Editorial
This morning while having my coffee I decided to read a bit on the seven deadly sins (as you do on a typical Monday morning). By 9:23am, when I started writing this editorial, the realization had struck me that in a matter of just 1 hour and 23 minutes since the alarm went off, I had already practiced all seven deadly sins: Gluttony (did I really need a second brownie with my coffee?). Vanity (or Pride) (was it really necessary to try on 3 pairs of trousers before deciding what to wear? And who cares what I wear, anyway? I work in science!). Envy (“how come my colleague has a flat screen? And how come she gets paid more?!! I am more qualified than her! And I have better hair!” (Pride again). Anger (“when will cyclists learn that they, too, have to stop at the pedestrian crossing outside the Maths Institute?! Or are they all color-blind?”). Sloth (well, I really should be working now and not be writing editorials). Greed (“I really need an iPod, the 8 minutes it takes me to get to work are sooo boring”). And Lust (you didn’t really think I would give details on that, did you?). Well, it appears that I am going straight to hell!

Now I always believe that we should try to become better people and not forgive ourselves too easily for all the bad things we do. But at the same time I think that a touch of (not-so-?) deadly sins can’t be that bad. What’s wrong with a bit of…erm, Gluttony? I was really hungry! And a bit of Vanity? Well, if looking good makes me happy, why not try to look good? And what if Pride will eventually get me my Mr Darcy? A bit of friendly Envy could maybe urge you to become better and as far as Anger is concerned well, cyclists should stop at pedestrian crossings! Regarding Sloth, well, I am Greek and some things you just cannot get rid off and as far as Greed is concerned what if getting an iPod (and the resulting entertainment) will make my day and, as a result me, nicer? And let me not get started on the perks of a bit of Lust!

Maybe I am too forgiving of myself and maybe I will go straight to hell. But maybe not. Maybe the answer lies in how my vices compare to my virtues. Maybe it’s ok to be a bit vain as long I am kind. And maybe it’s ok to be a bit irre-ritable as long as I am forgiving. And maybe it’s ok to sometimes be a bit lazy as long as I am charitable. And maybe it’s ok to be a bit lustful as long as I am affectionate. Maybe the answer lies in what we scientists call the proportion. And even though I don’t believe in New Year’s Resolutions, working on this proportion seems like a good one to me. Seasons Greetings everyone and enjoy this festive issue!
FESTIVITIES

Turkey Lag and Cherries

Not such a a winter wonderland for Emily Ross

We New Zealanders, being southern hemisphere types, are a confused lot at Christmas time. Someone forgot to tell us that it is the middle of summer; perhaps it was those British colonial types who left us with cups of tea and cucumber sandwiches. Tea and sammies are well integrated, but it is at Christmas that we are served a bit of a pickle.

When the festive season arrives, the Christmas lights are turned on but nobody ever really sees them unless they make a special visit to town after ten o’clock at night. The effort of wearily trudging the streets in the burning sun looking for that elusive last present is not made any more bearable by the Christmas songs that blatantly lie to us from speakers in crowded shops, confidently drone that they’re ‘walking in a winter wonderland’ or ‘...dreaming of a white Christmas’. Although perhaps dreaming of a white Christmas is an appropriate tune, given that reality is never going to toe the line.

Father Christmas himself is an altruistic man, but even more so when he visits us. He must sweat his way through long hot days of appointments with children and deliveries, in his thick heavy coat and his big red woolen hat. Even that beard of his must be stifling, although it may prevent sunburn, which is a relevant concern given his high altitude sleigh travel and our lack of ozone.

By the time Christmas dinner is served, the hype is almost over and a collective sigh of relief, a glass of wine and a chance to relax is arguably fairly universal. However it is at this point that many New Zealanders engage in a perilous activity, one that is potentially harmful to our health.

There are multiple ways to have a Kiwi Christmas dinner, but one can discern two broad categories. The ‘barbeque-on-the-beach’ faction is a powerful one. These are people who have thrown off the shackles of history and have forged their own new traditions. Theirs is a practical decision that takes into account major issues, such as heat, long daylight hours and beaches (for swimming and beach cricket). Arguably, by aligning themselves with their immediate environment, this group maintains good health and wellbeing.

The other major Christmas dinner faction could be labeled ‘roast-turkey-and-trimmings’. It is this group that, through transplanting the magic of a huge warming fire-in-the-belly feast to the middle of a stinking hot December day, endangers its health by inducing the phenomenon known as ‘turkey lag’.

Turkey lag is a well known disease (in our district). It occurs after a large amount of roast turkey has been ingested in a short period of time. It is exacerbated by heat and sun, by alcohol and by minted peas. The etiology of turkey lag has long been debated at the Christmas dinner table, but conclusions have never been made, partly because research has been limited, and partly due to the rapid onset of the illness itself at this very point, which hinders intelligent conversation. Some have speculated that tryptophan - present in high levels within turkey meat - is the culprit, given its soporific effects.

A typical case of turkey lag presents with malaise, lethargy, lack of motivation, and an overwhelming urge to sleep. This is easy to recognize given that in most ‘roast-turkey-and-trimmings’ households, nothing happens after dinner for the entire afternoon, and it is all anyone can do just to get up and watch the Queen’s speech on television in the evening. The duration of the illness is variable; those who receive adequate treatment can expect to feel normal again within hours, yet symptoms may last for days if neglected. In order to recover rapidly from turkey lag, one must drink and eat in moderation, stay out of the sun, and prevent core body temperature from becoming elevated. It is for this reason that turkey lag is a far greater problem in a southern hemisphere summer Christmas.

