not sufficient: "Careful planning will be needed to ensure transport is smoothly integrated into the electricity network to minimise the need for additional investment in infrastructure and generating capacity." They go further, stating that, "This complex mixture shows that the transport transition raises issues for the whole of society—calling for thinking well beyond just the personal car."⁷

Writing in *Le monde diplomatique* (LMD), Guillaume Pitron cited a university study from 2017 which suggests that electric vehicles produce 55% less greenhouse gases on average across Europe and 80% less in France, than diesel vehicles.⁸ The difference is explained by the high percentage (77%) of France's electricity that comes from nuclear sources which, "though not risk-free, produce less carbon." One would hope that, as energy production comes to rely less on carbon and more on renewables, such benefits would be more widely spread.

The Guardian cited a report by the Ricardo consultancy that takes into account not just the use of an EV, but also its production: making "an average petrol car will involve emissions amounting to the equivalent of 5.6 tonnes of CO₂, while for an average electric car, the figure is 8.8 tonnes. Of that, nearly half is incurred in producing the battery." Factoring in this figure, "the same report estimated that over its whole lifecycle, the electric car would still be responsible for 80% of the emissions of the petrol car."⁹

There are other potential hazards to EV use. Pitron writes, "there is reason to fear that energy savings may be cancelled out by greater usage." "Unless electricity is taxed as heavily as oil, the modest cost of charging an electric vehicle could encourage greater consumption. And the belief that electric cars are clean could lead to even greater urban congestion." With it, other problems,

such as particulate emissions from braking, are also accentuated.

Roy Harrison, in *The Engineer*, states that “emissions of brake-wear particles from electric vehicles will be greatly reduced because much of the deceleration will be achieved through regenerative braking as opposed to the application of mechanical brakes. However, it has been argued that, due to their heavy load of batteries, electric vehicles will be heavier than internal combustion engine vehicles and, if this is the case, they would be expected to generate higher emissions of particles from tyre and road-surface wear and from suspension of road-surface dusts.”¹⁰

A big problem for EVs is indeed weight. Interviewed by *LMD*, Laurent Castaignede, points out that battery weight may be an even bigger problem than service life. “A electric car weighs 10-20% more than one the same size with an internal combustion engine. This creates a vicious circle because such vehicles require heavier braking systems and drive-trains. Using a two-tonne Tesla to carry a 70-kg driver is nonsense.” Limited battery capacity, however, could “encourage carmakers to reduce the weight of cars so as to increase their range” However, Pitron adds, “except during the Great Depression of 1929, the Second World War, and the two oil crises of the 1970s, carmakers have always prioritised improving performance [over efficiency]”.

There are further questions to be answered over the effectiveness and efficiency of electric vehicles. As Beresford Clarke, MD of SFA Oxford,¹¹ stated, “80% of the world’s cobalt, an ingredient in lithium-ion batteries fitted to most hybrid and electric cars, is in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).” Such a concentration raises doubts about environmental and social sustainability.¹² Dependence on oil may be replaced by dependence on the rare, often hard to extract, materials used in the production of batteries and other car parts, whose “extraction and refining [...] involves highly polluting processes”. Again, Pitron in *LMD*: “It’s paradoxical that vehicles touted for their environmental friendliness rely on highly toxic materials, which are also hard to recycle.” These also shift pollution from the air of first-world cities to poor rural areas in the developing world, where extractive industries have their operations. A further problem is what to do with used car battery packs.¹³ For this and other reasons, for many the future lies in alternatives to EVs. One option is propulsion using hydrogen fuel cell vehicles.¹⁴

For Gary Fuller, the problem is that “Electric cars move pollution from our cities to distant power plants.” While energy continues to be heavily carbon-reliant, the potential benefits are limited. But there is a moral hazard, in that the perceived “greenness” of electric cars may in fact encourage unnecessary driving. Fuller continues, “A quarter of England’s car trips are less than two miles. [...] Replacing petrol and diesel cars with electric would miss the opportunity to save the NHS around £17 billion over the next 20 years by swapping short car journeys for walking or cycling.”¹⁵

Fuller’s arguments are broadly in line with those expressed by Sustrans. The transport charity argues that “We need a cross-government approach that maximises the co-benefits for physical activity, health inequalities, congestion and climate change.” The focus should be on “shifting everyday trips to walking, cycling and public

transport” and away from motor vehicles. This reduces carbon, improves air quality, and offers health benefits to commuters.¹⁶

A further possibility, and one that makes much sense in a city like Oxford, is the use, not of electric cars but of electric bikes. For longer local journeys, for those starting out as cycle commuters, and for routes that involve challenging gradients, as Rhodri Clark reported, the e-bike has many potential attractions.¹⁷ E-bikes also offer an alternative for what is known as the “last-mile” problem in logistics—how to get products from depots to where they need to be, often with significant constraints on access. The Department for Transport has launched a consultation, “The Last Mile. A Call for Evidence on the opportunities available to deliver goods more sustainably.”¹⁸ With the growth in online and home shopping, there has been a rise in van traffic, “by 4.7% to 49.5 billion vehicle miles in 2016 alone.” Much of this traffic is diesel engined, and often highly polluting (especially as this is the most emissions-intensive, least efficient form of driving). The Department is keen to explore and potentially promote the use of “e-cargo bikes, micro vehicles and e-vans.” Government support has already been offered for e-cargo bikes through the 2015 “Shared Electrically Assisted Pedal Cycle (EAPC) Programme.” As the consultation document states:

‘E-cargo bikes have huge potential for last mile delivery. They could reduce congestion and pollution, and operate from small hubs or local stores, reducing the need for fleets of delivery vans to drive into urban centres from out of town depots. [...] Whilst e-cargo bikes might not be the appropriate delivery mode for every location, they are of particular benefit in high-density urban areas as well as narrow streets in historical city centres.’ [...]

They add that:

‘Due to their size e-cargo bikes potentially offer higher rates of space utilisation than traditional vans. Research on van use undertaken by Transport for London showed that in London vans are poorly utilised, with 66% being half full or less than half full, with an average load factor (as a proportion of its capacity, by either weight, volume, or both) of 38%.’

It is likely that similar figures obtain in Oxford. For these and other reasons, reducing car and van traffic in the city should be a priority for local politicians and the University.

In its 2013-18 transport strategy, the University expressed a series of aims and desiderata on transport:

‘The University discourages unnecessary travel and the use of private motor transport both for travel to the University and travel for other work purposes during the day, with the aim of reducing traffic and parking in Oxford.’

The Strategy also promoted increased use of hybrid or electric vehicles; “a review of the University fleet identifies approximately 70 motorcycles, cars and light vans which have the potential to be replaced (in the longer term) by hybrid or electric vehicles.” Other potential initiatives included bike rental and/or bike share services; electric bicycles are also mentioned, as a potential solution to reducing car traffic between sites (e.g. city centre and Headington):

'Whilst the distances between the city centre and Headington sites suggest that the routes could be undertaken by cycle, the gradient of Headington Hill (when travelling west to east) and concerns over safety expressed through the consultation process are likely to limit cycle trips (although these trips could be more easily made using electric cycles).'

I spoke to Adam Bows, Estate Services Sustainable Transport manager, about the university's use of electric vehicles. Fully electric vehicles already account for more than 10% of the university fleet of around 110 road-going vehicles. These include a number of Nissan electric vans, three Nissan Leaf cars, and a Goupil electric tipper in the Parks Team. The University's Green Travel Fund (£425k in 2018-19), sourced from parking income, is used to implement the Transport Strategy and supports departments wishing to convert their fleet to electric vehicles by covering the price differential between diesel and electric vehicles and the cost of creating charging points. The Safety Office and the Clinical Trial Service Unit replaced a Mercedes Sprinter and SUV respectively with Nissan e-nv200 vans in 2017, in both cases with the added advantage that the new vehicle unit is significantly smaller and cheaper to run (around 5p per mile) – transporting air is not an efficient use of energy.

While the carbon footprint of “grid” electricity is dropping, the University is at an advantage as all the electricity purchased is from wind power. Electric vehicles charged on University premises potentially have a lower environmental impact than most private e-vehicles. There is also heavy investment in solar panels, for example at the Bodleian storage facility in Swindon, which on many days produces more electricity to run the building than it consumes. The University is undertaking research into “vehicle-to-grid” technology, whereby spare battery life can be returned to power fixed installations. Also being explored is the possibility of charging points for staff vehicles. This raises a number of issues. As Bows put it, “We would much prefer it if staff didn't drive in to work.” The Old Road campus car park will include capacity for charging fourteen electric vehicles (10 for staff), with potential for up to 30 more. There is also a pilot park-and-charge scheme at Osney Mead. As range increases, the need for at-work charging of private cars will, it is hoped, fall significantly. Another further area for potential performance improvements would be the Science Shuttle bus, in the final year of a three-year pilot scheme. One would hope that a future extension could find ways to run a more efficient, greener system.

But electric cars are not a cure all, for all the reasons discussed above; Bows added that, just like conventional fuelled vehicles, EVs potentially pose danger to vulnerable road users and cause traffic congestion. University parking is severely limited, and is being steadily converted to more valuable teaching and research space – and what remains needs to be reserved, for example for staff with mobility and caring needs. The University's “trajectory is to remove as many vehicles as possible,” Bows stated, with hydrogen fuel cells also a potential future option, perhaps with the University using locally-generated hydrogen sourced from solar panels. Estates Services has five electric pool bikes and the Green Travel Fund is also available to support departments in adding e-bikes to their fleets and helping their staff travel quickly and easily about the city.

