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CONGREGATION has been unusually active over the last three years, but not notably effective. In February 2015 there was an impassioned debate on the Castle Mill graduate flats on Port Meadow, which included an admission of, and apology for, inadequacies in planning from the Registrar. Then there were a series of principled debates on what might have seemed a matter of limited interest or concern for most Congregation members, the EJRA. Council arranged the sequence of events in such a way that an extra—and in effect pointless—Congregation meeting had to be called: moreover, contrary to normal practice amendments had to be announced electronically rather than in print (see *Oxford Magazine*, No 384, 2nd Week, TT 2017). At the end of TT 2017 there was a Discussion meeting called to consider the idea that central University bodies such as the Audit and Scrutiny Committee should report—perhaps annually and in an open, unstructured meeting format—directly to Congregation. Eight members of Congregation turned up in the audience. Nothing more was heard on the matter (*Oxford Magazine*, No 386, 8th Week, TT 2017).

But the pensions crisis and strike had such a galvanizing effect that, when 92 members (including a member of Council) put down a motion for a meeting on 6th March (8th week of last term)—a motion requiring the University to reverse its stated position on the level of risk proposed by the USS trustee—the Sheldonian was full, a turn out only exceeded in living memory during the governance debates in 2006 when the overflow had to listen in by relay in the Divinity School. The blocking of the debate on procedural grounds (*Oxford Magazine*, No 395, 0th Week, TT 2018) has left people wondering what role Congregation is able at present to play, and should play,

Meaningful self-governance

in our much-esteemed ‘self-governance’.

The question has gained heightened relevance in light of the last minute formal, e-mailed cancellation of a Congregation meeting scheduled for 15th May (4th week). The intended motion, announced in good time in the *Gazette* of 26th April, sought to include specially elected members of Congregation, drawn from constituencies whose interests are insufficiently represented by Council, in the membership of Council’s self-review,

due to take place over the summer. As announced in the *Gazette* of 26th April, Council at its meeting on 23rd April took the position that it “regarded the resolution to be unacceptable to it”, with the result that the original motion would be opposed and voted upon. The *Gazette* announcement noted that: “At a recent meeting of Council (12/3/18) it was agreed that the effectiveness of Council (and in particular the relationship between Council and Congregation) should be a topic for consideration at the next away day in September”. In the immediate aftermath of the pensions débâcle Council had already decided action was needed regarding its interactions with Congregation.

Council’s response also announced concessions to the proposals in the withdrawn motion. Council agreed that “the review take active steps to engage with members of Congregation by way of preparation”, and that the review would consider “How might engagement with Congregation be improved?”

We have yet to discover the nature of those “active steps” and whether the rest of the University staff and the unions will be involved. ‘Engagement’ tends to take the form of road shows or questionnaires, the representativeness of which can inevitably be questioned and in

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...and much more

the present case much more is required. If Council is to fully involve Congregation in its self-review it must take a stepwise approach starting with the widest possible canvassing of opinion, followed up by a gradual refinement of draft proposals through as many further consultations as are needed for consensus.

There are fundamental issues concerning Congregation itself which need to be resolved ahead of and alongside Council's self-review. The self-governing democratic principle that underpins the unique importance of Congregation for the University is compromised if the criteria for membership are not clear and are not followed. It has become evident that there are many arbitrary elements to the way newly-arrived eligible staff are placed on the Congregation Register. One result is that early-career academics, short-term college lecturers, post-docs and contract researchers—i.e. those, among other poorly represented groupings, that the withdrawn motion sought to involve in Council's self-review—end up underrepresented. I understand from representatives of the signatories that the motion was withdrawn on the grounds that these constituencies should be able to speak for themselves as Congregation members in consultations on the review. We also know that senior members

are sometimes removed from membership before the age of 75—often without explanation and without even being told (*Oxford Magazine*, No 385, 5th Week, TT 2017). Both issues can hopefully be addressed very soon.

The constraints imposed by the formal procedures of Congregation in themselves serve to inhibit member's involvement. But staff engagement simply becomes impossible if we are not adequately informed about policy in a timely manner. In the Council-initiated Discussion meeting of Congregation on pensions in 1st week this term Council accepted that internal communication had been inadequate.

Already important new precedents in terms of transparency have been set: in its *Gazette* response to the withdrawn motion Council published a document from Council papers that would normally not have been available to Congregation in print; the draft of the new Strategic Plan was made available before being discussed by Council. The article in this week's *Magazine* by Pro-Vice-Chancellor Anne Trefethen and the Registrar is a welcome signal and a hopeful pointer towards ways of better communication between Council and Congregation.

T.J.H

Contacting Congregation-elected members of Council

As noted in the *Gazette* of 15th March 2018, the eleven colleagues elected by members of Congregation to serve on Council are happy for members to contact them to express concerns, enlist views and discuss business as appropriate. The elected members on Council and the committees on which they sit are as follows:

Professor Helen McShane, *Nuffield Department of Medicine and Harris Manchester (Planning and Resource Allocation, Personnel)*
Professor Anne Trefethen, *GLAM, Vice-Chancellor's Office and St Cross (General Purposes)*
Dr Ian Watson, *Faculty of Modern Languages and Faculty of Linguistics, Philology and Phonetics, Christ Church (Education, Personnel)*
Dr Kate Blackmon, *Oxford Said Business School and Merton (Planning and Resource Allocation, Education)*
Professor Matthew Freeman, *Dunn School of Pathology and Lincoln (Research and Innovation)*
Professor Sir Rory Collins, *Nuffield Department of Population Health and St John's*
Professor Helena Hamerow, *School of Archaeology, Faculty of History and St Cross (General Purposes)*
Professor Richard Hobbs, *Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences and Harris Manchester (Research and Innovation, Planning and Resource Allocation)*
Professor Tim Coulson, *Department of Zoology and Jesus (Planning and Resource Allocation)*
Professor Geraldine Johnson, *Department of History of Art and Christ Church (Planning and Resource Allocation, Development and Alumni Relations)*
Mr Richard Ovenden, *Bodley's Librarian and Balliol (Finance, Personnel)*

How to initiate Congregation actions

How to trigger a debate or discussion in Congregation

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

Questions and replies

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

Postal votes

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

Flysheets

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

Regulations governing the conduct of business in Congregation can be found at: <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/statutes/regulations/529-122.shtml>

Items placed on the agenda for Congregation are published in the *Gazette*.

The Congregation website is at: www.admin.ox.ac.uk/councilsec/governance/congregation.

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



Reminders



The following extracts are taken from: John Carswell, *Government and the Universities in Britain: programme and performance 1960-1980* (CUP, 1985)

.... Change and development in universities have to be considered in terms of lifetimes, because the university experience forms lives. Those who work on the staff of universities commonly spend their lifetimes doing so and even those who attend only as students do not usually forget the experience. My context must therefore start with the time when I went to university (Oxford) just before the Second World War.

At that time the total number of undergraduates in British universities was scarcely more than the number of full-time university academic staff today (In 1937 the number of university undergraduates was about 48,000. In 1981 the number of university academic staff was almost 43,000) and one must also allow for polytechnics, which did not exist as a system in 1937. Education beyond the age of fifteen was then still privileged, sacrificial, highly competitive; the opportunities for women in higher studies outside teacher-training colleges were pathetically sparse; and the demands for scientific manpower were still in their infancy, even though Jowett, at the end of his life, had drawn attention to the scientific future of the universities and in 1931 the atom had been split at the Cavendish Laboratory.

The contrast is surprising even when all allowances are made. A power ruling half the world needed, or seemed to need, only about a tenth of the graduates Britain has today. The normal route for an engineer, an accountant, a solicitor, often a doctor, did not lie through the university at all. It was difficult for arts graduates to find jobs. Universities themselves recruited only about a hundred graduates a year to the academic profession.

The universities did not occupy a large place in the consciousness of the nation as a whole, for whom they came to the surface only in sporting events such as the Boat Race—and then it was only Oxford and Cambridge. They were respected landmarks. Between 1918 and 1945 Baldwin was the only Prime Minister to have a university degree, but since 1945 only two (Churchill and Callaghan) have lacked them. True, the universities were represented in Parliament by thirteen members, but they were returned by an electorate of less than 100,000 graduates in contests which rarely involved a party battle and were often undisputed.

The great change in the size and importance of the universities was largely the work of those who had attended them in the decade before the War and of their younger teachers. There were indeed outside, contingent influences: the War itself, and the influx of already qualified refugees (the products of the massive German university expansion of the 1920s) without whom the picture would have been incomparably different, and with whom the universities have moved into an international dimension which has replaced the former imperial role. The universities of the thirties may have been small, but

they were lively. Keynes published the *General Theory* in 1936, Namier began to revolutionise the writing of history in 1930. Cambridge had Leavis, Eddington, Thomson, Quiller-Couch, Gowland Hopkins, Moore and Trevelyan; and had instituted a degree in archaeology and anthropology. Oxford had Tolkien, Beazley, Lindemann; and had instituted a degree in philosophy, politics and economics. London University acquired a large part of Bloomsbury, built a ziggurat to mark its centre, and in 1929 gained the right from the University Grants Committee (UGC) to distribute, a block grant among its constituent colleges.

Despite, or perhaps because of, Britain having proportionately fewer university students than any country in Western Europe (let alone the United States) its universities achieved an extraordinary power over the feelings and outlook of those who studied in them. This was quite unaffected by the revolutionary opinions with which some of those graduates emerged. I have met many of that generation who repudiated their schooldays with horror and disgust, but none—even the most radical—who really wanted to subvert or destroy the university world he had known. This affection for universities, the sense of having acquired values by which to live, was to be most important in what happened later.

This sense of a world which was small, beautiful and detached, though bearing no relation to reality, has extraordinary power and endurance for both the lovers of universities and their critics. I have never been able to find the origin of the cliché 'ivory tower', which expresses one (usually hostile) approach to this.

In 1937 there were twenty-one universities (including the five just emerging from the ambiguous status of university colleges) as against forty-four today. Three-quarters of the students were at seven of the institutions: London, Oxford, Cambridge and four ancient universities of Scotland (Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and St Andrews). Indeed London had a quarter, Oxford and Cambridge a quarter between them and Scotland another quarter.

The other 12,500 students were thus spread over fourteen institutions, many of which were smaller than a major college in London or Cambridge, and for these the useful term 'redbrick' came into use. They were predominantly in the northern half of England, where civic pride and old industrial money had placed them. Though they had senates charged with academic authority they were not self-governing corporations of scholars like Oxford and Cambridge. Financial and administrative responsibility lay with a council on which local lay interests were strongly represented; and day-to-day management was in the hands of a permanent Vice-Chancellor appointed by the council. The 'redbrick' Vice-Chancellor was thus very far from being the short term chairman of an academic corporation, though one of his duties was to preside in the senate. He was the permanent head of the administration.