There is however, one range of treatments that are anecdotally effective, and always form part of a New Zealand Christmas. It would not be the festive season without berries and cherries. They are superb as an accompaniment to most foods. At breakfast one has raspberries and Weetabix. For ‘roast-turkey-and-trimmings’ proponents, Christmas dinner includes flaming brandy-soaked plum pudding and custard with raspberries and strawberries. Punctuating every spare moment in the day’s eating marathon are cherries. Cherries are the single most effective treatment for turkey lag. Although not supported by any clinical trials, this statement has definitely not been fabricated in order to justify eating this fruit in large amounts.

Turkey lag is the manifestation of a muddle of traditions. It, along with other struggles associated with a summer Christmas, means that New Zealanders must approach the festive season with a certain type of commitment and motivation in order to reach the New Year in a healthy state. So when you’re wrapped up in your woolsies, breathing steam, singing carols and stamping around to keep warm, dreaming about that open fire and some mulled wine, spare a thought for us. We’ll be lying in the shade, stricken with turkey lag, frantically trying to eat cherries before our eyes grow heavy and our will to lift a finger disappears. Merry Christmas, cherries! (hic).

LL
Christmas Day, when I was young, was the day my family went to the zoo (the only thing open in Melbourne) and then tried to find a restaurant that was open. So, Christmas holidays don’t mean much to me, except a great opportunity to have a long break and enjoy the summer (in Australia). At the same time, my family would celebrate Chanukah, which falls around the same time – the exact date changes every year as Jewish festivals go according to the lunar calendar, but this year actually falls exactly on Christmas Day. Chanukah is probably one of the better known Jewish festivals, not necessarily because of its importance in Judaism (New Year, Passover and the Day of Atonement are all more central to Jewish practice) but because of its proximity to Christmas. Chanukah is not even mentioned in the Torah (Hebrew Bible) as the events related to its celebration happened after Biblical times, and it was instituted as a festival by rabbis.

Chanukah is also known as the festival of lights (for reasons that will become clear) and is an eight day festival, where children are traditionally given a small gift every day of the festival (unfortunately, my parents stopped that tradition a long time ago!). Candles are lit every night of the festival on a channukiah (candle holder with nine candle holders) and prayers are said over the candles. It is also traditional to eat fried foods on this holiday (donuts and potato pancakes for eight days!) due to the significance of oil in the history of the festival. There are also other games and songs associated with the festival, including dreidels (spinning tops) that children play with a betting game to get chanukah gelt (usually chocolate money).

The dreidel game is played with a spinning top with the Hebrew letters standing for the following sentence on it: Nes Gadol haya sham – a great miracle happened there. This relates to the history of the festival, which is as follows: In 174 BC, Antiochus IV, a Syrian king, was ruling Syria and all the lands under its control, including Israel. He began oppressing the Jews in Israel, trying to prevent them from practising Jewish laws and was also massacring Jews. Many Jews had already assimilated to the Hellenistic way of life, but there was a nationalistic group opposed to Antiochus and the assimilation of the Jews called the Maccabees, led by Mattityahu and his son Yehuda. They led a revolt against the Syrian forces and won the war, returning to Jerusalem to rededicate the Temple. The Maccabees returned to Jerusalem to liberate it, and entered the Temple in order to clear it of the idols that had been placed there by the Syrians. The Maccabees wanted to light the Menorah (candle holder) in the Temple in order to rededicate it, but could only find enough oil for one day. By a miracle from God, the oil lasted for eight days until new oil was available. For many, this miracle proves that God had taken his people under his protection and helped them win a war against assimilation and oppression.

Overall, Chanukah is a story of a distinctive people fighting to keep practising a millennia-old religion, and is particularly relevant for Jews all over the world who seek to maintain a Jewish identity while interacting with other cultures and religions. Its relevance for non-Jews, as well, at this festive time, could be the importance of recognising diversity within our ‘community’ – our college, Oxford or the UK overall, and seek to understand other people’s religions and practices more deeply.

Stuart Hunter remembers his youth

Do you remember Christmas past from when you were just a little one? It was magical. It snowed every year and you woke up fresh as a daisy (at 5am) and your gifts were always perfect and Christmas shopping was so easy and you were never too full for a little bit more and the jokes in crackers were funny and TV was always awesome, as was the festive music, and no one argued about who you were spending it with and where. Christmas present just isn’t the same as it used to be.

Or is it? Is the innocence of youth clouding our vision and things are just as good now as they were in the Wonder Years? Are we just getting too cynical in our old age? Personally, I think 15 was my favourite age, but were you to ask me why, I could only say that my best (90’s) dance compilation and haircut (see pic.) come straight out of 1995 (yes, it was even better than the current one!). Also I guess I started growing into myself a bit more and appreciating some of the finer things in life…

With music the way it is now, it’s hardly a surprise we think the 90s were so much more badass though, is it? When you ask people what their favourite age was, they all seem to choose an age which they associate with some kind of newfound freedom, but which was long enough ago to not fully remember. Do we just see the past that we want to see? The mind is unfathomable at the best of times and would it be so crazy if we subconsciously chose to remember only the things we want to or need to? Can happy memories influence our happiness now?
FESTIVITIES

We don’t remember everything that has ever happened to us, probably because a lot of it was dull and we can’t be arsed (e.g. physics). So what things do we actually remember from the past? Mischief and adventures we got up to with our friends. Holidays with the family. Moments of enlightenment. Laughs. Triumphs. The time Leeds made the quarter finals of the Champion’s League (in style). Accidents. The good stuff, and the stuff which made us stronger and taught us valuable lessons.