These initiatives are encouraging, and we should support and encourage the University in its goal of functioning in a way that uses the fewest motor vehicles possible. How such local measures square with central government policy, and the rush to build ever more roads, is another question. Improved rail links between Oxford and Cambridge, with greater connectivity in the so-called “Brain Belt,” make sense. Much less coherent are the proposals for an Oxford-Cambridge “expressway,” with a route to the west of Oxford ploughing through areas important to wildlife, dividing communities, encouraging car use, with little concern for “last-mile” solutions, and almost certainly contributing to even worse air quality in the city. Councillor Hudspeth suggests that such problems could be resolved with “autonomous electric vehicles” on the expressway.¹⁹ The real solution lies elsewhere.

¹ https://www.oxford.gov.uk/info/20185/electric_vehicles/666/electric_vehicles_at_oxford_city_council

² https://www.oxford.gov.uk/news/article/727/oxford_city_council_secures_almost_200000_to_purchase_electric_vehicles_for_covered_market_traders

³ <https://www.oxfordsmartcity.uk/oxblog/oxford-to-have-worlds-first-pop-up-electric-vehicle-charging-points/>

⁴ https://www.oxford.gov.uk/news/article/513/city_and_county_council_partnership_begins_programme_to_install_100_electric_vehicle_charging_stations_in_residential_streets

⁵ “Electric cars in Oxford?” Richard Lofthouse, <https://www.alumni.ox.ac.uk/quad/article/electric-cars-oxford>

⁶ “From cradle to grave: e-mobility and the energy transition,” Aurélien Schuller and Christina Stuart https://europeanclimate.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/From-cradle-to-grave-e-mobility-and-the-energy-transition_IT_SP_UK_EU.pdf

⁷ “Enabling the transition to cleaner, smarter mobility” <https://europeanclimate.org/initiatives/sectoral/transport/>

⁸ “Do we really want electric vehicles?” Guillaume Pitron, *Le monde diplomatique* (English language edition) Sep 2018.

⁹ <https://www.theguardian.com/football/ng-interactive/2017/dec/25/how-green-are-electric-cars>

¹⁰ “Why EVs aren't a silver bullet for the particulate problem,” Roy Harrison, *The Engineer*, <https://www.theengineer.co.uk/electric-vehicles-and-particulates/>

¹¹ See <http://www.sfa-oxford.com/>

¹² Quoted in <https://www.alumni.ox.ac.uk/quad/article/electric-cars-oxford>. See also “China set to lead in electric car race,” Guillaume Pitron, *Le monde diplomatique* Sep 2018, pp 12-13.

¹³ For example Philippa Oldham, cited in <https://www.alumni.ox.ac.uk/quad/article/electric-cars-oxford>

¹⁴ At the Oxford summit, Sylvie Childs, Senior Product Manager for the Korean car maker Hyundai, stated that her employer sees “the real horizon as hydrogen fuel cell vehicles (FCVs)”. See <https://www.alumni.ox.ac.uk/quad/article/electric-cars-oxford> and for more on FCVs <https://www.autoexpress.co.uk/car-news/electric-cars/93180/hydrogen-fuel-cell-do-hydrogen-cars-have-a-future>

¹⁵ “Electric cars are not the solution,” <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/aug/13/electric-cars-are-not-the-solution-pollutionwatch>

¹⁶ <https://www.sustrans.org.uk/our-position/air-quality>

¹⁷ <https://www.transportxtra.com/publications/local-transport-today/news/58595/are-e-bikes-the-product-to-give-cycling-universal-appeal>

¹⁸ See https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/730081/last-mile-call-for-evidence.pdf

¹⁹ Cited in <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/sep/16/oxford-cambridge-expressway-brainbelt-corridor-double-population-wetlands-mil-lion-new-homes>



Reminders



The following extract from a briefing to Council's Building and Estates Subcommittee in September would appear to define the University's current position on the proposed £3 billion plus plus Oxford to Cambridge Expressway - eds

Highways England – Oxford to Cambridge Expressway

In April 2018, the University submitted a response to this consultation presenting a neutral position with no preference made for any specific corridor, given the significant reputational and development risks associated with what is likely to prove a highly controversial major infrastructure project should the Government decide to progress construction. This follows two previous responses in 2016 where the University was disinclined to support the Expressway.

On 12 July, following approval at Council, the University wrote to Highways England, the DfT and the MHCLG strongly supporting the East West Rail (EWR) and first last mile. It also stated that it was “in principle in favour of strategic connections” such as the Expressway noting that it would make most sense for the Expressway to follow and support the EWR i.e. Option B and the “sub-option around Oxford following a northern alignment would potentially support the University’s ambitions for a new settlement and expanded Science Park at Begbroke.”

On 12 September 2018 the Government announced its preferred route corridor for the Expressway in line with the recommendation from the Highways Agency. The middle route, Option B, has been chosen, the corridor for which runs either side of Oxford from the M1 to the A34 alongside the planned route of the EWR. Public consultation on the more detailed siting and designs should take place in 2019.

How the Behemoth Became (after Ted Hughes)

DAVID MIDGLEY

ON the two million, seven hundred and forty thousand, four hundred and seventy-third day, God surveyed all that he had created and saw that it was good.

Everything was evolving nicely, and his human beings were showing themselves to be increasingly adept at understanding the workings of the universe—even if they seemed rather slow to develop an understanding of themselves and their role within it. The learning landscape was coming on nicely, he thought. But as he looked a little more closely it struck him that some of its more resplendent blooms were looking a little crestfallen. He summoned his chief adviser and asked him to report.

Gabriel explained that those plants were having their output metred. Every few years the angels took stock of what they had produced and what they had discharged into the environment.

“But they used to look so proud and cheerful,” God protested.

“That was because they were gorging on esteem,” said Gabriel. “We need to be sure they’re actually coming up with the goods.”

“They look as if they’ve been forced.”

“Well we can’t have them vegetating, can we?” Gabriel replied. “They can lap up the kudos all right, but we want to see them putting something back into the system, don’t we.”

“What’s wrong with a bit of creativity?” God wanted to know. “Did I not lay the foundations of the earth? Does the hawk not fly by my wisdom? Does the eagle not mount up at my command and make her nest on high? And did I not create these people that they might inquire diligently?”

“Oh, they inquire,” said Gabriel, “and they scatter the seeds of their learning. They can churn out their stuff, all right. But what are they actually producing? That’s what we need to know.”

“So what is it that you expect of them exactly?” God asked.

Gabriel took out his notebook.

“According to the rules,” he said, “all creatures have to be either producers or consumers. Consumers have rights, and producers have obligations. These chaps are producers, so they have obligations. They need to show us that what they are producing is not just for their own satisfaction but for the benefit of others.”

“Isn’t it enough that they are making their contribution to the wondrous learning landscape?”

“Well, that’s all right in theory,” said Gabriel, “But how does it work in practice? What are they contributing to the supply chain? That’s what I’d like to know. What are they doing to provide a supportive environment for the next generation and to deliver greater numbers

of highly adapted youngsters? We want to see our new varieties taking pride of place in all the gardens of the universe, don’t we?”

“So how will you go about assessing the contribution they make to that process?” God wanted to know.

“Well, we can count the number of offspring each plant manages to bring on, and we can gauge how healthy each of them is at the time of propagation. And over time we can see how successful the youngsters are at establishing themselves in a competitive environment. That should give us a pretty clear idea of how good a service each plant is really giving.”

“And how will you know to what extent those outcomes are attributable to the quality of the nurture they’re providing?”

“Too technical for me,” said Gabriel. “We’ll get someone to look into that. All I know is that we need to show them who’s boss. We want them to know that if they don’t provide that service there are others that will. And the best way to do that is to keep them on short rations until they can demonstrate that they are actively helping to bring on a new generation that will flourish even better and put even more back into the system in its turn.”

“And how will you ensure that these things come about?”

“We shall set a watchdog,” said Gabriel, “with duties to assess and powers to punish all those that are found wanting. It will have powers to enter plants and inspect their internal workings, to approve or reject applications for the continued right to exist, and to consign them to the compost heap if they don’t produce the right kind of offspring.”

“Oh dear,” said God, wishing he had set firmer limits to the administrative exercise of creative powers. “How is that actually going to help the generations to come?”

“Ah, well that’s where the consumer rights come in,” said Gabriel. “The youngsters are not-yet-producers, so by definition they can only be consumers. All we have to do is give them the sense that what we’re doing is for their benefit and leave them to demand the outcomes that will give them the best chances of success. That is the process that our watchdog will oversee. It will be called the Guardian of Saplings and its name will be honoured throughout the land.”

And so it came to pass. The behemoth was created, and all the creatures of the learning landscape were beholden unto it.

But whenever God looked out of the window, there was the behemoth chomping up the undergrowth and snarling at the taller plants. And far from flourishing, they were shrinking visibly whenever it approached them.

The General History of Mark Whittow

LAWRENCE GOLDMAN

MARK Whittow's career turned on 25 minutes in March 1998.

Before that, on leaving his Junior Research Fellowship at Oriel College, he'd known the frustrations of a decade without a secure job: positions for medievalists, let alone Byzantinists, have never been profuse and he'd struggled to find one.

But afterwards he would enjoy twenty years of remarkable professional success and high regard at St. Peter's and Corpus Christi, in the History Faculty, and later in the University as Senior Proctor.