The larger civic universities—those of the Midlands

and the North—still conformed with the intentions of their founders by drawing most of their students from their own neighbourhoods. It was not unnatural for local authorities to pay quite generously for students attending such universities, and when the rare chance of a place for a member of one of their own families came up at London, Oxford or Cambridge, admiring ratepayers would admit the charge. After all, were not the civic universities supported in many other ways by the local community? Had not the University of Wales been built by the pennies of the people? Did not the University College of Nottingham derive a quarter of its income from neighbouring local authorities and much of the rest from the generosity of local employers?

The Welsh and Scottish universities were important symbols of their respective national identities—especially the Welsh. Oxford, Cambridge and London were metropolitan, in the sense of drawing students from all over the country; but they were in addition, and alone, international. There were fewer than 5,000 overseas students in the system altogether. Seventy per cent of them were at either London, Cambridge or Oxford. Edinburgh led among the Scottish universities with about 400. Elsewhere overseas students were numbered in scores, or even dozens, Southampton had six, Cardiff four.

The general outlook of the governments and student bodies of the redbricks might be local: it was quite otherwise with the academic staff, who had for the most part graduated at one of the three metropolitan universities. It was only to be expected. Those universities were older, bigger, grander. In 1935 London had 75 per cent of the graduate students in the whole country; and the three metropolitan universities between them produced far more of those who sought university careers than they could themselves provide for. There was a familiar *curriculum honorum* for such a graduate: a junior lectureship at a provincial university followed by a return to the metropolis as a college fellow, to end once more in redbrick with a chair.

As a result the metropolitan style pervaded, and was even exaggerated, in the academic life of the provinces. Manners were more formal, discipline stricter, innovation of curriculum less common, eccentricity less acceptable. The same, incidentally, could be said, even in the metropolitans, about the colleges for women. As for medical schools it should be recorded that in 1935 there was not a single woman medical student at Guy's, St Thomas's, St Bartholomew's, Charing Cross, St George's, the Middlesex or St Mary's.

For all its apparent placidity the university system of the thirties contained a dynamism that was to determine future events. This lay in the tension between the metropolitan and the provincial institutions—penetrated as these had been by the academic standards and memories which had come to them from the older universities. The institutional urge to expand did not originate in Oxford, Cambridge or even London though all quickly sensed the necessity to fall in with it. The steam was generated in the redbrick universities....

* * *

The state and the universities are like a discontented couple who cannot live without each other: he rich, busy, self-important, preoccupied with the office; she proud, independent and in her own opinion beautiful. The state-husband will always complain about her extravagance and inconstancy, and the university-wife will endlessly denounce his stinginess, jealousy and philistinism. Her parting words in the endlessly renewed argument will be that she knows he has a mistress—'and very common she is'. But they would not dream of parting: because of the children.

Nails

They were the gluons that Grandad used
to hold his atomic chicken run together,
corrugated iron roof and bits of wall
held fast against disparate timbers,
the slanted up prong on which
the torn up slices of Radio Times
were spiked in the outside lavatory,
the gravity defying picture hangers
crumbling the plaster under the wallpaper,
the six-inchers of rectangular cross-section
hammered into oak beams for no apparent reason,
bent and rusty seemingly from first planting,
now rooted in and unyielding
until blood and knuckle scraping dues all paid,
the projection in any self-respecting shed,
coming in handy, a snag for the unwary,
the incursor to a horse's hoof
once fresh hot from a smithy's forge,
the half-dozen selected for the job in hand
carefully wrapped in a twist of brown paper.

DAVID BRAUND

David Braund, now a retired computer software consultant active in literary and musical pursuits, graduated from St. Edmund Hall in geography in 1962.

In Focus: simplifying the University's support services

EWAN MCKENDRICK and ANNE TREFETHEN

In her October 2017 oration, the Vice-Chancellor called on the University to 'focus our resources on the activities we care about most, the research and teaching which are, and always have been, the central mission of this great University'. By reducing unnecessary complexity and removing duplication from processes, she argued, we can lessen the administrative burden placed on academics and researchers and free up people's time for the research and teaching that drew them into universities to begin with.

Some of you will already be aware of the efforts underway to recast and simplify the delivery of our support services. A number of pilot projects are underway and these are being taken forward as part of the Focus programme (www.ox.ac.uk/focus). The three-to-five-year programme comprises a range of activities aimed at simplifying processes, improving policies and making it easier to share proven ways of working. In some areas there is an opportunity to make swift improvements to processes and services, but for the most part Focus is a long-term programme of change aimed at achieving long-lasting benefits.

Support services—by which we mean the range of administrative and professional services that support the University's academic endeavour, from HR and student support to procurement—are currently delivered in different ways across the University: some at a local level, and some at a divisional or central level. Where local differences arise, this may be the result of specific local needs, and the fact that we are able to respond to these needs is one of the strengths of our devolved structure. However, in many cases the differences are born of processes that have developed in an organic fashion in response to external pressures, constraints or compliance requirements. It is now time to step back and reconsider our processes and policies from end to end.

The sheer volume of administrative work has also increased significantly over the last decade due to the growth in the institution, our research capacity and student applications. Applications for undergraduate places have risen by 15.8% since 2013, while graduate applications have increased by 31% and currently stand at over 26,000 per annum. We are also the most successful UK university at attracting external research income. Between 2007/08 and 2016/17 the number of successful grant applications increased by 23%, with a doubling of research income over that period. However, while successful applications grew by 23%, the overall number of applications doubled. In short, the continued growth in our research income requires an increasing amount of work to sustain, with a concomitant rise in support service costs.

As a university, we want to continue to react to research calls, engage with innovation, deliver high-quality teaching and admit the best students. However, the

complexity of our current processes is hindering rather than helping our academic endeavour. It is thanks to the skill of our staff in finding ways through our - at times labyrinthine - processes that we have been able to provide excellent support. But this is neither an efficient nor a sustainable way of operating. For our world-leading research and teaching to continue to grow and flourish, we need simpler ways of delivering support services, with straightforward processes that work well across the central, divisional and departmental structures.

Over the past few months, we have run a number of exercises on the Oxford Ideas platform¹, an online forum for members of the University to suggest ideas for process improvement and comment on colleagues' suggestions: the first exercise canvassed ideas on how to make administrative services more effective; the second on how academic administrative support could be improved. Over 100 ideas were submitted across both exercises, with the second engaging over 250 contributors and attracting over 7,500 views.

These suggestions—together with others gained from the divisional plans, priorities collated by central service directors, discussions with groups and individuals across the University, and analysis of the UniForum data²—have formed the initial set of activities for Focus. These include making our policies easier to understand and communicating them clearly; simplifying processes and standardising them where it makes sense to do so; and encouraging joined-up ways of working across the University so that we can share knowledge and expertise across the institution. It is, after all, those who have first-hand knowledge of a process or system, and who experience its foibles and frustrations on a daily basis, who are best placed to identify the key issues and who can help design a more efficient way of working. Our approach with Focus is therefore a highly collaborative one: to involve staff across the University in suggesting areas for improvement, and designing and implementing more efficient ways of working.

The collaborative approach can be seen in one of our first pilot projects—e-expenses—which will see the University move from a paper-based to an automated process for claiming expenses. Over a seven-week period, from early January to late February 2018, we mapped out the current process for submitting and paying expense claims, holding interviews and workshops with colleagues across the University to better understand the inefficiencies and frustrations of the current system and identify opportunities for improvement. What we found was that each expense claim currently takes approximately 60 minutes to process, is handled by an average of seven people, and takes three to four weeks to pay. When we multiply that by the 70,600 claims submitted each year, together with the photocopying and archiving costs associated with a manual process, we end up with

an annual bill of £1.2 million simply to process expense claims. I am sure that few of us would disagree that this money could be put to far better use.

The new e-expense system will enable us to reduce overall processing time by an estimated 60-70% as well as reduce the number of lost and returned claims by 20%. Not only will this save valuable time for those involved in processing claims, but it will also mean a shorter time from submission to payment for claimants as well as a more environmentally friendly and cost-effective way of operating. Furthermore, the knowledge gleaned by those staff involved with the project will prove invaluable for taking forward process improvements in other areas. As more projects get underway, involving a greater number of staff across the University in reviewing and redesigning processes, so we can start to develop a more efficient way of operating—one in which we adopt common approaches and share systems. And

this in turn will enable staff working in support services to develop new skills and strengthen their professional networks across the University.

Our focus is ultimately about people. We want to provide better support for academics and researchers so they can focus on their core priorities of teaching and research, and we want to create joined-up ways of working so that staff in support services can share knowledge and build networks. In so doing, we will enable Oxford's world-leading research, learning and teaching to continue to grow and flourish, whilst securing the institution's long-term financial sustainability.

¹The University platform for sharing ideas: <https://oxfordideas.wazoku.com/#/discover>

²UniForum (www.admin.ox.ac.uk/pras/pi/ufintro/) is the data collection and benchmarking exercise carried out in 2016, which offers a snapshot of the effort expended across the University in delivering administrative and support services.

Unscrambling Humpty Dumpty

PETER OPPENHEIMER

THE earlier section of this article (“Humpty Dumpty is Falling Apart”, *Oxford Magazine* No.396, Second Week, Trinity Term 2018) focussed mainly upon the creeping decline since 2000 in Oxford's educational and examination standards. But it also emphasised that such decline has not been isolated or self-contained. Rather, it reflects the general decay of University governance at Oxford, stemming from the North Reforms at the end of the 20th century. These reforms created a vacuum at the top. The General Board, the crucial instrument of cross-faculty opinion in the University's policy machinery, was abolished. And Council, the remnant executive body, was lumbered with a size of membership and complexity of structure and procedure that has made it fundamentally unworkable. So control over the University's affairs passed by default to the central administration. An appearance of Council's effectiveness is superficially maintained, because Council has itself become the creature of the central administration.

In these circumstances the administration—up to and including Vice-Chancellors—has understandably lost sight of its proper function and limitations, and misleads itself when it refers to the sum of its activities as “support services”, indistinguishable from those supplied by departmental staff. That term should imply relationships of symmetric dialogue, not of unilateral direction and policy-making. Revealingly, the current EBITDA financial target for the University (a piece of gratuitous Whitehall managerialism, entirely inappropriate to a not-for-profit organisation) is cited to justify restraints on departmental, and potentially even college, outlays, but not, as far as one can see, on the central administration itself.