Is it part of the human condition to look back fondly on the past, even if it wasn’t all that? Why do they say that our school days are the best days of our lives? I think life now is pretty sweet too, probably because of my distinct lack of responsibilities-postgraduates really do avoid the real world don’t they? Oh well, on with the article…

“We don’t remember everything that has ever happened to us, probably because a lot of it was dull and we can’t be arsed (e.g. physics).”

Perhaps we don’t like Christmas coming early (despite the saying) because we don’t want to be reminded about how good it’s going to be while we are still stuck in our work regime and its only manifestation is a small chocolate (of inferior quality) each day (if you’re lucky) and of course, The Shopping. Things have changed for my family this year, but I am still really looking forward to Christmas. For the joy of seeing the loved ones we still have, for the joy of giving presents, to catch up with friends I don’t see half as often as I would like to, and for a healthy escape from everyday life. The magic is just that Christmas feeling and the nostalgia it evokes. The magic is still there.

And if not, there’s always New Year.

Festivus Linacre

Aaron Miller thinks we need a big pole

As this cold and bitter Ice Age…err…winter…sets into Oxford, and I and others bundle up in parkas and scarves, flannel undergarments and fuzzy ear muffs, my mind naturally wanders to how HOT Linacre is!

I mean, seriously! Could there be a more happening place for the not-so-young-any more graduate student? Bops of matriculation, bops of super heroism, wine-tastings, exchanges, you name it: Linacre’s got it.

So when I think about festivals, my mind inevitably turns to Linacre. Let’s be honest people, just being at Linacre is a festival in and of itself. Great food, great (and cheap) drinks, and great people! Maybe it’s just me, but Linacre beats the heck out of the ‘real’ world, whatever that means.

But when I ruminant on the festive, I feel like there is still something missing at Linacre. I think: “sure there’s Christmas, Hanukah and Kwanzaa, but what about Festivus? Do any Linacrites bow to the gods of Festivus?”

For the less fortunate, more Kramer-deprived amongst you, Festivus is the Seinfeld-contrived holiday which took the ceremonial world by storm at the end of the 1990s. The main aspects of the holiday are a pole, feats of strength, and the airing of grievances. Festivus cannot end until the head of the family has been pinned to the ground. I will not try and recreate the episode’s humour here, but you should know about its far-reaching and, in some cases, disturbing implications. They might be on your exams.

Festivus has been the subject of two books, one called Festivus: the Holiday for the Rest of Us and The Real Festivus by Dan O’Keefe. O’Keefe was co-writer of the Seinfeld episode “The Strike” in which the idea of Festivus was first aired, and in the The Real Festivus, he explains that the idea for the new holiday was originally his father’s.

Which, of course, I am a bit ambivalent about; because, although Festivus clearly met its destiny on one of the most popular television shows of all time, the airing of “The Strike” marked the unhealthy seeding of an idea in the fertile and wild minds of Seinfeld viewers everywhere. Here is some proof:

“Rowers: can you spare the Festivus Committee a few quid?”

Festivus was, for a time, the moniker for a flavor of a Ben and Jerry’s ice cream (now called Gingerbread Cookie). In Dallas, Texas, people in bars sang a song called “Oh, Festivus” during the 2004-2005 holiday season, and in 2004, the University of Richmond (Virginia) renamed their annual “Pigroast” event “Festivus” as part of an effort to change the event’s image (just what image they were shooting for is anybody’s guess). Though Festivus is generally celebrated on December 23, in the irreverent spirit of Seinfeld, the date is flexible and people celebrate it at various times.

The point is this: Linacre should celebrate Festivus too! Because, well…just because. And because if we don’t, I’ll pin the head of the family’s head to the ground! (Just kidding Principal Slack!) According to some disreputable websites, Festivus poles can now be purchased online. For only $37.50! And Linacre is rich, right? Rowers: can you spare the Festivus Committee a few quid? Just think how HOT Linacre would be if we owned a Festivus pole!

And may I humbly suggest that the theme for the next Bop be ‘the airing of grievances’?

LL
Once upon a time of all the good days in the year, upon a Christmas Eve the Domestic Bursar sat busy in his office. It was cold, bleak biting, foggy weather; and the city clocks had only just gone three, but it was quite dark already.

The door of the Bursary was closed, that he might not hear the sighs of his secretary, who, in a dismal little office beyond, a sort of tank, was typing letters. The Bursar had his radiator turned to the lowest setting, but the secretary’s radiator was turned off. But she couldn’t turn it on, for the Bursar kept the thermostat in his own room. Wherefore the secretary put on her Linacre scarf, and tried to warm herself at a candle. Naturally however this was a futile exercise as to light a candle was an offence against Health and Safety Regulation no. 3549.

“A merry Christmas, Bursar! God save you!” cried a voice. It was the voice of a college student, who came upon him so quickly that this was the first intimation the Bursar had of his approach.

“Bah!” said the Bursar; “humbug!”

“Christmas a humbug, Bursar! You don’t mean that, I am sure?”

“I do. Out upon merry Christmas! What’s meant that, I am sure?”

“It held a branch of fresh green holly in its hand; and, in singular contradiction of that wintry emblem, had its dress trimmed with summer flowers. The spirit of Festivities Past, for this it was, led him to the window and pointed outside. The Bursar found himself looking at a strange figure, -- like a child: yet not so like a child as like a tiny old woman. In an instant that sight too became insensible for the creature was translucent and the texture of the chair was entirely visible. It seemed indeed to be fading as it spoke.