On the morning in question he was interviewed for the medieval history fellowship at St. Peter's. He was the first up at 9 o'clock to give a short, specimen lecture and answer our questions. I can't remember exactly what Mark told us about the Second Crusade, but I do recall the brio and bravado with which he said it and his use of technology (which was bound to awe the fellows of St. Peter's). He was compelling as he drew his small audience into another age and world.

After he had finished, the then Master, John Barron, turned to me and said simply: 'I think we've found our man'. John was a great judge of academic horse-flesh, and of course he was right. The rest of the day was a parade around the paddock rather than a race. Mark told me afterwards that St. Peter's was his final job application and if he'd been unsuccessful he would have given up and become an interior designer. It is to the credit of this college that we didn't let that happen—though I mean no offence to interior designers.

Mark followed the remarkable Henry Mayr-Harting in St. Peter's. Henry had built-up History here and especially medieval history over the three preceding decades and there was so much already in place: we were all in Henry's debt for the high regard of the subject in the college and History Faculty, and among the wider community of historians.

Mark, Henrietta [Leyser] and I were in harness for twelve years. Together, we admitted as undergraduates or appointed as junior research fellows many of the speakers at today's event and many of you in the audience, collaborating in mutual respect and affectionate regard, sharing a common view of our task, and fuelled always by great quantities of Mark's tea and cake. We were referred to by another of today's speakers as 'the dream team'. As everyone who knew him can attest, Mark was a huge personality in his own right, but he was also a team player which is why he collected so many friends and admirers along the way.

He was a brilliant undergraduate tutor who knew he was made for the job. In 2007 Mark rejected an offer from the History Faculty to translate to the soon-to-be vacant Lectureship in Byzantine Studies at Corpus, explaining to me as we walked down the high street in Aldeburgh, Suffolk on a History Reading Party, that he was thoroughly happy at St. Peter's and didn't want to move. Unfortunately for St. Peter's, difficulties within the college two years later led him to change his mind and to

apply for the position at Corpus.

Mark spoke often of the nature and aim of an Oxford education and it's this I want to dwell on. He believed in breadth and perspective, not depth and specialisation, always conscious that the majority of Oxford undergraduates will not become academics themselves but follow careers in the professions, the media, public life and politics.

He admired Oxford's long history of supplying men, and now women, for public service, and wanted that to continue. For this reason, he was against the earlier plans of Vice-Chancellor Hood to build the most prestigious graduate school in Europe. To Mark, Oxford's role was to send young people out into the world to make a difference and their fortunes, and then to help support their university; not to replicate their teachers and merely populate the university system. As he always said and long lamented, what good would it be to Oxford if its alumni were all paid merely academic salaries?

For these public roles, he knew that a broad understanding of History is more useful than specialised knowledge of a little, and his strength as a teacher came from his ability to take that sweeping view of the past, the *longue durée*, just the view he had shown us at his interview in 1998.

Accomplished in so many ways and deeply learned in his own subject, Mark was an ideal convenor of the successful Masters course in Byzantine history for sure. This was the appropriate place to begin the training of future academics. But a first degree was for education and learning, rather than for scholarship and skills. His aim was to provide a framework of the past for undergraduates. The details could then be filled in, whether at Oxford or later during all the years of reading and travelling and thinking that would follow graduation.

The purpose of reading History, indeed any subject at all as an undergraduate at Oxford, was self-development and self-realization. Nothing gave Mark greater pleasure than to see shy and unconfident young people at the Matriculation Dinner turn into self-aware adults by their Schools Dinner three years later. In his view, those years of intensive academic work were as good a way of finding out about oneself as has yet been devised: it's an argument rarely heard now in defence of a traditional university education, but Mark made it continually.

He understood that if executed conscientiously and at the highest level, whatever one studies will develop the capacity for judgement—judgement of situations, judgement of people, of lab results, of experiments, of historical controversies, of political contests. He taught in such a way that his pupils were encouraged to weigh the evidence, assess the arguments, and become confident in their ability to judge the present as well as the past.

Mark believed in a liberal education, in short, though that is a Victorian term and concept, and I never thought of Mark as an earnest Victorian in any manner: to me he was instead an eighteenth-century squire, the kind of figure who dominates a portrait by Stubbs, surrounded by

family, horses, and of course, beagles.

The best speech I heard Mark give was at a Faculty meeting, one of so many in that permanent revolution which is the Oxford History syllabus. On this occasion, I recall, General History was under threat of being downgraded. In Oxford terminology, 'General History' denotes those papers which survey broad swathes of international history, all of them covering many decades and, in Mark's period, several centuries.

Though his colleagues might dwell upon the merits of Special and Further Subjects which focus on specific themes or events, Mark explained that intellectually, a paper in General History is the hardest element in Oxford's syllabus, calling for knowledge across frontiers and continents, and great powers of synthesis. To do it well, undergraduates have to stamp a period with their own authentic structure and plan, their own view of the period, and know what they think about each regime in turn; the textbook could not save them. General History is the ultimate test in sorting out the best from the merely good. We lost that vote, I'm sorry to say, as we lost many debates on the syllabus, but Mark always defended a traditional Oxford education.

It was for this reason that Mark's election at Oriel was cheered so loudly: it was against the run of play. We welcomed it, of course, because we knew Mark was the man for this particular job in this particular college and that he would do it brilliantly. But we also hoped that he would make these arguments about an Oxford education in the highest councils of the University and protect, as much as he could, the concept of a broad, outward-facing, self-enhancing, liberal education in a public-spirited university.

Many of you sitting here today and listening to this who were taught by Mark are his legacy. We will together honour his memory in the best way if we remain committed to his vision of Oxford and the purpose of an undergraduate education here.

The above appreciation formed part of the Commemoration event for Professor Whittow at St Peters on 3rd November, 2018.

The lighthouse

Strange the way this constellation's
Sutures dissolve, so the stars
The light years slip from my shoulders
Into bespoken lives:

The soul leaving a firefly
Confuses her mothly suitors,
Lovers in longhand who jockey
Until there's no move left to make.

A second distress flare grieves
For the first. He follows her
Last sighting, heading down
To the lake of evening. She'll rise
To meet him with a lily's kiss.

Three wise ones sanctify the pumps
At Edward Hopper's gas station.
Something beyond the road, the trees —
My ear picks up what the leaves have
Guessed — blown reeds in the woodwind;
The stroke and irregular beat
In a blue jazzman's brushes
Feather and skitter the canvas.

My own fall is a talking down
Through kind lunar gravity,
Delivered under the lighthouse
Into the hands of this soft-spoken
Clear-eyed physician, lodged in his
Memory the x-ray of mine,
Ready to speak through silk reined in.

Phoenix

In memory of Chris Hartley (1954-2015)

The Nile of Wight's common birds gather
For take-off, the air leavening last calls,
A frequency of whispers: to hear
The Long Winged Conehead Bush-Cricket's song
Between 8 and 19 KHz,
You need to draw close to the singer,
To nape and collarbone. Among pearls

In her palm and not long unfastened
A lapsed concentration takes up slack.
While night comes on, each star and streetlight
Against the dark, each stalwart that burns
Has a flame in mind to begin with,
A matchmaker's eyelash and feather
Brought together once more by looking:

A skein, in the absence of geese, spans
Water Rails, Black Kites, Purple Herons
Dusky Warblers, Red Footed Falcons
And then, at either end of the clasp,
Little & Alpine Swifts, their marriage
A double helix, sleep given wing
For the Phoenix over Wootton Bridge.

The glassblower

Fisherman

His hair that stands on end and sways after the plunge
Assumes a greater burden on surfacing:
The pull of the tide and woozy plumage leaves him
Tight-lipped before the trawlermen's catch and speech,
His tongue a rooted eel, interrupted
By a pair of lungs that spare a thought underwater.

Builder

His father's house was just as he imagined:
Ceremoniously laying the foundation stone
Then stepping back as though before the Cenotaph,
An about-turn sends him to the doorway as planned
To cross the threshold, turn a house into a home,
A spirit-level balanced by a single breath.

Apprentice

Once the wine-taster follows her nose and picks up
Through the full-bodied red and the subtle oak
A silent trumpeter's note bearing fruit, there is
No need for the diamond scribe to craft his name
Now that one of his glasses has been put to use
And the making of these is in the blood.

Glassblower

Though he's long since mislaid the glassblower's phrase,
A drink set down among the empties, he watches
Lupins unkindling, losing their colours,
Drawn by a candle sinking into itself
Until called in by women from the midnight garden
While holding the ghost of a tulip by the stem.

GREG SWEETNAM

Greg Sweetnam was one of the poets in the OxfordPoets Anthology (Carcenet, 2004), and he has been widely published elsewhere. He works for Facilities Management.