It is an irony of the present situation that the central administration likes to lecture the academic community on the virtues of interdisciplinarity in theory, while

doing its best through the Divisional system and otherwise to discourage it in practice. The community, in other words, is Divided and Ruled. To-day's academic departments are expressly separated from central policy-making. They have no incentive to develop mutual understanding and a sense of common purpose even within, let alone across, Divisions. Whenever possible they are deemed to be in financial deficit; and are pressed to eliminate this (or to avoid it in the first place) by finding additional research income or admitting more fee-paying students. Among the consequences have been major growth of medical research activity (often defensible) and disproportionate expansion of postgraduate taught courses, notably in social sciences (pretty much indefensible). Medical research departments are altogether in a special position: their subject matter is homogeneous, research is their sole academic activity, and together they receive two-thirds of the University's entire research funding.

The central administration may occasionally recognise and claim to remedy some shortcoming or other in the University's governance. But the shortcoming has to be sufficiently trivial, and not one that casts doubt on the autonomous authority of central administration itself. Council, for example, conducts a triennial “Self-Review of Effectiveness”. The outcome of the 2015 exercise is recalled (by way of prolegomenon to that forthcoming in 2018-19) in *Gazette* No.5202, 26th April 2018, pp.420-1. Among the half-dozen ameliorations there mentioned is *a change in seating*: “to improve the dynamics of Council....only Council members now sit around the Council table”—and also, one must add, resume sitting afterwards around a different table, for dinner at the Vice-Chancellor's residence. Deck chairs on the *Titanic* come naturally to mind. Or perhaps more pertinent, the celebrated fable from Russia's Aesop, I.A.Krylov, about a menagerie

(monkey, donkey, goat and bear) trying to play string quartets, who can't agree on the seating arrangement that will turn their cacophony into music. The unwelcome truth is put to them by a passing nightingale:

*"However much you change positions,
You'll never make it as musicians!"*

Almost as venturesome as this revolution in seating is the formal approval of direct communication between any individual member of Congregation and their elected representative(s) on Council. But the latter are warned against taking these communications seriously, being "reminded at the beginning of the year of their duties as Trustees and their responsibility to the institution, rather than the community they may feel they represent". The quotation is again from Council's Self-Review in 2015. The stated antithesis is false. The two kinds of responsibility can, and typically do, run in parallel, and are precisely to be reconciled as circumstances permit. What we have here is a bare-faced attempt by the administration to designate its own interests as those of "the institution", whereas, of course, academic concerns are merely parochial or self-serving.

The same attitude appears in other connections. Council was quick to reject a reasoned proposal from a group of Congregation members (*Gazette* No.5202, *ibid.*, pp 418-420) that its forthcoming "Self-Review" be afforded from outside with five persons additionally elected by Congregation, persons who were to pay particular regard to the viewpoints of under-represented constituencies (such as college-only or part-time academic staff). This proposal, moreover, was itself an explicit reaction to preceding episodes of high-handed conduct by central administration. One such episode occurred in Hilary Term 2018 over the USS Pensions issue. Another, mainly during 2017, concerned the mode of enforcement of the Government's PREVENT legislation, and specifically the sidelining of the University's Prevent Steering Group, appointed to protect academic freedoms. Congregation-elected members of the Group felt compelled to resign in protest. (See *Gazette* Flysheet of 25th January 2018.)

And then there is the five-year "Strategic Plan". This is currently being "refreshed" for the new quinquennium 2018-23. Let us not fool ourselves. The last document, in 2013, was a matter of the central administration concocting for Whitehall a colourful pot-pourri of the newly emerging and the long established, of the plausibly boastful and the politically prudent. The academic community had no sense of ownership in the product. Nor has anybody attempted to link it with actual developments in 2013-18. Those who look to a different outcome this time should not hold their breath. Council has made no bones that "rather than developing a new plan from scratch, the plan covering the period from 2018-23 should build on the existing framework, updated as necessary to reflect changing priorities or changes to the external environment." (*Strategic Plan 2018-23-Consultation*, 5/4/2018). No need either to enquire who decides (or has decided) (a) which priorities (if any) are changing; (b) what changes in the external environment are relevant; and (c) what strategic responses are therefore appropriate. The principal merit

of the 10-page draft published and laid before Council on 14th May is its brevity.

This draft again promises (*pace* new priorities) all things to all persons, with absolutely no hint of possible conflicts between objectives, of trade-offs among them, or of sequencing. Everything is a priority: we just aren't told which comes first. Big issues are evaded. One of these is total student numbers, and the arguments in particular for a lower intake to postgraduate taught courses. Another is undergraduate funding and the case for a proper mechanism, not tied to government edicts, to ensure needs-blind admission. Many undergraduates should pay nothing for tuition; others should pay up to £20K p.a. Degraded examination standards are not mentioned, merely that they need to be equally degraded for all genders and all ethnic groups.

Is it still possible to restore Oxford University to academic self-governance? Thoughtful and experienced persons now see this not as a tentative possibility, but rather an urgent necessity. David Palfreyman, long-serving bursar of New College and a member of the Office for Students, talks in the *Oxford Magazine* (No. 395, Noughth Week Trinity Term 2018, pp 4-5) about reverting, on grounds equally of efficiency and economy, "to the pre-2000 governance structures". Ralph Walker, sometime Chair of the General Board, emphasises a similar message in the succeeding issue (No. 396, Second Week Trinity Term 2018, p.5), noting in particular that "The Divisional system has set one part of the University against another, repeatedly. This is because the different divisions of the University do not understand one another, or see the value of what is done by other divisions."

Two things at Oxford stand (as yet) in opposition to administrative dictatorship: the colleges, and the sovereign body of Congregation. Only the latter has specific authority at University level, and of course it cannot run the University from day to day. Its function is to decide occasional major questions of principle, and otherwise to act as a watchdog or constraint. The central administration makes no secret of its distaste for Congregation and would plainly like to strip it of its authority. While that is not in prospect, Wellington Square relies a good deal for its freedom of action on the inertia of Congregation. The assembly is not easily aroused. Its members are busy with their day jobs of teaching (including pupil welfare) and research. Many, especially younger ones, may feel that resistance is basically futile. Probably no-one under fifty can recall Oxford having satisfactory leadership by the Vice-Chancellor.

Certainly if Congregation is to make a decisive move to re-establish academic control of University policies and bring the administration to heel, it needs to choose its ground carefully. One approach would be to enforce a comprehensive review of the post-North regime. This was originally promised—not contemplated: promised—after an initial 5 years, but then abrogated. It would, of course, be time-consuming in itself. Given the experience of the subsequent period, moreover, it is arguably unnecessary. A step-by-step procedure could enable straightforward changes to be made promptly, while others are elaborated gradually, by partial analogy with the "Self-Review" mechanism. The remaining paragraphs elaborate fractionally on this scheme.

Three Divisions (Humanities, MPLS and Social Sciences) should be abolished. Their place should be taken by an Academic Council, similar in limited size and broad remit to the former General Board, its members nominated by department/faculty boards in rotation (rather than elected as individuals by the crowd). The Medical Sciences Division, as stated earlier, is a different case. It should remain and send a representative to the Academic Council. This rearrangement removes an entire layer of top-down administration (Division Heads and their bureaucracies), and substitutes an executive body derived systematically from the grass roots. The Academic Council will require a secretariat of perhaps a dozen, compared with the present Divisions' administrative staffing of over a hundred (Medical Sciences excluded).

The Academic Council will evidently be responsible (again like the General Board) for academic governance, creating at a stroke much needed light and space for the presently overloaded University Council. Consideration will need to be given to the latter's size and membership, as well as to the distribution of committees between the two Councils. The University Council should be a good

deal smaller than at present (making it even easier to sit round the table). And it should contain a substantial college element (Heads of House) instead of the string of elected individual members of Congregation, who embody neither the cohesion nor the departmental legitimacy (contrast the Academic Council) needed to play a useful role.

Education Committee matters, including proper Departmental Reviews, should obviously be under the Academic Council. Likewise some of the current responsibilities of PRAC such as the programme for maintenance and new construction of academic buildings. The University Council must exercise overall financial responsibility, not least for overarching budget constraints, from which the central administration should cease to be exempted. Both Councils should have shorter and more frequent meetings. Members' other duties could be bought out. Both must share the compilation of Strategic Plans.

The foregoing may suffice as illustrative pointers. One should add only that the two Councils between them will plainly trim the need for the ever-enlarging phalanx of Executive Pro-Vice-Chancellors each presiding over this or that corner of the University's business.

Who will be held responsible by the Office for Students?

G.R.EVANS

THE cancellation of the Debate of Congregation which was to have been held on 15 May postpones for the time being any opportunity for Congregation to have a direct say in its role as the University's sovereign body published in the *Gazette*. Yet the need for that had become clear. Council has published its intention to consider 'the relationship between Council and Congregation.'¹ But in the light of the emerging requirements of the Office for Students the most urgent matter seems to be to clarify which body is to act as the governing body of the University. In the case of Cambridge the Statutes are clear. The governing body of the University is the Regent House (Statute A,III,1). In Oxford's Statutes whether Congregation or Council is the governing body is never stated in explicit terms. Perhaps it should be. This question is just part of a much wider one: how will the new Office for Students set about identifying the bodies or individuals with ultimate responsibility across the whole range of English HE institutions? As more and more alternative providers (among them private, for-profit ones) enter the HE market place this question becomes increasingly pressing.

* * *

For providers seeking to be on the new Register 'listing all the English higher education providers officially recognised' by the OfS² the Registration process opened on 3 April. The Register will begin to be published in July

and will be added to as more providers are approved. It will be possible to 'provide higher education' in England without being on the Register. However, the governing body even of an unregistered provider will be required to provide the OfS with information needed for the performance of OfS's functions.

The new Register is designed to include a far wider range of types of provider than HEFCE's previous Register. Identifying the governing body of a provider will be of the first importance to the integrity of the OfS process. A provider's governing body will be responsible for making the application and for appealing if its application is refused. It will be responsible for complying with the conditions of registration, both mandatory and specific. If OfS informs the provider that it intends to deregister it, the governing body will be responsible for making representations about the stated reasons. It will also be told if its Access and Participation Plan is to be rejected by OfS and be responsible for amending it. The governing body will receive any public funding for which a registered provider is eligible. It will be informed of any OfS intention to revoke the provider's degree-awarding powers or university title and may make representations about that. If the provider wishes to appeal to the First Tier Tribunal against an OfS decision, that is the responsibility of the governing body.