“Who are you?” exclaimed the Bursar in some alarm. “Who told you the security code? Did you shut the door behind you? The air has become bitter and we can’t afford to use more heat.”

“Thomas Linacre at your service, Bursar.” At once the Bursar’s face became wan, his teeth chattered mightily and he began to quake.

“What do you want?” he whispered fearfully.

“I have come to share with you the meaning of Christmas -- sorry, Festivities, I should say.”

“Bah!” spluttered the Bursar, “that isn’t difficult! It means money. Money spent and money thrown away. Festivities sharing is the rise of shares.”

“Let me show you, as I revealed the truth so many years ago.”

Light flashed up in the room upon the instant, and they were joined by another, the sharing of sweet-tasting joy; voices were lifted in simple thanks. The Bursar had his radiator turned beyond, a sort of tank, was typing letters. The Bursar remained at his desk while the great city of Oxford prepared itself for its Christmas festivities. The Bursary grew dark and chill. “Good” thought the Bursar, “dark and chill is cheap”.

As he sat in his Excel worksheet trying to find a one pound saving, a strange clanking was heard and through the door appeared a man – a man oddly transparent and wearing a wide hat and black scholar’s robes.
**FESTIVITIES**

“The future is bleak. I am the ghost of the Festivities Yet to Come but I have nothing to show you, nothing; for there will be no more festivities unless…” It was too much effort; the voice sank to inaudibility.

**Why is snow white? (And other festive physics questions)**

Is there anything Russell Ewings doesn’t know?

Festive, to me, means unrealistic pictures of winter wonderlands with implausibly dressed people making snowmen. However as a physicist I started doing that thing that physicists do, namely asking ‘why?’ Not ‘why are all those children playing in the snow middle class and white?’, but ‘why is the snow white anyway?’ and ‘are all those stories my grandfather told me about snow really true?’

The first question I thought about was whether it really can be too cold to snow, as it’s something I’ve heard lots of people say. It turns out that the answer is yes. For snow to form the atmosphere must have moisture in it and air can hold more moisture when it’s warmer. It then rises up from the ground and expands, cooling in the process, and clouds will form provided there is enough moisture in the air in the first place. So if the air starts off too cold there may not be enough moisture for cloud formation. Even if clouds do form and ice crystals begin to grow in them, if the cloud itself is too cold then the ice crystals will tend not to bond to each other to make snowflakes. However all those people in England who’ve said it was too cold to snow were still wrong, as it needs to be about -20 degrees Celsius for that claim to be true, and it never gets that cold here.

The next question is whether two snowflakes can ever be identical. This is tricky, as it’s very dependent on what you mean by identical. You really can’t tell two electrons apart, for example, and this leads to all sorts of weird quantum mechanical properties of electrons.

Since a snowflake might contain on average $10^{18}$ water molecules and not all the water molecules will be the same (due to different isotopes of hydrogen and oxygen) it is incredibly unlikely that any two snowflakes will have an identical shape and layout of water molecules, so much so that on average you would have to wait for a length of time longer than the age of the universe and examine every snowflake that fell on Earth before you found two that were the same. Even if we relax what we mean by identical to mean just that they look the same, the growth conditions for snow are so complex, being heavily dependent on temperature, water concentration in the cloud, pressure and a host of other things, that it’s still massively unlikely that you’ll ever find two snowflakes that appear exactly the same.

...you would have to wait for a length of time longer than the age of the universe and examine every snowflake that fell on Earth before you found two that were the same.”

And finally, why is snow white? The snow you look at contains a very large number of ice crystals which are all clear and reflect light. These ice crystals are all randomly aligned with respect to each other, so light scatters off them in all directions and is bounced around inside the snow lots of times until it eventually emerges. Since light of different colours will be scattered pretty much equally what you see emerging is white light, made up of all colours mixed together. But then think about when you see snow under yellow street lighting – it still looks white... This isn’t really fully understood, but it’s thought that the brain somehow compares the colour of the light that’s falling on the snow and the light that reflects off it and decides that the snow must be white if the two colours are the same. Very clever, I’m sure you’ll agree.

Right, I’m off to make a snowman!

**The Bursary grew dark and chill.**

“Good”, thought the Bursar, “dark and chill is cheap.”

But the Bursar was grieved, moved by an emotion he had forgotten he had ever known: regret for what was lost. He saw himself in the years to come, alone still, and working each day without change, without recognition of one day from another, without celebration or fellowship.

“Is there nothing we can do? Is it truly all over?”

“That’s up to you!” The voice was fading, advancing and fading, till the Domestic Bursar found himself alone once more in his cold, dank room. He raised his head from his desk, to see with bemusement the familiar shapes of his bursary office. Light was beginning to glimmer through the window and at the same time, he heard the first of the Christmas bells ringing though the morning air. A smile gleamed on his face and he chortled, “Not too late, after all.”

That Christmas was the first he ever truly celebrated, for he knew it now, as with all our holy festivals, to be a good time; a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time; the only time, in the long calendar of the year, when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely, and to think of people around them as if they really were fellow-travellers to the grave, and not another race of creatures bound on other journeys.

It was always said of him, that he knew how to keep the festival well, if any man or woman alive possessed the knowledge. May that be truly said of us, and all of us!

-With apologies to Charles Dickens

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**linacre 6 lines**
There’s been a bit of a furore recently over the teaching of Intelligent Design (ID) alongside Evolution in schools (mainly in the US, but we’ve had a bit of it over here too with the Vardy/Emmanuel Schools Foundation). So, just to get in the festive mood¹, I thought a little article about it wouldn’t go amiss.