An unpublished poem by Edmund Blunden

LAURENCE ELDREDGE

POETRY and prose flowed from the pen of Edmund Blunden like water from a spring. Most of his poems and essays have been published but, according to his bibliographer, “Many remain in the hands of friends in the form of unpublished poems.”¹ Recently we came across one such unpublished poem, apparently unrecorded.² It is written in Blunden’s own hand on the flyleaf of a copy of Herman Melville’s *Moby Dick* and plays on the imagery of whaling and of the Apostle Andrew, a fisherman (Matthew 4:18):

ANDREW VALDEMAR COCHRANE LEVENS

*This for small Andrew, soon to hoist his sail
And join the hunters of the Great White Whale;
To show his strength and pluck in the world’s old game
And, if I may conjecture from his name,
With splendid omen; he’ll have small complaint
With such a Fisher for his patron saint.
A whale may be no Fish in strict zoology,
But in this case Andrew needs no apology.*

*Spring up, young Captain, show us how to win;
Bring home your Whales with jam-jar and bent pin,
And later on the metaphoric kind.
Dreams that come true, and bright works of the mind—
Prosper, sweet boy, and claim what heights you please,
Triumphs, from Demon Bowling to Degrees,
Such as your gifted parents will acclaim
As adding honours to an honoured name.
And then if you have any old Whales to spare,
Your several godparents might like a share.*

Merton College Chapel,
Sunday, July 28th, 1935

My wife Karin’s brother, Andrew Levens, was killed in an automobile accident in 1961 and never did fulfil the predictions of his godfather, but the copy of *Moby Dick* must have had an interesting history. Thornton’s Bookshop in Faringdon, Oxon, offered it for sale in 2015 with the following description:

MELVILLE, HERMAN *Moby Dick Or the White Whale*, Cape. Library Edition. Jonathan Cape, 1925; xii, 7-545 pp.; orig. buckram, paper label; label chipped at corner. a christening gift from Edmund Blunden to one Andrew Valdemar Cochrane Levens, with a specially composed possibly unpublished 18-line ms. poem on the fly-leaf, signed Edmund Blunden and dated Merton College Chapel, Sunday July 28th, 1935. Red cloth, spine faded, paper title label worn at the right top, text browned. Price: GBP 350

Andrew Levens was the son of Robert and Daphne Levens. Robert was a classics don at Merton, an early editor of the *Oxford Magazine*, and a good friend of Blunden’s, sharing Blunden’s passion for cricket. And Daphne was an outstanding entrepreneur in Oxford amateur theatre.

Of course we had to buy the book, even at that inflated price. We thought that it must have been in Robert Levens’ private library when he died in 1976 and was subsequently sold by Daphne when she moved from her home with Robert to a smaller house nearby. When she died in April 2009 it was not among the books she had kept, so it must have been circulating on the second-hand market from about 1995 to 2016 when we bought it.

Blunden wrote a great deal, as the 725 pages of Kirkpatrick’s bibliography attest. His Oxford colleagues nominated him six times for a Nobel Prize, though never successfully. But it does say something about his sensibilities that he left this private poem unpublished, a gift to his godson.

¹ B.J. Kirkpatrick, *A Bibliography of Edmund Blunden* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1979), p. xvii.

² It is not listed in Kirkpatrick, and a check through volumes of Blunden published around 1935, failed to turn up any trace of it. See also https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edmund_Blunden, accessed November 2018.

NOTICE

Lucy Newlyn, 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 lucy.newlyn@seh.ox.ac.uk together with a two-sentence biog.

Statistics on bullying

After the *Guardian* published an article on 29 September 2018 in which it claimed that Oxford had the highest score for bullying of the universities which had responded to its FOI requests, I made an FOI request myself, asking for the information which had been sent to the *Guardian*. That was duly provided. I also requested further information. The responses are below, with the permission of the University.

These responses raise many questions, not least about the coherence and consistency of definitions of bullying and harassment in the various codes and guidance in use in the University and the colleges. Revisiting those as a set might be a good place to begin the review which should be triggered by the Editorial in the *Magazine* of Fifth Week.

G.R.EVANS

Reply to request for information under Freedom of Information of Act	
Your Ref	Email dated 30 September 2018
Address	
Request	<p>1. The disclosures Oxford made to the Guardian as reported in: https://www.theguardian.com/education/2018/sep/28/academics-uk-universities-accused-bullying-students-colleagues 'Oxford topped the list in terms of complaints made about all staff, with 73.' (though one wishes they had not chosen a photograph of the Encaenia procession).</p> <p>2. numbers of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• grievances raised under Statute XII• bullying and harassment complaints (not involving alleged sexual harassment)• bullying and harassment complaints (involving alleged sexual harassment)• bullying and harassment complaints (involving both member of staff and student)• public interest concerns raised.• employment tribunal applications by Statute XII staff (not involving the EJRA) <p>3. broken down</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• by Division• by Department or Faculty• by year for the last five years• by time taken to complete/resolve the complaint or grievance

Dear Professor Evans,

I write in reply to your email of 30 September 2018, requesting the information shown above.

1. I sent you the information on 22 October.

2. & 3. Attached is information on: grievances raised under Statute XII; complaints of bullying and harassment; and employment tribunal applications.

As regards public interest concerns, during the period covered by your request, none were raised by students to the Proctors; one was raised by a member of staff in 2018 to the Registrar. The member of staff was from the Medical Sciences Division.

We have provided a breakdown of complaints against staff by division, rather than department/faculty. We are concerned that a breakdown by department/faculty might enable individuals to be identified by those with access to other information or knowledge. We therefore regard this information to be exempt from disclosure

under section 40(2) of the Freedom of Information Act. Section 40(2) provides an exemption from disclosure for information that is the personal data of an individual other than the requester, where disclosure would breach any of the data protection principles in Article 5 of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). We consider that disclosure of the information requested in the exact form requested would breach the first data protection principle, which requires that personal data is processed lawfully, fairly and in a transparent manner. Disclosure would be unfair to the individuals concerned, as it would be contrary to their reasonable and legitimate expectations. They would not reasonably expect that information relating to a disciplinary complaint, grievance or Employment Tribunal application in which they were concerned would be made public under the FOIA without their consent.

For the disclosure of personal data to be lawful, it must have a lawful basis under Article 6 of the GDPR. There are six possible lawful bases in Article 6; we do not consider that any of them would be satisfied in respect of the disclosure.

The exemption in section 40(2) is an absolute exemption and is not subject to the public interest test provided for in section 2(2)(b) of the FOIA. To the extent that the public interest is relevant in this case, the University considers it is satisfied by the attached information.

We hold no record of the time taken to complete or resolve complaints or grievances. To provide this information, it would be necessary to examine scores of individual case files, which we estimate would exceed the appropriate limit in Section 12 of the FOIA. We would also need to examine individual case files in order to provide a breakdown of complaints against students by division. Section 12 of the FOIA allows a public authority to refuse a request for information if the authority estimates that the cost of complying with it would exceed the appropriate limit. The appropriate limit for Universities is £450, which, because the regulations fix staff costs at £25 an hour, corresponds to a time limit of 18 hours or just over two working days.

Number of 'grievances raised under Statute XII					
Division	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Humanities	0	0	1	0	1
GLAM	1	0	0	0	0
Social Sciences	0	3	4	1	2
Medical Sciences	2	3	0	4	4
MPLS	2	2	0	2	1
UAS	1	1	0	1	1

Number of employment tribunal applications by staff covered by Statute XII					
Division	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Humanities	0	0	0	0	0
GLAM/UAS	0	0	0	0	0
Social Sciences	0	0	1	1	1
Medical Sciences	1	0	0	2	3
MPLS	0	0	0	2	0

Complaints of bullying/harassment (Sexual)*

Year	Complaints made by staff	Complaints made by students	Complaints made by 'others'	Complaints made against staff	Complaints made against students
2013	2	2	0	2	2
2014	1	0	0	0	1
2015	2	1	1	3	1
2016	1	1	2	2	2
2017	11	6	2	16	3

Complaints of bullying/harassment (Non-Sexual)*

Year	Complaints made by staff	Complaints made by students	Complaints made by 'others'	Complaints made against staff	Complaints made against students
2013	5	0	0	3	2
2014	6	6	0	9	0
2015	13	4	0	16	1
2016	17	4	2	20	3
2017	8	5	2	11	4

* Data includes multiple complaints made against a single individual

Breakdown by Division – Complaints against staff

Complaints of bullying/harassment (Sexual)					
Year	Hum	SS	MSD	MPLS	UAS/GLAM
2013	0	0	0	2	0
2014	0	0	0	0	0
2015	1	0	1	2	1
2016	0	0	1	1	1
2017	0	0	5	1	3

Complaints of bullying/harassment (Non-Sexual)						
Year	Hum	SS	MSD	MPLS	UAS/GLAM	Unknown
2013	0	0	1	2	0	0
2014	0	0	2	3	3	2
2015	1	1	0	0	8	0
2016	3	5	1	1	6	0
2017	5	0	0	3	3	0

The Guardian requests and the responses supplied

Reply to request for information under Freedom of Information of Act	
Your Ref	FOI/20180724/1
Address	sarah.marsh@theguardian.com
Request	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Does your university have a bullying policy in place? Please provide a link to it and state when it was last updated. 2) How many complaints have been made in the last five academic years (2013-14, 2014-15, 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-2018) about workplace bullying? Please break this information down by year and state whether the complaint was made by: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) staff - please provide detail on whether academic or non-academic and seniority if possible b) student 3) Please say whether it was made against <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) staff - please provide detail on whether academic or non-academic and seniority if possible b) student 4) Where applicable, please state what university department the staff or students making and receiving the complaints were from, the gender of those involved and the grade of seniority of those involved. 5) How many complaints made in the last five academic years (2013-14, 2014-15, 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-2018) about bullying were investigated? Please break this down by year.

Dear Ms Marsh,

I write in reply to your email of 24 July 2018 requesting the above information. For ease, we have itemised your request. Please find the University's response below.

Item 1

The University's policy and procedure on harassment is [here](#), and was last updated in April 2017.