One option available to a provider which chooses not to engage with the OfS to more than the minimum necessary extent would be not to register at all. The 'benefits'

of being registered will be mainly financial. A Registered provider may apply to be placed in one of two categories: 'Approved' and 'Approved (fee cap)'. The second category will give access to public grant funding (the remainder of the old block grant), for teaching and research. Research funding under this head must be made available to the governing body through Research England within UKRI. Providers in both categories will have access to public grant 'project' funding administered through the UKRI research councils, and their eligible students, both undergraduate and post-graduate, will be allowed to apply for taxpayer-funded student loans, and for Disabled Students' Allowance. Both categories will be eligible to apply to the Home Office for a Tier 4 Sponsorship Licence so as to recruit international students. Both will be able to apply for degree awarding powers and university title.³

In setting out the requirements for Registration (or identification for default information-gathering purposes) OfS seeks assurance that a provider will be governed in a satisfactory manner. *Condition E1* is that 'The provider's governing documents must uphold the public interest governance principles that are applicable to the provider.' *Condition E2* is that:

*'The provider must have in place adequate and effective management and governance arrangements to: (1) Operate in accordance with its governing documents (2) Deliver, in practice, the public interest governance principles that are applicable to it.'*⁴

This appears to distinguish 'governance' from 'management', but whereas the HEFCE Register, which included mainly publicly-funded universities and further education colleges offering higher education, could usually assume that the 'governing body' would be readily identifiable, and clearly distinct from the 'operational management', that will not be the case for the OfS Register, which must be designed to include alternative providers of various legal forms, and providers which are very small. There will not always be any separation between governing body and operational management.

The OfS provides a Questions and Answers document to assist providers. Question 30 asks how to respond to the requirement to identify 'key individuals':

'Does this refer to our senior management team or members of the governing body?'

The Answer given is that these should be 'the people who either own or have ultimate control of your provider'. But it is not straightforward to say who these are, for:

*'In many providers, this will refer to the governing body. It does not include the senior management team unless its members are also directors of the provider.'*⁵

So complex may this become that providers will be asked to describe their legal form, including Company or Charity number if applicable, in order that the OfS may be able to check that the various bodies of information it is given refer to the same entity.⁶

In the new Register, then, it will be possible to find providers which do not make the separation between

oversight and management which could be expected in the publicly-funded universities listed in the HEFCE Register. Those institutions were of familiar types: statutory corporations, whose required governance was set out in the Further and Higher Education Act 1992; providers with royal charters; the two ancient civil corporations (Oxford and Cambridge). Schedule 8 of the Higher Education and Research Act (HERA) makes amendments to Education Reform Act 1988 and adds stipulations about the governance arrangements of higher education corporations in England. But it does not seem to address the problem OfS has encountered in providing distinct definitions of 'governing body' and 'operational management'. Oxford and Cambridge are on their own in their governance arrangements and both have bodies with oversight and ultimate control of their operational management. These are the bodies, Congregation and the Regent House respectively, to which will fall the OfS-related responsibilities listed above. But what about the new private providers?

The document 'How to submit your application for registration with the OfS' contains the sum total of OfS guidance available.⁷ To satisfy *Condition E1* the provider may submit its own 'Management and governance self-assessment'. Yet in order to include a potentially ever-widening range of alternative provider-types separation of 'governing body' from 'operational management' is left uncertain. The FAQs explain that:

*'The term 'governing body' has the meaning given in section 85 of HERA. Broadly, this will be any board of governors of the provider or any person or group of people responsible for the management of the provider/company, or an equivalent controlling body. This might be the board of directors, the trustees of a charity, for example.'*⁸

The Chair of a governing body:

'Is the person responsible for leading the governing body, or equivalent, and who has ultimate responsibility for strategic decision making and oversight of the provider.'

Here operational management and governance seem potentially to be conflated, to the point where a single individual may be both 'the governing body' and 'the operational management':

*'Broadly, this will be any board of governors of the provider or any person or group of people responsible for the management of the provider/company, or an equivalent controlling body. This might be the board of directors, the trustees of a charity, for example. We recognise that for very small providers there might be a very small group of people responsible for management and one individual may be both the chair and the accountable officer.'*⁹

There are provisions which could make it difficult to ensure that that single individual is identified:

'You should confirm to us in this section that every individual whose details you have passed to us has consented in writing to our holding and processing their personal data for the purpose of our regulation of you, and that you will provide us with a copy of that consent on request.'

It might follow that it would be difficult to show that the designated individual was a 'fit and proper person'

in accordance with OfS's 'nine indicators': that person 'may not be' such a 'person'.¹⁰

It may no longer be straightforward to identify the controls on an alternative provider's dashboard or even who is the driver. An example is Global University Systems, incorporated in the Netherlands with a single proprietor, Arkady Etingen, and including the London School of Business and Finance (founded by Etingen), St. Patrick's College, London and Arden University.¹¹ The London School of Business and Finance was on the list of providers restricted from further expansion in November 2013 in the wake of Public Accounts Committee concerns about alternative provider exploitation of student loans.¹² St Patrick's College was one of those censured in the National Audit Office inquiry of 2014 into the same behaviour.¹³ Arden University was reviewed by the Quality Assurance Agency in November 2017 and its governing body identified:

*'The Board of Directors is responsible for the strategic direction of the University, the financial and legal aspects, and for the annual performance management process.'*¹⁴

It is not clear from the University's website who its Board of Directors includes. Companies House records six active Directors, with 17 resignations. Among the current Directors is Arkady Etingen (for whom 30 Directorships are listed in GUS and other related enterprises) and Philip Hallam, Vice-Chancellor and Chief Operating Officer. Companies House records one 'person with significant control', Au Bidco Ltd. This 'legal person' has two Directors recorded as having significant control, one of whom is Arkady Etingen. AU Bidco 2 Ltd was registered a few days later and has one person with significant control, Arkady Etingen.

The OfS guidance requires a provider to 'deliver in practice' the 'public interest requires governance principles that are applicable to it'. It seems less than clear what these would be in the case of alternative providers. There remains a tension between the view of the *Lambert Review of Business-University Collaboration* (2003) that 'the sector has reached a point where a voluntary code of governance should be developed, to represent best practice across the sector',¹⁵ and the principles set out in the recently revised and HEFCE-recommended *Higher Education Code of Governance* of the Committee of University Chairs.¹⁶

* * *

Where does this leave Oxford and the question of the 'relationship' between Congregation and Council? One thing seems to be clear. If Congregation is *de facto* the

governing body of the University it will be Congregation which will be responsible for all those 'OfS-facing' tasks. This strongly suggests that Council will need to tell Congregation a great deal more of what it is doing on the governing body's behalf and recognize its place as servant of that body.

¹ <https://gazette.web.ox.ac.uk/files/10may2018-no5204redactedpdf>

² <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/the-register/the-ofs-register/>

³ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/regulation/what-can-registered-providers-do/>

⁴ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/regulation/conditions-of-registration/initial-and-general-ongoing-conditions-of-registration/>

⁵ https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/2287a9a2-2f61-4774-ae1a-3089ceff6424/registration_faqs.pdf.

⁶ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/1280/how-to-submit-your-application-to-the-office-for-students.pdf>

⁷ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/1280/how-to-submit-your-application-to-the-office-for-students.pdf>

⁸ https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/2287a9a2-2f61-4774-ae1a-3089ceff6424/registration_faqs.pdf.

⁹ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/1280/how-to-submit-your-application-to-the-office-for-students.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/1280/how-to-submit-your-application-to-the-office-for-students.pdf>

¹¹ <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/arden-university-sold-global-university-systems>.

¹² Hansard (2013), Written Answers (13 November, 2013) <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmhansrd/cm131119/wmstext/131119m0001.htm>

¹³ National Audit Office (2014), *Investigation into financial support for students at alternative higher education providers*, <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Investigation-into-financial-support-for-students-at-alternative-higher-education-providers.pdf>

¹⁴ <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Documents/Arden%20University/Arden-University-Ltd-HER-AP-17.pdf>

¹⁵ http://www.eua.be/eua/jsp/en/upload/lambert_review_final_450.1151581102387.pdf

¹⁶ <http://www.universitychairs.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Code-Final.pdf>.

The next issue of Oxford Magazine will appear in eighth week

The Office for Students and the regulation for Higher Education

ROGER BROWN

DAVID Midgley has provided an excellent account of the genealogy of the Office for Students (*Oxford Magazine*, No. 395, Noughth Week, Trinity Term, 2018, pp. 11-13). My aim in this short note is to broaden the discussion by going back before 2010 and by including other means of regulation. I do so as the author of a book and many articles on quality assurance in higher education (see References).

First, let me say that I completely endorse Professor Misgley's central conclusion:

“What presents itself as an office for students...is in reality a heavily armed regulator designed to enforce the wholesale transformation of the English higher education sector into a market-orientated system and an instrument for compelling universities to provide the sort of service that the government thinks students ought to want.” (David's emphases).”

In the review essay that appeared in the same issue ('Unless reversed a disaster', p. 24) I noted that the paradox that the Neoliberal belief in the supremacy of the market was often accompanied by stronger state regulation was not unknown to scholars of Neoliberalism. Such scholars also generally agree that Neoliberalism is essentially an ideology, and that no amount of scientifically obtained evidence will dissolve it: as a former Civil Service colleague once asked Mrs Thatcher "Prime Minister, are there any facts that will enable you to take a different view of the situation?". Once successive governments had embarked on the marketisation of our higher education system—a process described in detail in my 2013 book with Helen Carasso—stronger regulation was almost inevitable. Was there nevertheless an alternative?

It has long been established that there are three ways in which the activities of universities can be coordinated: by the state, by the market, and through self-regulation by the academic community. It is also generally agreed that most mature higher education systems see a mixture of such modes. Finally, it is clear that in many countries, but especially in Britain, self-regulation is giving ground to state and market coordination (Brown, 2018). Unfortunately, I believe that the academic community—and especially its leaders, the Vice-Chancellors—bears some of the blame for this.

Before the unification of the sector in 1992 the existing universities were essentially autonomous as regards the control of the qualifications and courses they offered (though they had to share sovereignty in some professional areas like medicine and teaching). By contrast, and although by 1992 the polytechnics had achieved a high level of *de facto* autonomy, they continued to be subject to the oversight not only of the Council for National Academic Awards (whose degrees they offered) but also of Her Majesty's Inspectorate.

Already by 1992 the Government was keen to link institutions' funding allocations to judgements of quality.

But it was also wary of getting into academic standards. Indeed I recall a letter in 1990 from the arch-Thatcherite Chair of the new Universities Funding Council, the late Lord Henry Chilver, to the Chair of what is now UniversitiesUK confirming that standards were the universities' business and that the funding council had no desire to change this. Accordingly, and very largely owing to the Committee of Directors of Polytechnics (of which I was Chief Executive), a new sector-wide organisation to monitor standards through periodic audits, and to identify and promote good practice ('quality enhancement') was established under sector ownership: the Higher Education Quality Council, of which I became CEO.