Now, I’m an Atheist², but I’ve been brought up in a largely Christian society, large sections of my family are Catholic and I’ve got friends of all sorts of faiths. As such, I’ve had lively discussions with all sorts about who believes what and why. (Interestingly, the most stimulating discussions I’ve had have been with people who have been raised in a particular faith, and the most confrontational have been with those who have converted later in life, but that’s another article entirely).

In terms of the ID Vs Evolution debate, what concerns me most is that we are still having a debate of any form. In my mind (and most scientists’, I believe) there isn’t really a debate to be had. Evolution is a scientific theory³ with an astounding amount of supporting evidence. ID appears to be a conjecture⁴ that relies on the lack of explanation of various aspects of biology. Now, this would be interesting if ID also provided a testable explanation for the current evidence that the theory of evolution does explain. It simply does not, which leaves it lying outside of the realm of science.

Unless, or course, you’re a Kansas-school board. Then you simply redefine science. The Kansas school board in question now claims that science is no longer limited to searching for natural explanations for natural phenomena. Eek! No longer limited to natural explanations. What kind of explanations should we expect then? Supernatural?.

Supernatural. adj.

1.That is above nature; belonging to a higher realm or system than that of nature; transcending the powers or the ordinary course of nature⁶. Impossible to measure and observe then? In which case it’s not really science anymore. Unless of course you’re in a Kansas school.

In fact, I have yet to see an argument for ID being an alternative to Evolution that makes anyone who’s involved in evolutionary science think ‘Gosh that’s interesting, I wonder if there’s an explanation for that’. All the arguments seem to be conducted in a kind of in the pub, too many beers kind of way: lots of grandiose arm waving and ‘I wonder if they know something we don’t? Maybe one of the students has invented some kind of mysticalomiter for measuring supernatural occurrences, although that would have to exist in the natural world... Maybe a mystical mysticalomiter (waving your hands and saying ‘I can feel the spirits’). Sounds scientific to me. I don’t want to get too deeply into the argument between ID and Evolution. If people are interested there’s a lot of information on the web from both sides. Behe on Irreducible Complexity (http://www.talkorigins.org/face/behe.html), and then its flaws (http://www.talkdesign.org/face/idmyst/IDMyst.html), Demski on Specified Complexity (http://www.leaderu.com/offices/demski/docs/bd-specified.html) and Matt Young on the flaws in that (http://www.pcts.org/journal/young2002a.html)⁷.

So who nailed it to the perch and why? Why are various groups continually bringing up the debate and demanding that it be taught alongside science in schools? It seems the only reason can be to promote some other agenda (although this is flatly denied). This is what should worry us: that the education of our children has become the front line in a badly disguised battle of ideologies.

¹And by festive, you can read intentionally causing lots of arguments to brighten up the conversation over the family dinner table.
²For some irritating reason, I always feel like I should apologise for that in public, why is that?
³I would actually be happy with calling Evolution a fact. Evolutionary Theory is a different matter: it is continually reviewed, refined and altered to take account of new evidence (as any scientific theory should). But there exists such a body of facts (evidence) for the incremental adaptation of living beings that it’s hard to conceive of a different explanation... Special Relativity is a very different theory from Newtonian mechanics, but both still leave us spinning round the sun.
⁴“Evolution has been proven false. ID (Intelligent Design) is science-based and strong in facts,” declared board member Kathy Martin before the hearings began. Sigh.
⁶A number of ID supporters might say that they’re being misrepresented here. Some say that the theory of evolution is fine, what ID is discussing is the origin of life (what started the whole shebang, or set the goal posts just so). This is a completely different argument, and as far as I can see, doesn’t actually have much to do with Evolution. It has more to do with theories of the origin of the universe, or how some molecules began to self replicate (lighting in a bucket of goo, god, flying spaghetti monsters, etc.). In this case, I don’t understand the term intelligent. Why should we invoke this term here? If they believe that evolution is fine, then they must agree that evolution can create these phenomena that require an intelligent designer.

REFLECTIONS
A Case of Mistaken ID
Robin Freeman mourns the dead parrot

For anyone who thinks the Intelligent Design argument is new, please have a look at William Paley’s 1802 /Natural Theology/, where he sets out his Watchmaker theory. Then read Dawkins /Blind Watchmaker/ (1986) (or just have a look here: http://www.update.uu.se/~fbendz/no-god/watchmak.htm). A very dead parrot.
Observations of the Majority Complex
Aaron Kahn finds the US quite entertaining

History presents us with innumerable accounts of minority groups, often oppressed for centuries, who gradually gain a voice and press the majority power for equal rights. In the last century, we have seen women gain the right to vote in Western nations, witnessed Mohandas K. Gandhi’s non-violent protest of British rule in India, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s passive stance against racism in the United States. The tyranny of Apartheid in South Africa, as was the case in India and with women’s suffrage, reveals once again that the terms ‘majority’ and ‘minority’ have nothing to do with the percentage of the population a particular group represents, but rather which wields the power. Naturally, minorities will always fight for equality, but what happens when a certain group represents the majority and behaves as a minority, desperately trying to cling onto their way of life?

This also, is not a new phenomenon. The majority groups in the few examples mentioned above fought the inevitable relinquishing of their absolute control until the very end. However, putting this idea of a majority complex into the social and political context I know best, the United States of America, one sees a relatively unique and new manifestation of this drive to maintain a certain way of life; in actuality, this slip towards the right, heightened since the atrocities of 11th September, is not conserving a way of life, but rather creating a way of life. Those who support these increasingly conservative values hark back to a time that never really existed in the first place, all with the aim of protecting our ‘liberties’ and ‘freedom’ and the overall ‘morality’ of US society as a whole.