Item 2a and 2b

The following data is held by Personnel Services:

Academic Year	Complaints made by staff	Complaints made by students	Complaints made by 'others'	Divisions involved (where known)	Total Complaints
2013-14	7	2	0	Medical Sciences, MPLS, GLAM	9
2014-15	7	2	0	UAS, GLAM, Social Sciences	9
2015-16	16	4		UAS, Humanities, GLAM, Social Sciences, MPLS, Social Sciences, Medical Sciences	20
2016-17	12	1 student	2	UAS, Humanities, GLAM, Social Sciences, Societies, MPLS	15
2017-18 (to date)	15	1 student	4	Humanities, GLAM, Medical Science, UAS, Social Sciences, Societies, MPLS.	21

Item 3a and 3b

The information provided for Item 2 comprises the record of complaints against staff.

The Proctors Office (which holds records in relation to complaints against students) holds no record of cases that fall within the terms of your request.

Item 4

The following data is held by Personnel Services:

Academic Year	Number of Female Complainants	Number of Male Complainants	Gender of Complainant is unknown	Number of Female Alleged Perpetrators	Number of Male Alleged Perpetrators	Gender of Perpetrator is unknown
2013-14	4	5		3	8	
2014-15	3	6		4	2	
2015-16	11	9		5	13	
2016-17	11	4		4	9	
2017-18 (to date)	15	4	2	15	9	1

We have provided the names of the University Divisions involved in the complaints under Item 2. We will not disclose the specific names of the departments involved in the complaints nor the seniority of the individuals involved as we consider that this information is exempt from disclosure under section 40(2) of the Freedom of Information Act (Act). Section 40(2) provides an exemption from disclosure for information that is the personal data of an individual other than the requester, where disclosure would breach any of the data protection principles in Article 5 of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). We consider that disclosure of the information requested would breach the first data protection principle, which requires that personal data is processed lawfully, fairly and in a transparent manner.

The disclosure of the names the specific departments and level of seniority of the individuals would be unfair to the individuals concerned, since it could lead to their identification, which it would be contrary to their reasonable and legitimate expectations. They would not reasonably expect that information about a complaint they had submitted or a complaint that they are the subject of to be made public under the FOIA without their consent. (Please note that a disclosure of information under FOIA is presumed to be a disclosure to the world at large, and not just a disclosure to the individual making the request.)

For the disclosure of personal data to be lawful, it must have a lawful basis under Article 6 of the GDPR. There are six possible lawful bases in Article 6; we do not consider that any of them would be satisfied in respect of the disclosure.

The exemption in section 40(2) is an absolute exemption and is not subject to the public interest test provided for in section 2(2)(b) of the FOIA.

Item 5

Academic Year	Number of complaints that were investigated*
2013-14	8
2014-15	7
2015-16	20
2016-17	13
2017-18 (to date)	10*

*These figures exclude complaints where the investigations are either on hold, ongoing/pending, have been resolved informally or are subject to a different procedure.

Reply to request for information under Freedom of Information Act	
Your Ref	Email dated 24 July 2018
Address	Hannah.Devlin@theguardian.com
Request	See below

Dear Ms Devlin,

I write in reply to your email of 24 July 2018, requesting the information shown below.

1) How many students were disciplined for bullying over the last five academic years (2013-14, 2014-15, 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-2018)? Please break this down by year and provide details of whether complaint was brought by student/staff, gender and university department of those involved, where possible.

2) How many students were dismissed for bullying over the last five academic years (2013-14, 2014-15, 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-2018)? Please break this down by year and provide details of whether complaint was brought by student/staff, gender and university department of those involved, where possible.

The Proctors Office, which is responsible for investigating alleged breaches of the University's [Disciplinary Code](#) by students, has no record of cases that fall within the scope of your request. Students may have been disciplined by their colleges for bullying carried out in a college context but information relating to such cases would not be held by the University. Colleges are legally separate to the University and public authorities in their own right under the Freedom of Information Act.

3) How many staff were disciplined for bullying over the last five academic years (2013-14, 2014-15, 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-2018)? Please break this down by year and provide details of whether complaint was brought by student/staff, gender and university department of those involved, where possible.

Year	No of staff disciplined following complaint of bullying	Complaints by students	Complaints by staff	Divisions of complainants	Gender of complainants	
					M	F
2013/14	1	0	1	Medical Sciences	1	0
2014/15	-	-	-	-	-	-
2015/16	3	-	3	UAS ¹ , GLAM ²	1	2
2016/17	-	-	-	-	-	-
2017/18	2	1	1	Humanities, GLAM	1	1

¹ University Administrative Services

² Gardens, Libraries and Museums

Oxford: an academic community?

FERGUS MILLAR

At the end of Trinity Term I wrote a brief letter to the *Magazine* to express concern that this year, with no explanation or apology, it had apparently been decided not to invite to the Encaenia Garden Party those former members of Congregation whose membership had ceased when they reached the age of 75, and who previously had been invited. That seemed to me rather discourteous and insensitive; it would surely not take much imagination to realise that some elderly persons, though not of course all, might value the opportunity to turn out in academic dress and feel themselves to be still participating, in a brief and symbolic way, in the life of the University.

Interestingly, nobody from Wellington Square felt it necessary to contact me personally, or—as would clearly have been appropriate—to explain publicly the reasons for this decision (or indeed to make clear by whom it had been taken). Nor has anything been said as to whether the exclusion of the superannuated is now settled policy, or whether it is being reconsidered, or even reversed. Of course even long-retired Professors are aware that there are more pressing issues facing the University. But precisely in difficult and highly uncertain times openness and courtesy on the part of the administration in their dealings with members of the University are all the more important.

Moreover this issue can be seen in relation to much wider questions about the nature of the University as a society, and as a decision-making body, or self-governing corporation. So, in early October I decided to put these issues in a letter to the Vice-Chancellor. My letter and her reply are printed below.

Dear Vice-Chancellor,

The Encaenia Garden Party

It may seem trivial and out-of-order to raise again the question of whether former members of Congregation should be invited to the Encaenia Garden Party. But I submit that it is relevant to much wider issues relating to the nature of the University as an academic community, and that these issues deserve urgent reconsideration by those responsible for the running of the University.

Oxford and Cambridge are unique among Universities in that their staff are not merely employees, but voting members of a corporate body which is the supreme legislative organ of the University. It is surely not fanciful to think that this is relevant to the fact that these two medieval institutions still occupy the front rank among all the thousands of Universities that there now are in the world. Their staff 'belong' to the University, and it to them, in a way which is true nowhere else.

If this view is valid, the significance of membership of Congregation ought to be consciously and systematically advertised by those in charge of the University's affairs. But in fact neither the 'further particulars' sent out in relation to posts which have been advertised nor the subsequent letters of appointment make any clear reference to the significance of Congregation, if indeed they mention it at all. But this issue is of fundamental importance, both for recruitment and for retention. No-one could possibly mistake the widespread alienation felt by University Teachers elsewhere, who do not feel that they 'belong' to their University, or (still less) that it belongs to them. But surely the very people that we would hope to attract are those who would wish to see their role as not being just pushing out one more paper, and securing one more grant, but as involving a wider concern

with the University, its governance and its decisions.

What Oxford has to offer, if only it would resolve to say so loud and clear, in fact goes beyond that. For the right to vote as a member of Congregation lasts beyond the moment of retirement, and continues to the age of 75. As a glance at any issue of the Oxford Magazine will show, it is precisely retired members of staff who show the keenest interest in the conduct of the University's affairs, and the nature of the choices which it makes. We should value that—but at the same time feel profoundly alarmed at how rare it is for anyone in post and under 40 to express any opinion on any controversial issue of University policy.

If the University is a decision-making body of an almost unique type, it is also a large and very varied organisation, which is hard to grasp as a whole. That was where Oxford Today, in the earlier phases of its existence, played a valuable role in reporting on at least some parts of the system for the benefit of the others. Or, in default of that, one could, until 2015/16, gain a vivid impression by looking over the Internal Telephone Directory, abolished, so far as I know, without any general consultation. Of course, individual items from it can be found on-line. But a double-page spread of the Directory would contain some three hundred items, far more than any screen—and, by turning the pages, one could gain some idea of the University as a whole.

But the University, though divided into many very separate parts, can still be something more than an 'imagined community'. For on one occasion in the academic year, but one only, all the members are invited to the same event, the Encaenia Garden Party (how many other Universities offer any such general meeting-place?). Of course, not all have the time or inclination to attend. But all are invited, including (until now) former members of Congregation—over 75, that is—many of whom greatly value the opportunity to participate in a colourful event along with those in post, from the very young, often with infants in tow, to the (relatively) senior. Perhaps it might not be entirely irrelevant to the person thinking of coming to Oxford to know (if they were told) that they could not only vote, but continue to do so to age 75—and continue to be invited to a University event in the decades after that.

So it was, I fear, an act of extraordinary discourtesy and ineptitude for it to have been decided (by whom?) simply to discontinue sending invitations to retired members of Congregation, without notice, explanation or apology. Thought must be given to issues affecting the life of Oxford as an academic community—and if in this case the effect is that only certain College gardens will be large enough to take the numbers concerned, why should that be a problem? There are more important issues.

I must apologise for the length of this letter. But I do hope that these matters will be given serious thought.

The Vice-Chancellor's reply was as follows:

Dear Sir Fergus,

I wanted to write to thank you for taking the time to write to me recently. I appreciate you raising your concerns in such a frank and detailed manner.