HEQC was founded on the basis not only that standards were the universities' business but that self-regulation by the academic community through peer review and critique (supported by suitable training and development) was the best and most appropriate way of maintaining standards and quality: improvement comes from the intrinsic professional motivation to 'do better'. By contrast, the Teaching Quality Assessment process run by the funding councils—now reborn as the Teaching Excellence Framework—was based on the Neoliberal belief that institutions and their staff have to be incentivised to give of their best, that financial rewards are the best sort of incentives, and that this process will lead inexorably to higher levels of student attainment. The two views are incompatible as Chris Pollitt pointed out many years ago (see Pollitt, 1987).

The two agencies—the assessment units of the funding councils and the audit and enhancement arms of HEQC—rubbed along together for a few years. But the real or perceived duplication between the two led to calls from the sector for a single agency operating a single external process, what is now the Quality Assurance Agency. But whereas HEQC was owned by the sector through the various representative bodies, QAA was effectively a joint venture between the Government through the funding councils and the sector, and it was a structure in which the Government had the whip hand by virtue of its ability to withdraw its cooperation and restore 'quality assessment' to the funding councils. Moreover there was never any doubt that the new process would embrace academic standards. Finally, under its first CEO QAA saw itself very much as a policeman, and the enhancement work that had been one of HEQC's great strengths withered, eventually to be picked up after a fashion by the (also subsequently abolished) Higher Education Academy. Although it has survived and continues to do good and important work, QAA is now even more clearly an agent of the Department and the OfS.

One of the key tenets of the Neoliberalism that has underlain most Government policies towards higher education over the past thirty years is a deep hostility to public service professionals who are seen as self-serving

and resistant to change. So it was always likely, if not inevitable, that academic self-regulation would be reduced as marketisation proceeded. However, at crucial times the sector has not stood up for self-regulation. Nor has it done itself any favours by failing to address such issues as the quality and variability of assessments—preferring instead to hide behind an external examiner system that was already obsolescent in the 1980s. This is a great pity because a properly resourced, rigorous system of self-regulation is far and away the best means of protecting the quality of our programmes and awards, infinitely superior to both state inspection and commercial league tables (as we are already discovering with a grade inflation largely due to increased competition between universities).

It would be comforting to think that the challenges faced by the new Office for Students—ably highlighted by Gillian Evans in the same issue of *Oxford Magazine* ('Can the OfS keep up with ever-changing government policies?' pp. 7-10) as well as by recent debates in Parliament—might lead the Government to think again. But I

am afraid that my experience of both the Government and the sector over the past three decades does not encourage much optimism on this score. The road back to a sensible balance between state, market and academic regulation may be a long one.

Brown, R. (2004) *Quality Assurance in Higher Education: The UK Experience Since 1992*. London and New York: RoutledgeFalmer.

Brown, R. (Forthcoming, 2018) Changing Patterns of Accountability in the UK: From QA to TEF. In *Research Handbook on Quality, Performance and Accountability in Higher Education* edited by E.Hazelkorn, H.Coates and A.C.McCormick. Dordrecht: Springer.

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Democrats, Authoritarians and the Bologna Process

Universities in Germany, Russia, England and Wales

JUDITH MARQUAND

WHEN I told the Principal of an Oxford College that I was writing a book* about the Bologna Process, she asked 'What is that?' Only in England would such a response have been possible.

Elsewhere, in the past two decades the Bologna Process has given rise to unprecedented changes in the structures and methods of higher education. It extends across the whole Council of Europe area, from Nuuk in Greenland to Vladivostok in the Russian Far East. It was signed in 1999, yet no book about it has appeared since 2006. The Process renamed itself as the European Higher Education Area in 2010. It now has 47 member states. Beyond this, there is active participation in its triennial Policy Forum by countries from every continent.

Its main provisions have been to introduce, throughout the 47 members, a system of 3 or 4-year first degrees, followed by one or two year masters degrees, with comparability of outcomes and diplomas for each student which can be understood throughout the EHEA. Underpinning such a system has required the development of national qualifications structures based on 'learning outcomes and competences' so that ways of representing the outcomes of what students have learnt should be comparable. Guidelines for quality assurance spell out what is implied by this and emphasise the need to include all stakeholders in the assessment process.

The Bologna Process is essentially democratic between members in the conduct of its decision-taking. It is steered centrally by Ministerial conferences, now held

triennially. The secretariat moves with the conferences; it is located in the country where the next conference is to be held. Before each conference, each member state produces a report on developments in its higher education system. Discussions are held and decisions are taken, but there are no sanctions. Peer pressure and example are the only mechanisms for obtaining compliance. The European Commission funds the secretariat and the conferences and other supporting mechanisms, but the European Union as such is not represented and takes no part in the decisions.

More fundamentally still, the student-centred learning which lies at the core of the methods of the Process is essentially a *democratic* concept. The idea of capable, active citizens is crucial to the concept of an effective democracy and active, student-centred learning methods are key to forming capable, active citizens. For some countries, especially the so-called 'Anglo-Saxon' countries—the UK and North America—and for others in North-Western Europe, there is nothing new about using active learning methods. For many other countries, they are much more difficult. Together with implementation of new degree structures, they pose a major challenge.

So the only way to begin to understand what the Bologna Process has meant on the ground is to look at individual countries and higher education institutions within them.

I selected what I thought were 3 widely differing coun-

tries. The United Kingdom (England and Wales), as the ‘Gold Standard’ at the outset of the Process, was an obvious choice. Russia, where I had been working for many years, was another. But it had only joined in 2003. It seemed desirable to include another of the initial signatories. Germany was extremely slow to implement some of the major provisions. What was happening there?

Within each country, I could only interview a limited number of institutions. Obviously the peak organisations had to be included. Additionally, all the countries had ‘classical’ universities and various types of newer institutions, usually with a background in technical or professional training. So I made sure that the handful of institutions which I visited in each country included representatives of both traditions.

What I found did not correspond to my initial expectations:

- In Germany, the reason for slow progress was not unwillingness. Higher education is primarily the responsibility of 16 Land governments. All these Governments and the Federal Government believe in governing through consensus, not through unilateral edict. The Bologna objectives required a huge change, moving from 5 years or longer for a first degree to 4 years, with defined learning objectives, not curricula, for each course. To change by informed consent to such a system required an immense effort in each institution. Individual institutions enjoy considerable autonomy; the way in which each introduces and assures change *is not prescribed*. So change at first was slow and gradual. It was only in 2010 that legislation was introduced which required it over the next couple of years. Germany is no longer a laggard.
- By contrast, the Russian Ministry moves in an authoritarian manner, issuing edicts to which all institutions are supposed to conform. But the central Russian institutions are incompetent authoritarians. They provide almost no guidance on how their edicts are to be implemented and still less, any support in implementing them. So universities are able to go their own way. I visited 4 of them: two welcomed Bologna, as an opportunity to reform their teaching methods and extend their foreign links, so as to learn from best practice elsewhere. But the other two institutions had simply crammed their 5-year syllabuses into 4 years and had not attempted to reform their teaching methods. ‘Learning objectives’ were simply interpreted as ‘covering the prescribed syllabus’.

- The United Kingdom had signed the Bologna Declaration because the Minister for Higher Education had believed that it would require no significant changes in higher education. At that stage, she was right. But since then, the English system has changed dramatically, in ways which certainly do not respect the democratic methods of the Bologna Process. The environment in which universities operate has become increasingly authoritarian, imposing market-oriented approaches upon them, with the compulsory use of so-called ‘objective’ indicators. Anything which cannot be measured is treated as though it has no value. The key difference between the English and the Russians is simply that the English are *competent* authoritarians.
- My fourth country is Wales. It turned out that it could not be bracketed with England—since 1999 it has struggled, against the financial odds, to differentiate itself from English policies. The Welsh government view is that the Westminster government pursues policies of ‘choice, customers and competition’, whilst it believes in ‘voice, citizens, collaboration’. Not only does it pay all fees above £4000 per year for Welsh students and provide means-tested maintenance grants; part-time education is included. More radically still, the Welsh government has accepted and is now consulting on the detailed implementation of the Hazelkorn Report. This provides for a single new Tertiary Education Authority to regulate, oversee and co-ordinate the whole post-compulsory education system. Wales does its best to operate within the spirit of the Bologna Process methods of consultation and agreement.

So the main divide between countries which subscribe to the Bologna Process is that between democratic and authoritarian ones. Why do the authoritarian countries want to participate in what is an essentially democratic Process? I suspect, especially on the basis of my Russian experience, that there is a simple factor explaining the interest of authoritarian governments in the Bologna Process. They see it as a route to help their scientific and technological progress, by enabling them to share in the European and indeed in the ‘Anglo-Saxon’ excellence in these fields. But this misunderstands the role of democratic learning methods in producing such excellence.

What of the future? The triennial Ministerial Conference and Policy Forums take place in Paris on May 24–25. We shall have to see what happens there.

* *‘Democrats, Authoritarians and the Bologna Process: Universities in Germany, Russia, England and Wales’* (Emerald Press, 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 bio.

Birds at Daybreak

MARK LEECH

ONE of the few compensations for a dawn walk to Oxford station on the journey to work is the opportunity it gives to see the world before humans fill it. This is most appealing in spring and early summer when the birds are jousting.

In mid-March, when the cold had retreated, the green spaces and streets along my route recoiled from the chill. Through the half light occasional trees frothed with blossom. Daffodils kept catching the tail of my eye, their yellow such a contrast with the suffusing blue of the sky overhead that I often glanced back at them—were they moving?

Even in cities spring has a smell to it, something that imbues all the senses with its texture. To me it is a green smell; if pressed I would try to describe it as the smell of growing grass. South Oxford lies between fields and the river, so perhaps the scent is stronger here than elsewhere, even if intermittently overwhelmed by the car of a fellow early riser. It's almost as though all the sealed buds on the tips of the twigs in the gardens and parks are emitting growth fumes.

These days the ragged mop of a fox can dart out of a gate at any time, but maybe muntjac deer are too alert to the sound and smell and passers-by to be caught in the open. Badgers are probably already in their setts before the first light creeps over the stars. There are rabbits though, their ears wagging as they chew in the Grandpont Nature Park by the river.

And there are birds. I always start out intending only to listen, absorb the wash of calls, but every time I end up trying to isolate and identify individual songs—that's a sparrow, that's a robin, that's a wren, and so on. I'd prefer to fling my mind open and let the sound flood in. But the swell of it can be like a burst of heavy rain and it's easier to tune into the qualities of a particular voice. Blackbirds and robins have the classic melodic birdsong, but I think my favourite on those bleary journeys is the song thrush.