All you have to do is take a stroll through Borders Bookstore (in the US, of course) and you will see the wide range of books in the politics section informing you of how immoral we all are and what we should do about it. We should all expect Ann Coulter’s wide range of liberal-bashing, right-wing-supporting books to tout the dangers of straying from Christianity and indulging in equal rights for all. Other people have also come out with books to better inform us about not only our uncivilised ways, but also how we are endangering our great nation. Bernard Goldberg’s book is entitled The 100 People who are Screwing up America (and Al Franken is number 37). On the front cover we see photos of Eminem, Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Massachusetts), Barbara Streisand, Michael Jackson, Howard Dean, and, yes of course, Michael Moore. Sen. Rick Santorum (R-Pennsylvania) has recently released his take on things in It Takes a Family: Conservatism and the Common Good (an answer to Hillary Clinton’s 1996 book It Takes a Village to Raise a Child). Even more moderate and left-wing people are getting into the act. Sen. John McCain (R-Arizona) has just published Character Is Destiny: Inspiring Stories Every Young Person Should Know and Every Adult Should Remember and former Democratic US president and recipient of the 2002 Nobel Peace Prize Jimmy Carter has thrown his hat in the ring with Our Endangered Values: America’s Moral Crisis.

The following are some humble observations of the Majority Complex: people in the majority group fighting as if they were the minority. Or, in most cases, fighting with the fear that their way of life is somehow threatened by real and imaginary dangers, such as homosexuality, radical Islam and a national health care system. One characteristic of this that is unique to the US, though, is that the majority also equates these ‘crises’ with patriotism. So, since a=c when a=b and b=c, those who dare to question or act against the majority who view themselves as the minority are not only moral deviants, but also a threat to national security! Last year, when I was a lecturer at Ohio University, the state senate of Ohio introduced Senate Bill 24 (http://www.legislature.state.oh.us/bills.cfm?ID=126_SB_24). This initiative, disguised as a student bill of rights for higher education, was in reality an affront to the rights of students to learn. By introducing language into the bill that restricts the subject matter that university lecturers are permitted to introduce and discuss in their classrooms, the Government of Ohio enters into an entire different arena of education management and planning. Since university classrooms are not regularly monitored or checked by the department or administration, and since most classrooms do not contain recording devices, the only possible way that such a rule could be enforced is if a student plays informant and approaches the authorities. In fact, nowhere in the bill does it suggest open communication between students and their instructors; rather it paints students with conservative viewpoints as victims of a liberal conspiracy. As someone who studies sixteenth and seventeenth century Spain, the potential consequences of such a system is eerily reminiscent of the council that monitored heresy in Spanish dominions for 350 years: NO ONE EXPECTS THE SPANISH INQUISITION!!!

“...those who dare to question or act against the majority who view themselves as the minority are not only moral deviants, but also a threat to national security!”

The senator who introduced the bill, Republican Larry A. Mumper, presented it to the State Senate in an attempt to qualify its necessity. One small excerpt of his speech states that: ‘Ohio is blessed to have many top-notch colleges and universities and know that in many classrooms there are excellent professors and faculty working to serve as educational tutors and guides. If we can open up our classrooms even more to broader ideas and views, how could that be viewed as a negative?’
On the surface, this does not seem too bad, but when you read what he said shortly after to the Columbus Dispatch newspaper (27th January 2005 - http://www.dispatch.com/election.php?storyid= dispatch/2005/01/27/20050127-C1-04.html), he seems to contradict himself: ‘Mumper, a Republican, said many professors underestimate the values of their students because “80 percent or so of them (professors) are Democrats, liberals or socialists or card-carrying Communists” who attempt to indoctrinate students. “These are young minds that haven’t had a chance to form their own opinions”, Mumper said. “Our colleges and universities are still filled with some of the ‘60s and ‘70s profs that were the anti-American group. They’ve gotten control of how to give people tenure and so the colleges continue to move in this direction”’. What Mumper is unintentionally doing is making a connection between education and liberalism, while simultaneously making link between repression of information and conservatism...at least that’s what it seems to me.

I made it a point to inform everyone of my students about this move so they could have their say. What it does is shows a lack of respect among lawmakers for adult students to make up their own mind. I do not mean to underestimate the influence of a teacher in the classroom, but this seems to emphasize a latent fear that the masses may know too much.

A few months prior to this, in early November 2004, I watched with the world as 51% of eligible voters chose to re-elect the President Bush for a second term. What angered me most, however, was that the people of Ohio approved Issue 1, which stated that the law will inevitably fail (you can still read the letter online at http://www.athensnews.com/archives/article.php3?story_id=18840). Here are some excerpts: ‘The fact that such an amendment was even allowed to be proposed and appear on a ballot has taken the entire state, along with the 10 others that passed such propositions, back to a Jim Crow-type mentality. […] I know that 50 years from now, people will look back upon this the same way we look back upon the Jim Crow laws in the South, the internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II, and the failed attempts to maintain other social hierarchies -- with utter disdain and disbelief that our majority-minded U.S. citizens allowed the government and society to act in such a way’. I suppose there is always hope.