With best regards

It is impossible not to regard this reply as disappointing. There is nothing to suggest that any of the questions raised by me have received, or will receive, any discussion. Has any decision been made on invitations to the Garden Party? On what basis could anyone defend failing to mention membership of Congregation in connection with the filling of any post which carries entitlement to it? But enough. Perhaps someone else will be more successful than I in persuading Wellington Square that how Oxford functions as a community and as a self-governing body is a matter of some importance.

REVIEWS

Re-Singing the European Idea

Oxford's 17th Lieder Festival: balancing act between Excellence, Expressiveness & Exclusivity



THE Grand Tour—what began as a sumptuous rite of passage for the young British gentry in the eighteenth century—recently found its way back into popular culture via television programmes, with Brian Sewell and Kevin McCloud being its controversial trailblazers. Only vaguely alluding to adventurous and, at times, debauched odysseys akin to those of Lord Byron and James Boswell, those new grand tour formats most notably feed on the voyage's instructive cultural exploration of Europe. Moreover, with apocalyptic Brexit references lurking around every corner, the promotion of the European idea very much lends itself as the conceptual springboard of any event that has its finger on the pulse of time—and rightly so, I may add.

In this vein, it was hardly surprising that for this year's Oxford Lieder Festival, the director Sholto Kynoch cunningly picked up on the signs of the times, staging its two-week, song-infused extravaganza in the spirit of a musical *tour de force* through Europe's vast song treasures (12-27 October). The festival gave its audience the unique chance to immerse itself in European song across borders, "exploring wider cultural and geographical influences"—very much in keeping with the European idea.

Being a young avid song enthusiast myself (and a regular attendee of the festival) I was, obviously, very much taken with the idea of "Songs Without Borders". Despite its admittedly kaleidoscopic, treasure trove character—never have I felt more like a child being granted access to Mr Kynoch's song-plastered Wonder Emporium—the festival, however, raises questions about its own exclusivity and elitism. But let's not upset the apple cart right away: what is undeniable is that the festival impressed with its artistic excellence and unadulterated expressiveness throughout.

Vocally light-footed tenor (and unexpectedly passionate thesp) James Gilchrist and angelic soprano Sophie Bevan impressed with the greatest of ease during the ambitiously programmed open-

ing night concert. Particularly Gilchrist's driven, eerie interpretation of the Loewe ballads "Erlkönig" and "Tränen und Lächeln" as well as Bevan's heavenly rendition of Strauss's all-time classic "Morgen!" transformed the anachronistic town hall into a vessel of vocal beauty and ability—not forgetting the beautifully blended sound of the choir, Schola Cantorum of Oxford, with its pin sharp Debussy renditions. The opening concert playfully paired up expected standards of the song repertoire with rediscoveries such as Louis Spohr's unintentionally funny, yet compelling, setting of "Erlkönig". What was also quite apparent in this programme, though, was the strong presence of German and French composers—a premonition of what was to come?

Partly yes, because, after what felt like the hundredth rendition of Schubert's "Winterreise" by Robert Holl and Graham Johnson, that was what the audience seemingly expected. Partly no, because at the margins and, at times, the centre of the programme, the festival surprised with short introductions to the idiosyncrasies of a variety of languages, and a remarkable selection of insightful study events (with the "Exploring Nordic Song" study event being a particularly well-programmed, fantastically diverse mixture of song and academic detours). And of course, the festival also swayed the audience with a selection of lesser known song "belles".

Captivating Estonian mezzo-soprano Kai Rüütel and irresistibly lucid pianist Roger Vignoles, for instance, presented impressively intimate songs by Estonia's *grande dame* of music, Ester Mägi. Her three songs on poems by Betti Alver with their obvious folk music inflections were stunningly beautiful in their deceptive economy of music and text. Equally thought-provoking were Estonian Mart Saar's somewhat Schumannesque bitter-sweet songs "Kadunud ingel" (Lost Angel) and "Sügismõtted" (Autumn Thoughts). The wonderful and pleasantly unagitated intimacy of this concert was topped off by the crystal clear, unpretentious late-night concert of The Carice Singers, a young British vocal ensemble, and its talented conductor George Parris. The carefully and tastefully selected programme presented cunning and witty "sauna" pieces (such as Matthew Whittall's sound-joke piece "Lauantaisauna") as well as positively laden conceptual modern pieces such as Kaija Saariaho's restless Balzac-setting "Nuits Adieux". The euphonious qualities of Scandinavian choral music be-

came even more apparent in the sonorous surroundings of New College's beautiful, candle-lit ante-chapel (which, incidentally, a week before had provided the stage for soprano Ilona Dominich's and Kynoch's impeccable and congenial interpretation of Debussy and Tchaikovsky songs).

In the spirit of Rüütel's simple and astonishingly intricate interpretation, charismatic Swedish soprano Camilla Tilling won over the audience with her spot-on Wilhelm Stenhammar song renditions. His opus 26 was beguiling in its atmospheric evocation of unpredictable Swedish landscapes. Tilling and her accompanist Paul Rivinius coalesced and playfully duetted in blissful agreement.

Soprano Lorena Paz Nieto's and mezzo-sopranos Marta Fontanals renditions of Spanish (most of them being merely Spain-inspired) songs should not go unmentioned. Especially their duets, a combination of the pixyish ease and fluency of Nieto and the saturated mature voice of Fontanals, foreshadowed the delights that were to be expected from the late-night performance of Camino del Flamenco. The unconditional devotion that those artists showcased proved how song could be understood as part of a living tradition: a tradition that breathes, ages and rejuvenates itself.

Rejuvenating and rethinking traditions—that is what the dynamic of a, in many respects, grandiose festival such as the Oxford lieder festival should prepare the ground for. When the interpreters took the liberty to travel beyond their usual itineraries, to focus on repertoire that is more recent or that lies outside the well-trodden paths of the canon, the lieder festival was at its best: diverse, inventive and surprising. One got a glimpse of what it might look like to not only rethink, but to actively re-sing the European idea.

However, I could not help but notice that as alluring as this sounds on paper, the Grand Tour—in its essence elitist, exclusive and high-brow—and in its wake the festival itself, were at times seemingly unable to shake off their deeply essentialist and conservative reading of what it is and means to be European. Excurses to the, among others, rich Estonian, Hungarian, Polish and Czech song traditions, were noticeably treated as such and often paired up with more conventional, canonised German, French and English songs. At times, I was unable to fend off the impression that the "Heidelberger Frühling" mentality of centre-staging those countries' song traditions (as well as settings of the 18th and long 19th century) subtly

marginalised and exoticised lied repertoire from other countries, eras, genders and social classes. This is why the occasional foray to folk music repertoire and new music should become a constant of the festival rather than an add-on.

One has to acknowledge that this problem of exclusivity comes with the territory: the lied, the last stronghold of a sometimes outdated concubinage of poetry and music, is known for its appeal to a homogenous audience (at times, I made a point of counting attendees under the age of 30). The Oxford Lieder Festival fights the same battle as many supposed strongholds of high-brow culture do: they have to pacify the needs of their largely conservative donor base and regular audiences, all the while trying to draw in a younger, more culturally diverse generation of song lovers (or song lovers in the making). With the European idea already being an essentialist and, in many ways, exclusive concept, I would argue that the lieder festival could (if it does not want to go beyond its European framework) at least experiment with more inclusive outreach formats within the European tradition. School workshops and free concerts that are already in place do not target that which follows in the wake of high-brow exclusivity: accessibility starts with the earnest attempt to not only hand canonic song repertoire to new audiences on a silver platter, but to uncover and actively work with points of cultural, generational and social points of intersection.

The Grand Tour as a European journey through Europe's diverse countries and their songs would then not only provide bed and board for a privileged group of aficionados, just as it used to with a selected group of the British gentry, but with a new and more diverse, cosmopolitan audience. In a Brexit-clad Britain that is what the European idea should be about.

STEFANIE AREND

Home is so sad

Philip Larkin: Letters Home 1936-1977, edited by James Booth (Faber & Faber, 2018). £40.



If these letters were written by someone who was not a published poet it is doubtful that any publisher would have accepted them. They are for the

most part tedious, low-key and uninspiring—and filled with diurnal banalities that should never be translated into the immortality of hand-writing or print. Not even speech perhaps. 'Mrs Oates tells me that my lavatory brush is on its last legs and will have to be replaced!' (1 March 1973) A whole range of objects and activities should be consigned to outer darkness, in-

cluding pedal bins and mangles. Although I did laugh out loud when he told Judy Egerton (not in this collection) that *Qualcast*, a brand of lawn-mower, 'sounds like a character in Henry James'.

Larkin wrote 4,000 letters and cards to his father, mother and sister. Booth makes a selection of 607 (which is more than enough) and provides a good introduction. His father died in 1948 and his mother in 1977. Larkin was dutiful and caring to his mother, but he was also exasperated and weighed down with responsibility, caught in a world of the humdrum and stultifyingly domestic. There's a photo of socks. Not something I have seen in a scholarly publication before. Reminds me of Ian Fletcher's remark about Herbert Horne: 'Poor old Horne, researching Michelangelo's laundry lists, and always one item missing.'

One benefit of the correspondence is that it allows us glimpses into that distant age. His mother was literally perspiring with excitement on seeing the 'climax' of the weather forecast when television was first installed in January 1954. I hope there were no reports of thunderstorms—one of her paranoid obsessions. The 'blacked-out and butterless days' of Oxford seem very remote. Bombs were falling, and when one interrupted Herbert Francis Brett Smith's lecture on mediaeval romance he said, 'Do I hear an *unacademic* sound?' (28 October 1940) All this was way before sexual intercourse was invented, so inevitably Larkin had a vividly evoked set-to with the Bodleian librarians when he failed to get access to *Lady Chatterley* (6 March 1941).