Between two patches of daffodils, since Wordsworth the go-to flower for epitomising spring, I stop and shiver, and listen to the song thrush, which seems to be having a terrific argument with itself. No languid dawdling in twilight, this song is all abrupt leaps, interruptions and frantic repetitions, with a fizz that the sogginess of the mist cannot dispel.

I peer into the thin limbs of the surrounding stands of half-grown trees until I can see the bird. Usually it's a smudgy silhouette, its shape broken up by the branches, its speckles and eye invisible against the weak sunlight. But every so often I see one framed by the river below the path and I watch its beak, sharp and open as the disorderly-seeming cavalcade of sound fires out.

But I ought to make sure I catch the train. So I leave the thrush, cross the river and pass by the hissing geese on Oxpens. I always make sure I get a last look at the Thames before making my way up to the road.

Not
the
Gazette
and not
again
now till
Eighth
Week

NB The *Oxford Magazine* is not an official publication of the University. It is a forum for the free expression of opinion within the University.

The next number of the *Magazine* will appear in the Eighth week of term.

Step-changes

BEN BOLLIG

In a letter to the *London Review of Books*, Danny Dorling notes one of the unfortunate effects of Oxford's status as "the UK's most unaffordable city"¹:

*"The grey light fades over a city mythologised more than any other by children's authors. None of this would matter much if it didn't result in the highest house-price-to-wage ratio in Europe, astronomical rents and the growing dysfunctionality of forty thousand people a day driving cars across a green belt because they cannot live where they work."*²

Everyone in town has to live with the consequences, including in the air we breathe. According to Oxford City Council, "Oxford city centre currently has illegally-high levels of toxic nitrogen dioxide, which contributes to diseases including cancer, asthma, stroke and heart disease - and contributes to around 40,000 deaths in the UK every year."³

Partly in response to this, the City Council has announced plans to limit the type of vehicle permitted in parts of Oxford. From 2020, according to their proposals, petrol and diesel vehicles would be banned from a small area around St Giles. By 2035 the area would stretch to cover the whole of the city centre. As the Council states, "The Zero Emission Zone [or ZEZ] proposals ban emitting vehicles from Oxford city centre in phases, starting with some vehicle types and a small number of streets in 2020 and, as vehicle technology develops, moves to all vehicle types across the whole city centre in 2035."⁴

A consultation held at the end of last year suggested that, for many residents, these proposals—if they ever become a reality—are insufficiently ambitious. According to the Council, "Ninety per cent of those who responded to the online consultation said tackling poor air quality in Oxford is either 'very important' or 'important'.⁵ The report adds that, when surveyed about the appropriateness of the ZEZ's size, 28% responded affirmatively, 20% that the ZEZ "should be smaller"; but 45% said it "should be larger". In addition, "Sixty one per cent said the zone should be extended beyond the proposed boundaries in the future."

Much of the decision-making power for transport in Oxford rests in the hands of the County Council. The "Oxford Transport Strategy", published by the County Council in 2015 with the subtitle "Connecting Oxfordshire", addresses many of the problems and potential solutions to travel in the city and the wider area. The Strategy document focuses on car journeys in particular:

*"It is estimated that job growth within and outside Oxford, could result in 26,000 additional journeys within the city boundary by 2031—a 25% increase from 2011. Initial estimates suggest that, without improvements to the transport network and changes of travel behaviour, this could result in approximately 13,000 more commuter car trips each day."*⁶

Oxford has a history of innovation in transport, for example opening the world's first Park & Ride

scheme, in the 1970s.⁷ In the face of problems of such scale—recognised by both councils—and given Oxford's history of transport innovation, radical solutions are surely called for. A number of options and proposals appear in the document. These include "a city-wide Workplace parking levy (WPL)"; "Road user charging could also be a potential option for reducing traffic levels on certain routes without a complete closure." Perhaps most eye-catching, at least in its rhetoric, is "A new mass transit network [MTN] for Oxford" which we are told "will deliver a step-change in travel choices for diverse movements within and into the city."

One pictures overhead shuttles or at best electric trams. Cambridge already has a "busway", a system of guided buses driving on a dedicated track, in many places with an accompanying cyclepath, stretching over 16 miles in and around the city—the longest such transport system in the world.⁸ Instead, Oxford's MTN sounds rather more like a beefed-up regular bus service, with some PR spin:

"Bus-based Rapid Transit can offer significantly faster and more reliable journey times than conventional bus services. Rather than simply being a bus route with a higher level of priority over other traffic, bus-based Rapid Transit is an integrated system of facilities, services and amenities that collectively improve the speed, reliability, comfort and image of bus transport."

There are proposals too for increasing and improving cycling infrastructure in the city, even if in the press release accompanying the announcement of the ZEZ proposals there is no mention of bikes. The Council's earlier report makes reference to "a city-wide walking and cycling network [that] will include continuous pedestrian and cycle routes and high quality spaces for pedestrians in areas of high footfall". This will involve what the Council refer to as an "ambitious agenda of road space reallocation". Once again, the mood music is encouraging:

"Given the size of the city (with no two points within the ring road being more than 11 km apart), Oxford should be able to challenge Cambridge as the city with the highest proportion of residents walking or cycling to work."

The Council aims to achieve this with a "combination of high quality routes [and] better cycle parking and other measures". It plans to create "Cycle super routes", "cycle premium routes" and "cycle connector routes". The first of these categories refers to separate bike lanes, with improvement in signage and connections. Segregation, whereby cars, bicycles and pedestrians are kept physically separate—a key requirement for many safety campaigners—also gets a mention: "Complete or semi-segregation will be provided wherever possible (otherwise mandatory cycle lane markings will be used)"—only on the so-called "super routes".⁹ But on closer inspection, much of what is being proposed sounds little better

than the current white-line and green-tarmac solution. And this is at the consultation stage, before measures are watered down or abandoned.

In a related document, “Connecting Oxfordshire: Local Transport Plan 2015-2031”¹⁰ there is a strong focus on the need to get commuters out of cars and into other forms of transport:

“We have a huge challenge to enable people to make the journeys they need to as the population grows, and avoid damage to the economy caused by severe congestion, as well as to protect the environment. So there needs to be a significant shift away from dependence on private cars, towards more people using forms of transport that use less road capacity and damage the environment less—where possible walking, cycling, or using public transport. Our aim is to make this happen by transforming travel by these means, supported by innovation.”

Here the County Council is clear on the benefits of bikes: “a reliable, cheap means of transport that emits zero carbon in use” and which helps to address “problems of obesity and ill health related to inactivity”. Elsewhere, in its document “Oxfordshire Cycling Design Standards”,¹¹ the Council cites a study by Dr Rachel Aldred for British Cycling, “Benefits of Investing in Cycling”.¹² Aldred concludes that what might be called “Danish or Dutch levels” of cycling in the UK could save the NHS £17 billion within 20 years and reduce road deaths by 30%. If just 10% of journeys currently made in cars were made by bike, the fall in air pollution would save what Aldred calls “400 productive life years”. The author has a clear message on the safety benefits of spending on cycling infrastructure:

“While motor vehicles are the major threat, bicycles do cause some pedestrian injuries. However, encouraging evidence from New York and California, where cycling is growing, shows this already low figure falling further. One reason could be that where cycle infrastructure is improved, cyclists are less likely to ride on the pavement and come into conflict with pedestrians.”

Aldred makes an obvious but often overlooked point: spending on cycling infrastructure reduces injuries and deaths: “Countries that have invested in cycling have low injury risks, despite few cyclists wearing safety equipment. In The Netherlands, adults under 30 experience a lower risk of dying, per kilometre, when they cycle than when they drive”. In safety terms, England compares most unfavourably to some near neighbours. Again, from Aldred’s report:

“Per hour spent cycling, cyclists in England are around four times more likely to be killed than in The Netherlands. In 2013 109 cyclists were killed in Britain. If cycling were as safe as in The Netherlands, we would see around 80 fewer cycling deaths on the roads each year at current cycling levels. Put another way, we could have 12% rather than 3% of people commuting by bike, without any increase in cycling deaths.”

After the tragic death of the Oxford DPhil student Claudia Comberti in May last year, friends and cycling activists launched “The Claudia Charter”, an ambitious and passionate vision for cycling in the city.¹³ For its authors, “No loss of life or serious injury is acceptable”; they aim to “make cycling here an everyday reality for all ages and abilities.” Part of their approach is to defend those on bikes, by “reporting all near misses, close

passes, and aggressive interactions to the authorities” in order to “raise awareness of the conditions faced by those who choose to cycle.” But they also aim to bridge some of the divides that exist between what at times may seem like rival tribes of travellers: “All road users are people. Let’s progress the conversation: cyclists are people on cycles and drivers are people in vehicles, and lots of people do both. Let’s all get home safely”. Measures proposed in the Charter include: “continuous, segregated cycle ways that are at least as good as in the ‘Oxford Transport Strategy’ and the ‘Oxfordshire Cycling Design Standards’”; “high standard cycle provision at junctions”; and “properly prioritising vulnerable road users in all parts of Oxford, not just the centre.”

Cycling infrastructure in the UK tends to be built piecemeal, if it gets built at all, and the results are seldom what travellers might hope for. But there are examples from around the world of how much can be achieved with ambition and resources. Seville is a case-study of transformation in cycling provision, with resulting improvements in health, environment, and safety. Writing in *The Guardian*, Peter Walker described how the capital of Andalusia has become “an unlikely poster city for sustainable transport.”¹⁴ Local government built some 50 miles of fully segregated cycle lanes, almost in one go:

“Unlike London’s much criticised ‘cycle superhighways’—where riders are protected by little more than blue paint—Seville’s cyclists enjoy a kerb and a fence. Much of the space was actually taken from bus or parking lanes but the kerb was raised to pavement level to offer more protection.”