The final example that I feel is pertinent is perhaps the scariest. Right-wing evangelical Christians have increased their political power immensely over the last twenty-five years or so, and what has become most apparent to me is that this is the group that suffers most from the majority complex. They love (the Christian) God, Jesus and the good old USA so much that they feel they should all be intertwined in every aspect of life...including public life. While they vehemently express their love for the US Constitution, which firmly establishes a separation of Church and State that has never really existed either, they insist on having prayers in state schools and displaying the Ten Commandments in public buildings. Anyone who objects is verbally and sometimes physically attacked and branded as a God-hater.

So, with two supreme court positions, which are held for life, becoming vacant recently, the Christian right rose once again to call upon the president to nominate god-fearing, anti-abortion, pro-death penalty, pro-war, anti-hippie judges. They did so by holding Justice Sundays (see http://www.justicesunday.com/). In ‘Justice Sunday II – God Save the United States and this Honorable Court’ (confusingly held on Saturday, 13th August), one muther, the senior pastor at Two Rivers Baptist Church (don’t know where it is) Dr Jerry Sutton, emphasised the necessity of nominating a judge who will uphold the Truth against the liberal government that rules the US. He stated: ‘The most religious nation in the world is India. The most irreligious nation in the world is Sweden. We are a nation of Indians ruled by Swedes. As Christians, we’ve been called to be salt and light. That means we are to preserve, to purify, to reveal, and to clarify. Pastors across America, I want to say this to you. You are the leaders. You speak for God. We care about our country. As time passes, we have watched our nation’s moral foundation and moral fabric decay before us’ (see the transcript of the whole event at http://www.frc.org/get.cfm?i=LH05H04). Look out for ‘Justice Sunday III – Proclaim Liberty Throughout this Land’, taking place on 8th January 2006.

So this is the majority complex. I’m sure it exists in other countries, but it can’t be as entertaining (or vomit-provoking) as it is in my fair country. Perhaps they’re gearing up for another mighty clash with atheist communism – China ain’t gettin’ any smaller, you know. Whatever the reasons, I felt these observations of the majority complex would make you giggle and shake your head while that nervous knot forms in your stomach as you imagine the US prepare itself to take on other ‘threats’. LL
Towards the end of October 1517, Martin Luther pinned up a statement of his beliefs on the door of Wittenberg Castle Church under the title of the 95 Theses. The door functioned as a means of publicising a student’s work and as a site of debate – some kind of equivalent to a modern academic journal. However, as Luther’s statements gained wider currency this act was removed from its context and took on dramatic significance. In the face of local corruption and the oppressive source of this corruption in Rome, Luther could be seen striving up to the heart of the problem and digging a nail into it. His relatively neutral academic statement had changed into that most courageous and dangerous of public acts: speaking out. What is more, with hindsight, Luther’s criticism of the Catholic church had taken on the same resonance as the writing that appeared on the wall of Belshazzar’s palace foreshadowing the destruction of Babylon.

Like many modern examples of the writing on the wall, a piece of graffiti that appeared in Linacre recently seemed to contain something of the same spirit of outrage and defiance. On two of the posters put up by Christina to solicit articles for this edition of Linacre Lines, the title had been amended from ‘The Festive Issue’ to ‘The Christmas Issue’. Perhaps it was just because I’d had a say in the title of the issue that my hackles rose at the sight of this rather minor anonymous scrawl. Yet the thing rankled.

“It wasn’t so much the author’s decision to assume editorial control without having first explored the traditional route of becoming editor as it was the assumptions that appeared to lie behind the change.”

Yet my annoyance was sparked not by any of these but rather by the thought that someone might be casting themselves in the role of crusader against political correctness. It’s a common complaint in the gutter press at this time of year that Christmas has been cancelled by one or other local council. These stories, rather like those about Birmingham banning black bin liners, turn out almost universally to be fabricated or gross misrepresentations. This doesn’t stop the outrage, however, as today we are all revolutionaries in our language if not in our deeds. The idea that there is any kind of battle to be fought against the might of the PC thought police strikes me as particularly horrid, quite as horrid as any such thought control itself – were it to exist. A greater threat to freedom of speech than political correctness is the desire to hunt down and stamp out accuracy of expression. What our Daniel of Doom, our Linacre Littlejohn, appears to have overlooked in this case is that the theme of this issue is not Christmas. Nor is it necessarily any religious festival. The theme is festivities of all kinds. Yet the “you couldn’t make it up” clan find witches everywhere, burning innocent and malevolent alike.

And the irony is that in the pursuit of freedom of expression they shout down free expression. [Moreover, their desire to assert the homogenous over the diverse is surely inappropriate in an international environment such as Linacre.] Now the astute will have noticed that I’m guilty here of that of which I accuse others. I’ve created a group I maintain are pervasive and a threat to the well being of the community. Even worse, I’ve written a jeremiad in a public space and splutter outrage and revolution. Perhaps it must always be like this. I will say, however, that I at least am happy to put my name to it.

In 1621, a few months after the first Thanksgiving had been inaugurated by a community of Puritans in North America, this same community – direct descendants of the protest made by Luther in Wittenburg a century earlier – banned Christmas. Thirty years later and motivated by similarly devout objections to anything that smacked of Popery and idolatry, Christmas was outlawed in Britain and Ireland by the revolutionary government of Oliver Cromwell. So it is that the desire to protest and change can replace old intolerance with new. [Merry Christmas!]
REFLECTIONS

The Doomsayers of Christmas

Don’t get Tim Rayden a gift this Christmas

Those of you that know the author will be aware that he is not one to miss an opportunity for a tirade against rampant consumerism. Between long haul flights, your correspondent is given to pointing out the scarcity of the world’s natural resources, and the inequity of the free market system that sacrifices all for economic growth. And of course Christmas, with all its jingly bells and late opening shops, provides ample chance to lament the loss of the good fight against the great god of profit. Before Guy Fawkes’ ashes are cold the country’s retail outlets are gearing up for their biggest push. Shelves are teaming with this year’s must-have gifts, and all those little somethings with which you can prove your love for those that matter. And despite ourselves, we consumers are drawn in to this annual feeding frenzy. The desperate angst-ridden spending on which our nation’s economy so unhealthily depends. There we are rushing around in the rain, franticly shelling out for, well, what? Do you love your girlfriend enough to buy her one of these? You don’t really know what it does, or know if she really wants one, but you know she knows it’s expensive and lets face it, that’s probably what matters.