Why then do we read the letters? Do they throw light on the poetry? The poetry is so largely self-explanatory that it doesn't need light thrown on it; it throws its own light. The letters, however, make us encounter in a different dimension tensions in Larkin's vision, tensions which are at the heart of his poetic oeuvre. Take '*Vers de Société*', inhabited by a crowd of craps, and a 'bitch who's read nothing but *Which?*'. And yet one can't escape this milieu, since '*virtue is social*' and total withdrawal is impossible. There is though another world, where one reads 'under a lamp' and outside the moon is 'thinned to an air-sharpened blade.' Everywhere in Larkin's world we encounter the collision between the opposed states: one in which one gropes 'back to bed after a piss', another where 'the moon dashes through clouds that blow/ loosely as cannon-smoke.' It is no accident that 'sad steps', the title of the poem where these occur, is a phrase from a poem by Sir Philip Sidney.

The banal world is merciless and oppressive, aggressive even, matter of fact, filled with depressing detritus, 'ripped mags', 'lagged pipes' and 'separates from the cleaners'. 'Cushions from Harrods' sounds almost like Betjeman's 'stuff from Heal's' ('False Security'). It's where one eats an 'awful pie' on a railway platform. It strenuously resists transfiguration, and

poses a challenge to and a distraction from the creative imagination. These elements make one measure the gaping distance between the everyday world and the imaginative and visionary world. They provide the context, the frame for rare and remarkable epiphanic moments. In a larger sense the letters home provide an even larger context for the discovery of nuggets as rare as those in some surging river in Yukon. He is the laureate of boredom: after a series of social occasions for Degree Day in Hull, he 'plunged into a bath, and fell into a daze feeling all my fatigue and boredom being slowly soaked out of my bones till I almost expected to see it floating on the water like scum.' (3 July 1960) An afternoon in the Wellington Library is '100 years long'.

Larkin's mother did not have the intelligence or imagination to pursue a different life, one which could involve happiness and a degree of fulfilment. By concentrating on triviality and banality Larkin humours her, accommodates himself to her level, plays by the rules of her game, maintains a level of control. But only up to a certain point. He is capable of standing aside from himself and looking at everything from a broader perspective. Reviewing the new edition of Sylvia Plath's letters in *TLS* (2 November) Hannah Sullivan has a very good phrase about the 'qualified kinds of intimacy' she had in the correspondence with her mother (published in *Letters Home* (1975)). Something of this applies to Larkin.

There is performance in the letters to his mother; not as entertaining as the performance in his letters to Kingtons though. He projects himself as very nearly defeated by domesticity and the daily round. This is partly because it is what his mother understands. He is often sentimental, and there is a good deal about Froggy, an animal stuffed with beans, and the wicker-work rabbit Virginia, to fill up the void.

Many of the letters are illustrated with charming drawings of 'creatures'. I particularly like the one on p. 274 of him driving an Edwardian car, wearing goggles, his mother wearing hat and motoring veil. There is a good deal of something very like baby-talk, which is embarrassing, because exposed. This is, finally, a form of evasion, a form of escape from having to come entirely clean.

An alarming amount of this infantilism features in English literature. The most nauseating example is Ruskin's letters to Joan Severn (published at tiresome length in 2009, edited by poor Rachel Dickinson, who had to transcribe them). The things one does for scholarship! I suppose there is a doctoral thesis subject here: 'The place of baby-talk in interpersonal relations.' One encounters baby talk in *Look Back in Anger*, when Jimmy Porter communicates with Alison. Kenneth Grahame's biographer Matthew Dennison tells us that his 'extraordinary courtship' with Elspeth Thomson was 'conducted

mostly by toe-curling missives written in a mixture of baby talk and Cockney.' Not a good foundation for marriage, and she wrote in panic to Thomas Hardy's wife Emma, who replied, 'Keeping separate a good deal is a wise plan in crises—and being both free—and expecting little: neither gratitude, nor attention, love, nor *justice*, nor anything you may set your heart on.' Writing about the weather is another form of evasion, firmly built into the cowardly, uninventive, unimaginative, uncommunicative British psyche.

* * *

Not far away in Larkin's letters is suppressed anger and resentment, which occasionally insisted on bubbling to the surface. A perennial gripe was what to do about Christmas. Year after year in the letters there is the protracted struggle, which everyone goes through, not to alienate too many relatives with the excruciating and complicated arrangements. It's mid-November 1971, and angst is manifested: already 'the thought of Christmas depresses me.' 'To hell with Christmas' (his italics) a sentiment to which many a bosom will return an echo. There is a good deal in the letters on the 'other people are hell' theme (Larkin's adaptation of Sartre's 'Hell is other people'). Mainly noise. One sympathises.

All this prompts the question: who is the *real* Larkin? It is a problematical question to ask for anyone, since one should never underestimate the aspect of performance in everyone's make-up, challenging and compromising the elusive search for authenticity. And with a literary account one has to take account of the works produced, which may or may not represent an inner self. Sufficient to say that the *real* Larkin is not *more* visible in the poor sod struggling to install a draught-excluder (18 November 1956) than the one registering the Hardy-esque experience, and translating it into a poem, of an elderly woman seeing love's 'bright incipience' betrayed in a collection of sheet-music ('Love Songs in Age').

There are vivid incidents, such as the dogs invading Wellington Library (23 April 1944). I recall John Wain recounting these experiences to me, and saying that Larkin concluded, 'And they talk to me about Dostoevsky and suffering.'

Sometimes his poetic soul is exposed, and flashes of diction remind us of his poetic gifts. 'The chestnut trees with their candles are shifting ceaselessly' he writes on 5 June 1966. The sound effects here are not unlike those in poems: 'yet still the un-resting castles thresh/ in fullgrown thickness every May' in 'The Trees'; 'shadowing Domesday lines/ under wheat's restless silence' in 'MCMXIV'; 'the green/ river-fresh castles of un-resting leaf/ where loud birds dash' in 'Long roots moor summer to our side of earth'; 'long sibilant-muscled trees/ were lifting up' in 'Night Music'; 'shouldering off the freshened silence' in

'The Explosion'; and 'the wind's incomplete unrest' 'Talking in Bed'. In 'Here' we find 'the widening river's slow presence' adjacent to 'electric mixers, toasters, washers, driers'—reminding us that banal world can intrude into the poetry. In these examples Larkin shows himself the master of sibilants.

At Christmas 1955 he stayed with his mother in The Angel Hotel, Grantham, where he had an epiphanic experience, producing the exquisite 'Pigeons':

On shallow slates the pigeons shift together,
Backing against a thin rain from the west
Blown across each sunk head and settled
feather.
Huddling round the warm stack suits them
best,
Till winter daylight weakens, and they grow
Hardly defined against the brickwork. Soon,
Light from a small intense lopsided moon
Shows them, black as their shadows, sleeping
so.

What a fortunate hotel—to have had Edward III and Richard III staying there, and to be the site of a Larkin poem! He wrote to his mother (9 September 1956): 'Do you remember them? I expect not. You were asleep most of the time!' His mother replied, 'I don't think I was asleep most of the time, but only had my eyes closed!' I don't suppose Larkin knew that the hotel was one of the treasures of Pugin's *Contrasts* (1836), opposed to the neo-Classical Angel Hotel in Oxford.

'Reference Back' is a beautiful poem whose *donnée* one can trace in a letter his mother wrote (1 November 1955) about the time she said 'That was a pretty one' on hearing King Oliver's 'Riverside Blues' (1923). However you can't imagine him having a conversation with his mother, or anyone else (except perhaps Proust), about the poem's deep complexities.

Sometimes one encounters experiences which could have been transmuted into poetry, such as the festival with fire barrels in Allendale he elaborately described (5 January 1969). It could have been made into a poem, with sparkling images, but it wasn't. He attended it a number of times, always apprehensive that sparks would fall on his overcoat.

Also flashing out, quite often, is the Larkin humour. Craig Raine said to me years ago that the thing one has to remember about Larkin is that he was very funny, especially if you had the good fortune to meet him. He has a connoisseur's taste for the ridiculous, and sometimes shares it with his mother. We catch a glimpse of this on *Desert Island Disks* (which can be heard on the internet), when Larkin stipulates his luxury: 'a typewriter and an unlimited supply of paper'. When Roy Plomley asks what he'd write he says his memoirs, but hopes that the white ants would devour them before he was rescued. Incidentally Booth (30 May 1976) should have told us what the eight records were.

The indispensable one was Bessie Smith's 'I'm down in the dumps'.

We are fortunate to know what Larkin's wry voice sounded like. I can just hear him saying, 'I think I like George [Hartley] better as a shop assistant than as a publisher' (9 September 1956) and 'I paid only 6/6 for some "curried chicken" and it was like a dog's dinner, including worm-powder' (16 June 1960). In Durrants Hotel there were Americans: 'One of them talked, too, like a machine left running by accident.' The fact that it was breakfast just made it worse. (20 June 1971) He observed that 'Poets' Corner seems to be getting rather crowded! No doubt there will be room for me.' (3 October 1974) Looking forward to going to Buckingham Palace to receive the CBE he wrote that he had better buy a new mac: 'The old ones seem covered with marks of one sort or another. The Queen might think this a bit off!' (8 October 1975)

Most of the letters are lugubriously complaining, but there is occasionally positivity. One of the happiest days was 26 June 1955 when he went to Oxford for the 400th anniversary celebrations of St. John's College. He met his 'old enemy' the Dean, not identified by Booth, but it was Will Grayburn Moore (1905-1978), with whom the unbreakfasted young Larkin had humiliating interviews as an undergraduate—Nicholas Jenkins's (Co-Chair of the Auden Society) grandfather as it happens. Moore is thought to be one of the originals for Bruce Montgomery's ('Edmund Crispin') Gervase Fen. The President was actually Sir Cyril Norwood (1875-1956).