Beyond the benefits to commuters, Seville offers almost unique material for scientists. Two Spanish researchers published a study of the effects of Seville’s building programme. They analyze changes in risk levels associated with cycling in the city before and after the opening of the segregated cycle network. Looking at the period 2000-2013, the seven years either side of the construction of the cycle network, and working with data from local traffic police on collisions between bikes and motor vehicles, they conclude that “a sudden drop of such risk was observed after the implementation of the network of bikeways.”¹⁵

Their findings seem to confirm observations made in another paper from last year in the *American Journal of Public Health*:

“Walking and cycling are safer on completely separate off-road facilities, such as mixed-use recreational paths, or in car-free zones, traffic-calmed residential streets (with slower speeds and less traffic), and physically separated on-street facilities (such as cycle tracks). Thus, the provision of more and better separate facilities is a key to improving overall walking and cycling safety. Such facilities are especially important for children and seniors, who are most likely to be killed or seriously injured if hit by a motor vehicle.”¹⁶

Taken together, the Seville example, these academic studies, and the increasingly distant history of Oxford as a transport innovator, all suggest that a radical solution is needed for the city. At the moment, cycling in Oxford is beset by problems: school buses and trade vehicles parking in cycle lanes; potholes that turn roads into Swiss cheese; cars that turn without signalling or using their mirrors; and bike lanes that start and stop with no

apparent warning. Nor is it clear that the proliferation of app-based hire bikes in the city helps the image or practice of cycling. They have been charged with littering streets¹⁷; they provide additional hazards for the blind and partially-sighted; and even Paris, a city that pioneered such schemes, seems to be falling out of love with its Vélib.¹⁸ All these snags need to be solved, and more.

In the short term, the Oxford cycling campaign group CycloX has some simple advice for cyclists:

“Be confident, be courteous. [...] Cycle with a smile and be an ambassador for the bike. Do stick to the rules of the road; they’re for your safety too. [...]”

Ride with pride; cycling is part of the solution, not part of the problem.”¹⁹

¹ Alison Millington, “The UK’s 20 least affordable cities”, *Independent* <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/uk-least-affordable-cities-house-prices-london-oxford-a7606326.html>

² Letter to the Editor, *LRB* Vol. 40 No. 2, 25 January 2018, responding to Colin Burrow’s review of Philip Pullman’s *The Book of Dust*, Vol. I: *La Belle Sauvage*.

³ “Oxford Zero Emission Zone”, https://www.oxford.gov.uk/info/20216/air_quality_management/1227/oxford_zero_emission_zone_zez

⁴ “City and County Councils propose historic reduction in Oxford’s air pollution with world’s first Zero Emission Zone”, https://www.oxford.gov.uk/news/article/553/city_and_county_councils_propose_historic_reduction_in_oxford_s_air_pollution_with_world_s_first_zero_emission_zone

⁵ “More than 750 have their say on Zero Emission Zone proposals”, https://www.oxford.gov.uk/news/article/606/more_than_750_have_their_say_on_zero_emission_zone_proposals

⁶ “Oxford Transport Strategy”, http://mycouncil.oxfordshire.gov.uk/documents/s33711/Background%20CA_JUN2816R12%20Connecting%20Oxfordshire%20vol%208%20part%20i%20-%20Oxford%20Transport%20Strategy.pdf

⁷ *Oxford Mail*, “How Oxford led the way to create Park and Rides”, http://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/10859209.How_Oxford_led_the_way_to_create_Park_and_Rides/

⁸ See <http://www.thebusway.info/about.shtml>

⁹ As Peter Walker puts it, “Segregation—separating bikes by a physical barrier like a raised kerb or fence—is something of a holy grail for campaigners, who argue it makes cycling accessible to people of all ages, allowing them to trundle along at slow speeds in every-

day clothes. This is in contrast to the scene in most UK cities, where mainly young, generally male riders speed alongside motor traffic dressed in helmets and luminous high-vis jackets.” *The Guardian*, “How Seville transformed itself into the cycling capital of southern Europe” <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/jan/28/seville-cycling-capital-southern-europe-bike-lanes>

¹⁰ Volume 1: Policy & Overall Strategy (2015), <https://www2.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/sites/default/files/folders/documents/roadsandtransport/transportpoliciesandplans/localtransport-plan/ConnectingOxfordshirevol1policyandoverallstrategy.pdf>

¹¹ <https://www2.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/sites/default/files/folders/documents/roadsandtransport/transportpoliciesandplans/newdevelopments/CyclingStandards.pdf>

¹² https://www.britishcycling.org.uk/zuvvi/media/bc_files/campaigning/BENEFITS_OF_INVESTING_IN_CYCLING_DIGI_FINAL.pdf

¹³ See <http://www.claudiacharter.uk/>. The document can be found at http://www.claudiacharter.uk/media/2017/11/171107-CCCharter_Final-A4-Digital.pdf; it was “collaboratively created by Broken Spoke, CycloX, two of Oxford’s City Councillors, members of the University of Oxford’s Environmental Change Institute, and friends of Claudia”.

¹⁴ “How Seville transformed itself into the cycling capital of southern Europe” <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/jan/28/seville-cycling-capital-southern-europe-bike-lanes>

¹⁵ R.Marqués & V.Hernández-Herrador, “On the effect of networks of cycle-tracks on the risk of cycling. The case of Seville.” *Accident Analysis & Prevention*. Volume 102, May 2017, pp. 181-190. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aap.2017.03.004>

¹⁶ Ralph Buehler and John Pucher, “Trends in Walking and Cycling Safety: Recent Evidence From High-Income Countries, With a Focus on the United States and Germany.” January 11, 2017.

¹⁷ See Greg Dickinson, “The rise of the dockless bicycle—street litter, or the future of public transport?” <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/news/are-dockless-bikes-the-future/> and also Mark Blunden and Sean Morrison, “Cycle hire company oBike accused of ‘littering’ London’s streets as bikes vandalised,” <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/transport/cycle-hire-company-obike-accused-of-littering-londons-streets-as-bikes-vandalised-a3593161.html>

¹⁸ Angelique Chrisafis, “Wheels come off Paris bike-share scheme after hi-tech upgrade,” <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/may/04/paris-bike-share-scheme-velib-hi-tech-up-grade-problems>

¹⁹ CycloX, “Rights and Responsibilities” of cyclists, <http://www.cycloX.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Hanger-final-for-web.pdf>

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September for a full academic year, but can be started at any time.*

All that is the Case: Homage to Anton Webern

*O sing unto my roundelay
O drop the briny tear with me
Dance no more at holiday
Like a running river be*

'The serpent eats its own tail'

i Prelude *Der Urknall*

First blurt of flame
Light-bearer's bound
God said *Let there be sound*
Music came

ii *Preglhof*

Birth-pangs of tulips stained the day
sanguine fingers tore
viridian cauls

iii *At Schaubegg*

Springlight filtered
through beaded fallows
in salty haze
old griefs glistening

iv *KV 551*

His prism-globe's annulate gleam
proved *perfect*
this side the gulf no dream

v *Du holde Kunst*

Preserved unstrained
texture without tune
without tone timbre
restrained reserved

vi *In Summer Wind*

Slowly swing your quick scythe
quench its flame in dawn's chilly
quivering grasses

vii *Relative Major*

Franz Joseph's soul
could have grasped smiling
(joy's modest craftsman)
your sheer whole

viii *Passacaglia*

You shed volume with your first opus
piano henceforth
would be your forte

ix *Snowfire*

Passionate order
not disordered passion
pulsing idea
dire truth

x *Klein ist schön*

Size tells in works of flesh not soul
GOOGOLPLEX dwines
before *Drei-in-Eins*

xi *Alpine Lionfoot*

Grubby hands procure
this light-kissed maid
Schicklgruber's
'darling flower'

xii *Your Discipline*

Sublimated serial substance
with no surplus
without any loss

xiii *Dmitri's Crux*

Can this art attack
evil? Save with cold keys
even tease
white from black?

xiv *Just Music*

Pain it eases not ends injustice
small but something
to make friends peace

xv *Die Welt des Glücklichen*

Lucky the man
who finds something
he thinks worth paying
any price for

xvi Atonal Centre: *Ludwigslied*

Music is a greater revelation than the whole of philosophy

A world's creation
being its scheme
its utmost claim
concentration

I must admire
your art's endeavour
to conjure through
its spectral mirror

sacred voices
holy echoes
airs and graces
from other planets

expositions
of what otherwise
must lie speechless

revelations
eluding logos

bright disclosures
of nature's telos
pneuma's ciphers

yet blessed elements
form no compounds
permanent
or sempiternal

music's undone
where chord minus root
sits at centre
case wanting noun

world-creation's
Spiel ohne Ziel
when change forms the theme
of variations

The shaping of the outer world is a showing-forth of the inner spiritual mystery

xvii *Feierlich, misterioso*

While Titan Anton
atones at length
a curt die-throe sets you at one

xviii *Distant Prospect*

Alban long gone
Arnold aloof
your undisplanted
Geist remained proof

xix *Wiener Blut*

Jacob's well drained dry
Cana's champagne
turned to water tasting of stone

xx *Stalag VIII-A, Görlitz*

Near Jakob's house
this Gallic *Meister*
fought with music
firing rainbows

xxi *A stone-dead city twice as cold as rime*

Wien petrified, Wien pied
liver-vanilla-hued
dead sure living-dead

xxii *Zur Ruh*

Salt brews succeed
when rich ichors drain
in lupine *Lied*
Orpheus we mourn

xxiii *Monte Albano*

Through eager air on eagle wings
his Icarus lungs
expired warning

xxiv *Curfew Bell*

One rare cigar
fragranced the night
enraging fate
your firefly star

xxv *Sleepless Soul*

Seine's 'lethal tide'
bore Anselm womb-ward
your Lethe guide called unscheduled

xxvi *Montebello*

His Cyclops-branched
cedrus Libani
quelled each light-drenched
ceanothus

xxvii *Gezeigt nicht gesagt*

Not said but shown
your parturition's
particulate strain sensed not seen

xxviii *Rough hew them how we will*

Mehmet who pierced
John Paul got pardon
out-of-time Bell
untolled remorse

xxix *Chance's Strange Arithmetic*

Thirty-one pieces
spun when hap split
the tempered strings of your swept heart

xxx *Going Viral*

Seven times
seventy-seven's
just forgiveness
for duteous crimes

xxxi Coda : *Alles was der Fall ist*

Dimming to silence
for Adam's *Fall*
one death ablates all
music still

NOTES Anton Webern (born Vienna 1885) was accidentally shot by an American soldier Raymond Bell at Mittersill near Salzburg before curfew, Sept. 15, 1945. Preglhof (ii): the Webern family's country house; Schaubegg (iii) their burial place. Thirty-one (xxix): the sum of Webern's opus-numbered works. Wittgenstein is the imagined speaker of xvi. From his *Tractatus* come the main title and coda '(The world is) all that is the case'; also xv, 'The world of the happy is a different world from that of the unhappy' and xxvii 'Shown not said'. Main epigraph and quoted phrase in st. xxv: Chatterton, Minstrel's Song from *Aella*; second epigraph, Wilfrid Mellers, *Man and his Music* (on Webern) i. *Urknall*: 'Big Bang'. v: Fr. von Schober, 'An die Musik'. xiii: a question raised by Shostakovich. Epigraph to xvi, from Beethoven; *Spiel...*'game without aim'. Epigraph to xvii, from Jakob Boehme, *Magnum Mysterium*; xvii, title: 'Solemn, mysterious', Bruckner, 9th symphony. xx: the prison-camp near Boehme's home where Messiaen composed *Quartet for the End of Time*. xxii: a Hugo Wolf song on Wagner's death. xxv: Ansel, the real name of Paul Celan. xxix, title: from Wilfred Owen, *Insensibility*.