John Wain told me that the Amis/Larkin circle thought he was the spitting image of one of the Keystone Cops, and a quick glance at the photographs confirms that. The walk in Christ Church Meadow with 'the dew still on the grass' was a 'wonderful treat for me, and I felt really glad to be alive. Gorgeous rich expansion of everything! I felt I wanted to stay there for ever.' The day before there were strawberries and cream, champagne, fireworks and conversation with John Wain, Noel Hughes and his 'irritatingly attractive wife.'

The footnoting is on the whole adequate, but there are plenty of instances of where more could have been done. There is not room to catalogue them all. Here are just a few representative examples.

p. 338: Robert Conquest gave Larkin *The miseries of human life* (1807). The author was James Beresford, a Fellow of Merton College (1764-1840). It contained, *The groans of Timothy Testy and Samuel Sensitive: with a few supplementary sighs from Mrs. Testy. To which are now, for the first, time, added, Posthumous groans.* It catalogued 'in excruciating detail' the 'petty outrages, minor humiliations, and tiny discomforts that make up everyday human existence.' There are descriptions of the miseries of city life which would have appealed to Larkin.

p. 375: 'clip chanticleer's comb close'. See Thomas Gooday's *Chanticleer, or the British Cock* (1757):

Sooner than Destiny severe,
Shall clip the comb of Chanticleer;
Or ever it shall be decreed
That thou, courageous Bird, shall bleed. (p. 32)

p. 405: On Sark he encountered the obnoxious director of the corset manufacturer Spirella with 'his sheepfaced wife'. Research could perhaps identify these persons—although research has to stop somewhere.

p. 424: We need to be told that this description of Bellingham Show is a prose version of 'Show Saturday'.

p. 426: 'Guinness is good for you' first appeared in *The Daily Mail*, 6 February 1929.

pp. 470 and 471: 'the Librarian of the Bodleian'. Needs a note: Robert Shackleton (1919-1986).

p. 479: Hardy's *The Woodlanders* on T.V. It had Felicity Kendal as Grace Melbury—the sort of casting that looks absurd from this point in time.

p. 550 We need to be told where Anthony Powell's estate was: the Chantry, Whatley, Somerset.

pp. 565 and 566: Costin (not indexed). A Fellow of St. John's, William Conrad Costin (1893-1970). He was President of St. John's (1957-63) and author of the college history (1958). He was Larkin's moral tutor, and told him 'The three pleasures of life drinking, smoking, and masturbation.' Kingsley Amis met him with Hilly in the street, and reported: 'he raised his hat. Or perhaps he merely caught it when his erection had already knocked it off.'

p. 574: The mayor of Oxford. Not identified. It was Edgar Arthur Smewin (1893-1962), the first socialist mayor of Oxford, who did

indeed, as Larkin senior says, work for the railway.

If one wants a point of comparison for editorial work I'd suggest Zachary Leader's edition of Kingsley Amis's letters (2000). That's *really* sound—except that the binding is falling to pieces. But at least Booth's edition is superior to Anthony Thwaite's *Selected Letters* (1992) and *Letters to Monica* (2010). The notes are absolutely hopeless in both, and the indexes are lamentably inadequate. They'll all have to be done again.

BERNARD RICHARDS

Admitting Postgraduates

Sir—Martin Williams's indignant defence of Oxford's growing emphasis on postgraduate taught courses (*Letters, Oxford Magazine*, No.401, 5th Week MT 2018) would carry more conviction if he addressed the points I actually made, rather than one which exists solely in his imagination (and also, if he refrained from deploying the Vice-Cancellarial "vital" as a one-word substitute for reasoned argument). My original letter (*Oxford Magazine*, No.400, 2nd Week MT 2018) made two points. One was that Oxford's recruitment criteria for postgraduate taught courses are (unlike those for undergraduates) only partly academic, being driven to a considerable extent by financial objectives and students' ability to pay.

The other was that the postgraduate degree courses in question are of short duration and uneven quality. I implied, and am happy to spell out, that this is connected with their breakneck expansion over the past twenty years. Barely a generation ago, in the late 20th century, postgraduate taught courses contributed prominently to the University's international standing. The faculties, for example, of Philosophy and of Law were able to scoff at the suggestion that the BPhil in Philosophy or the BCL should be re-designated "Master's" degrees to prevent misunderstandings. Latterly, these titles have been submerged under a flood of M.Stud, MPP and other courses whose value and distinction are far from self-evident.

At no point did I say anything about the academic capacity of the postgraduate population. Professor Williams's ludicrous accusation of prejudice against them is almost the polar opposite of my concern.

TO THE EDITOR

Graduate students are increasingly being lured to Oxford from all over the world by its historical reputation—and then short-changed when they get here.

The number of postgraduate students at Oxford has now overtaken that of undergraduates. To be sure, this includes research students, notably in clinical medicine and related scientific subjects, which between them account for the bulk of the University's research income. But the process is not over. The Strategic Plan 2018-23 recently foisted upon Congregation proclaims that the growth agenda is to continue. Give it another decade or two, and we shall have become, in central Oxford, a predominantly post-experience institution offering light-weight degrees to persons whose serious higher education has been obtained elsewhere.

Not to worry. We shall then be frightfully Equal and unbelievably Diverse. Our medical research (and spin-off companies) up the road will flourish. Our tourist facilities will be second to none. And, thanks to the Focus agenda, our dozen or more executive Pro-Vice-Chancellors will be presiding over the world's biggest and smoothest-running university bureaucracy.

Yours sincerely

PETER OPPENHEIMER

Oxford

Bullying

Sir—The idea that one must do no more than assert the vague sense of being harassed to have an offender removed from sight, if not position, is unheard of at least in the libraries of Oxford. In fact, many readers have ceased moving forward with complaints about people who have stalked them in the library, sometimes coupled with verbal abuse, for fear of retaliation from the accused given the lengthy complaint process which involves so many interviews that they are certain their anonymity will be lost.

I only wish I saw a student body with the confidence and surety of their rights as you present (*Oxford Magazine*, No.401, 5th Week, MT 2018), instead of students, disproportionately women and people of colour, who feel too intimidated by Oxford's traditional culture to stand up for themselves in a space that they have earned and, yes, pay dearly for.

Yours sincerely

ALEXANDRA ZALESKI

Taylor Institution Library

Sir—Quite possible that both Tim Horder and Ben Bollig had just written their potent and disturbing editorials ('Bullying' and 'Notes on Harassment', *Oxford Magazine*, No.401, Fifth Week, Michaelmas 2018: pp.1-5) when the philosopher Martha Nussbaum was in Oxford over the weekend of November 10-11th, talking to and with a variety of people about her new book *The Monarchy of Fear: A Philosopher Looks Back at Our Political Crisis* (Simon and Schuster, 2018), in which Professor Nussbaum explains that:

"Fear is a trickster that lures people into believing that complicated problems have easy solutions, often convincing them that they can conquer their feelings of helplessness through scapegoating, revenge and exclusion" (pp iv).

Her starting point was waking up in a Japanese hotel room the night after Donald Trump's election in 2016, with the growing realization that "fear" seemed to be at the core of Trump's victory, unexamined fear which often leads to "aggressive 'bothering' strategies rather than useful analysis." (*ibid*), which perhaps echoes Tim Horder's:

"More broadly still, the common denominator could be seen as an increased freedom and imperative to express strong feelings in public that pervade societies today. Unsurprisingly the national press soon piles in. And so multiple positive feedback loops escalate the emotions and polarise positions regarding the original legitimate problem issues".

This is not to suggest that what has been happening at Oxford over the last few years mimics the thought (?) and practice of Trump, where the loudest voices do prevail, bullying and exclusion routine. On harassment, Ben Bollig quotes the Guardian's Gaby Hinsliff that "the odd thing about workplace bullying is that it's not necessarily secretive; indeed, sometimes humiliating the unlucky target in front of everyone is half the point."

In the first of her 2014 John Locke Lectures (*Anger And Forgiveness*, Oxford, 2016), Martha Nussbaum's questions Aristotle's "reference to a 'slighting' or 'down-ranking' ...where people are always ranking themselves against one another" (p.19). Nussbaum goes on to examine status injury, for example, denigration in the workplace, and the tendency towards narcissism, which (self-)focuses on the person and not the action to which the person(self) has been subjected.

To an alarming extent people seem to enjoy other people's (self)discomfort, especially if it makes others look better than the person under attack: the TV programme *The Apprentice* plays on this, where denigration is a sport, a spectacle, with "you're fired" triumphant and hysterical. Trump has been doing this all his life, not just during and since his *Apprentice* days. Vice-Chancellors, of course, bear no resemblance to Donald Trump.

Does Oxford have a particular set of problems on bullying and harassment, as meticulously set out by Drs Horder and Bollig? The answer must be yes and no, for while Oxford is no doubt *sui generis*, the University and its colleges reflect the world in which they're set. Status injury could be the norm, not the exception.

Yours sincerely
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