CARL SCHMIDT

The *Oxford Magazine* is edited by

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&

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should be received by the Wednesday of the previous week.

Literary Editor

Lucy Newlyn at St Edmund Hall

No FRs!

Sir – It was disappointing to note in the University’s latest Annual Review that none of our distinguished colleagues in the sciences appeared to have been elected Fellows of the Royal Society. On the other hand, it was gratifying to discover that a number of them have so excelled in the visual arts that they have become Fellows of the Royal Academy.

Does this represent the triumph of inter-disciplinarity or is there some other explanation?

Yours sincerely

COLIN THOMPSON

St Catherine’s College

Quality assessments

Sir – In his article ‘Academic Boards’ (*Oxford Magazine*, No. 396), Ralph Walker states: ‘In the late nineties we were oppressed by the activities of the Quality Assurance Agency, which carried out lengthy and inaccurate studies of universities’ teaching activities. In 2000 Council and the General Board, acting in concert with a number of other universities with a similar outlook, put a stop to the Quality Assurance Agency.’

Lest this myth become part of the more general history of the University, I need to point out that what Dr Walker describes as ‘lengthy and inaccurate studies of universities’ teaching activities’ (not in itself an entirely inaccurate description) were the brainchild of HEFCE, were begun in 1992 and were bequeathed to QAA when it was formed in 1997. The first round of these

TO THE EDITOR

‘teaching quality assessments’ (TQA) was completed in 2001 and it was the second round, known as ‘academic review’ that was truncated, in 2001, not 2000 and, I should say, much to the relief of many of us then working at QAA.

Far from a ‘stop’ being put to QAA, however, the Agency has continued with its work in the subsequent 17 years, evolving and developing its review methods to meet the changing and challenging needs of the users (and funders) of higher education. It is now the ‘designated quality body’ commissioned by the Office for Students and is celebrating its 21st birthday in 2018. Whatever one may think of the QAA, both past and present (and opinions may differ on this), it is still very much with us and looks to be so for the foreseeable future.

I’m sorry to disappoint Ralph Walker, but ‘Council and the General Board, acting in concert with a number of other universities with a similar outlook’, did not ‘put a stop to the Quality Assurance Agency’.

Yours sincerely

PETER WILLIAMS

(Chief Executive, QAA, 2001-09)

Norfolk

A sadness

Sir – Somewhere between submission, page proofs and publication, very possibly because of my own carelessness, there slipped from my poem, “On Shadows” (*Oxford Magazine*, No.396) a dedication to Ken Gross and Liza Lorwin. I’m sad about this, first because I wanted to celebrate a warm (though inevitably distant) friendship, secondly because I wanted to pay tribute to Ken Gross’s edition of John Hollander’s *The Substance of Shadow: A Darkening Trope in Poetic History*.

Yours sincerely

JONTY DRIVER

Sussex

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

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NOTICE

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

REVIEWS

Words, words, words

Périclès, Prince de Tyr; Oxford Playhouse



THE Cheek by Jowl theatre company have been regular and welcome visitors to Oxford. Their production of Shakespeare's *Pericles*, earlier this term, however, may have come as a bit of a surprise to unsuspecting theatregoers, since it featured Cheek by Jowl's Francophone arm, performing in their native tongue but providing us monoglots with surtitles from the Bard's own script (if, indeed, he did write it).

Pericles is rarely performed, even in English; Ben Jonson thought it 'a mouldy tale' and it doesn't fall into any of the conventional pockets of Shakespeare's work—neither tragedy, comedy, nor history. We know of at least one historical *Pericles*: 'a man of powerful character, sober, incorruptible and reserved', my trusty Oxford Companion reminds me—not much like the chap in the play, then, and Cheek by Jowl most certainly were not bringing us history. Better, perhaps, to pop this play into some separate category such as 'fantasy' or 'romance', along with *Winter's Tale*?

Peter Kirwan's short essay in the printed programme accurately sums it up as 'A painful adventure'. The plot revolves around the unlucky *Pericles* and involves hasty marriage, childbirth, shipwreck, lives lost then miraculously restored, incest, entrapment in a brothel, and other misadventures. All this could have been played out on a bare stage—as it was, presumably, when first performed, but for reasons that were not, so far as I could see, explained in the programme, Cheek by Jowl chose to set it in a present day hospital ward—substantial bed (on which some notable action took place), swing doors to corridor, plastic table and chairs, harsh lighting. Throughout the play faint recorded voices could be heard from the bedside radio, until (perhaps to get the audience in the mood for a happy ending?) they were replaced by a rendering of that Jean Sablou tearjerker, *J'attendrai*.

It says a lot for Cheek by Jowl's acting and direction that the play's chain of mishaps and reconciliations, and its sudden switches of scene, made, not sense exactly, but at least a story that one enjoyed having seen unfold and characters with whom one might, momentarily, engage.

Close on the heels of that example of

entente littéraire, the first major student production of this term was Tom Stoppard's *Travesties*, a West End hit back in the 1970s and a stiff test for any company, amateur or professional. Sadly, your reviewer was able to see only the first half of this play (but my guess is that my verdict would have been the same if I had seen the rest).

The plot, every bit as surreal as that of *Pericles*, concerns an ageing diplomat recalling his adventures, his part in a production of *The Importance of Being Earnest* in 1917 Zurich and conversations with Lenin, Joyce and the Dadaist Tristan Tzara. The action consists, essentially, of a series of revue sketches. Advance publicity promised '...limericks, razor-sharp wit and laugh out loud moments'. Limericks, quotes from Oscar Wilde and others—the former so numerous as almost to constitute a play within a play—plus plays on words and seemingly mistaken identities followed one another thick and fast. And there were some laughs.

The cast's mastery of Stoppard's complex text, their movement and diction were all fine. No expense seems to have been spared on the construction of the set—a two storey effort, with staircases and a good supply of tables and chairs which were whisked on and off by the stage crew as each mini-episode concluded. For a work of literature whose stated aim is to make us think about the meaning of language, it seemed a tad excessive. Lee Simmonds, as the central character Henry Carr, deserves individual mention for mastering a difficult script and engaging our attention throughout, but all the actors did well. Direction, staging, lighting and so on were all good. Maybe if I had seen the second half I would think more kindly of the play itself. Maybe.

CHRIS SLADEN

From Why to How



The Johns Hopkins UP has one of the most extensive lists of any publisher on HE—Governance, Management, Policy, and now on 'How'. Consider: B.C. Mitchell and W.J. King, *How to run a College* and R.A. Scott, *How University Boards Work* (both p/bk, 2018).

The first opens with 'Governance and Management' (and 'dust ups on boards of trustees'), just as Eliot (1909, former President of Harvard) writing the first-ever book on university administration

began with the role of the trustees. It then proceeds via 'Finance' and 'Enrollment' to 'Advancement' (fund-raising, development) and 'Academic Affairs'—plus 'Student Life' and something so peculiar to US HE 'Athletics' ('College sports are also a glue that holds campus culture together...') and generate big money for a very few institutions, as well as mega management issues for quite a few institutions).

The book ends with 'The Path Forward'—rocky, steep, winding; but no more so than in the past is the cheery message ('The sky is not falling around Higher Education, which remains the best avenue into the middle class.') and happily Universities/Colleges are really rather good at adapting. But, the authors say, Boards need to do a better job of governance and work better with Faculty in shared-governance (what here we call collegiality)—'it comes down to the basic challenge of whether shared-governance can match tradition with innovation'—and so the segue to the second 'How' book.

Robert Scott has been a US University President and has closely observed the folk who populate HE Boards; and has even spent time here in Oxford reflecting on his experience as he wrote this handy and stimulating, timely and neat little book brimming with wisdom for addressing the issue the previous book sets out in terms of how to achieve effective shared-governance: how, as I see it, to balance the Governance Triangle of Board/Council—Faculty/Senate—Executive/Management. And here in Oxford it seems a rebalancing exercise is now underway following the Congregation debacle over the USS problem.

We are taken from 'Board Responsibilities' and 'Board Membership' via 'Processes and Procedures' and 'Strategic Leadership' (offering 'Ten Habits of Highly Effective Boards'), before ending with 'Leading Higher Education into the Future' (including 'Building a Brilliant Board'). Useful 'Exercises' are added—covering how to performance review the CEO, and how a CEO might periodically report to the Board.

So, Scott is essential reading for our own CEO/SMT as well as our Council members as they ponder their working relationship with each other and also their governance relationship with dondom—surely the University can afford 30 or so copies for the Council/Executive away-day, and it might even get a discount from the JHUP for an order that size!

DAVID PALFREYMAN

OXFORD MAGAZINE

Written

Saloniki, September 1997

It is written, they might have said; but what is this restless scribble? What does it say? Dusty palmettes of horse-chestnut shade a dusty square at evening. As far as that goes it might be anywhere. A knot of boys kick their ball purposelessly, watch it bounce

from wall to wall. Evening air echoes to its dull thump: sometimes, thump, against one mute nameless building, locked and abandoned. Look inside through vacant windows: nothing but dusty emptiness. *Show us*, these had prayed, *the straight path*... Do the boys with the football care

or know what place this was? No metaphor of the spirit, sure, the path the scribblers took in the end. *Written*, as by and by for those – whom these, with all their faults, had kept secure – who have not even this faint memorial, scratch of pencil on sill. But that was yet to come.

Eastward: exile. The most we can read here is that all who wrote these crowded words are gone and dead (did these pass going the other way the dispossessed of Trebizond, know them fellows too late?) – gone, dead and presently dust: fading Ottoman script recording dust.

Tomorrow may be nosegays fresh with basil and mint at liturgy's end under the dome of St George, mosaics glittering in the glow of summer's last feast – Byzantium restored with the Cross to glory from the waste of years? For now, dust and declining day. Still air

of evening magnifies the echoes. Bounce of a ball, a boy's voice... Where is the breath to stir these horse-chestnuts' dusty palms shading the square, the mosque silent so long? For now, mute words left stranded in a strange land that repudiates them, in an alphabet

even a returning exile, if by chance one came by here, would be hard put to read – mute words no years unwrite proclaim on sills or mullions the long dead who wrote them, gone, as will we, clutching at whatever faith or none, to dust. *Written*, we might have said.

2016

NICOLAS JACOBS

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