The coffers overflow. The high street reports strong trading, and the pound is safe for another year. I’m not joking about the degree to which our collective fortunes are wedded to our consumer spending. Our endless turning over of cash is about the only thing that keeps the system afloat. You know what the Treasury staff say when they get back to the office in the new year? “Did you have a good Christmas?” “Oh yes. VAT receipts from sales of tinsel and perfume have secured our programme of health service investment!”

Thus the message is clear. If the responsible citizen goes forth in festive goodwill to spend his money for his loved ones, the gurus of economic forecasting will tell us that, through the miracle of the market, we have made the world a happier place. Economic activity contributes to the greater good, and as a happy co-incidence, we can continue to enjoy our privileged at the top of the economic pile. It has been a good Christmas period. Ho ho ho, and all that.

But every good anti-capitalist knows what this reliance on the market really means. Behind the picture post card scene of Christmas shoppers indulging themselves and their families lies the exploitation of the third world, the destruction of what remains of our natural environment and the imminent collapse of society. Consumerism on this side of the economic divide, only widens the gap between our luxuriant lifestyle and the grinding poverty of those that produce for us. And some left leaning spoil-sport will, no doubt, manage to point this out to you over Christmas. Nothing delights the staunch campaigner more than a chance to tell you that the world is going to hell in a hand basket. In fact, as a general rule, the bigger the forthcoming environmental catastrophe, the more glee with which the vitriol is poured out upon those that forget to do their recycling.

“....parts of Christmas have been hijacked by multinationals bent on the exploitation of our festive good will.”

My problem here, is that we seem to be caught between a rock and a hard place. Neither free-marketeers nor anti-capitalists are really offering you a solution that will enhance your Christmas time. Consumer goods are devoid of much of the value their price tag might suggest. And the fact that you parted with your cash to acquire them for someone else won’t bring you any closer to salvation. But to assume that the whole thing is just an evil plot, hatched by the editors of the Economist, to intensify the exploitation of a defenceless world’s resources, might be a step too far. Yes, parts of Christmas have been hijacked by multinationals bent on the exploitation of our festive good will. But we don’t have to play their game.

We don’t have to be the ones to prop up the economy with our consumer spending. We don’t have to waste our money on each other as if it were the only way to secure redemption. But we don’t need to run a mile from it either. Retreating to a fenceless world’s resources, might be an ally cool. Environmentalism, on the other hand, promises little. If you spend your short haul flight will consign the Andaman Islands to the deep. According to these zealots there just isn’t anywhere to turn, and the only possible solution is an un-heated house and a car (if you must have one) that runs on olive oil. It’s not hard to see why the tendency to prophecy our demise ultimately turns people off from the environmental message. With all the world’s major religions, however hard it might be to meet their demanding specifications, you’re always offered a happy ending. Take Buddhism.

"It's not hard to see why the tendency to prophecy our demise ultimately turns people off from the environmental message. With all the world's major religions, however hard it might be to meet their demanding specifications, you're always offered a happy ending. Take Buddhism."

You might have to sit for long hours on cold stone floors. You might have to go without food and water in order to purify the soul. And you might get piles. But at the end of it all you're promised freedom from all worldly concerns. Christians get a shiny everlasting afterlife in return for being nice, and if you're a good Hindu, you get to come back as something really cool. Environmentalism, on the other hand, promises little. If you spend your whole life washing in cold water and eating odd shaped organic carrots, the best you can hope for is that the hole in the ozone layer stops getting bigger.

But this is the problem with the whole environmental movement. The hairshirts who can live with anything. According to these guys everything you want to eat is either GM fed of hormone enhanced, and everything you want to wear has been sewn by slave labourers bonded by some monstrous multinational. And whatever you do, don't go on holiday! The carbon emissions from your short haul flight will consign the Andaman Islands to the deep. According to these zealots there just isn’t anywhere to turn, and the only possible solution is an un-heated house and a car (if you must have one) that runs on olive oil. It’s not hard to see why the tendency to prophecy our demise ultimately turns people off from the environmental message. With all the world’s major religions, however hard it might be to meet their demanding specifications, you’re always offered a happy ending. Take Buddhism.
REFLECTIONS

My Fair Trade Company

Steven Bardle wears fair

There are many ways of escaping the loneliness of a PhD. You can row, join a society, or go drinking at the Linacre bar – just try to pick a busy time. I like to set up and run companies. My latest venture is Wear Fair, a fair trade jewellery retailer. The company falls under the category of Social Enterprise, which can roughly be described as the belief that you can do some good in the world whilst still making a healthy profit. Social Enterprise is well represented in Oxford by the Skoll Centre for Social Entrepreneurship at the Said Business School, which currently sponsors five MBA students who will work on social enterprise projects after graduation. Oxford Brookes is a designated fair trade university, and the city centre is home to a number of fair trade outlets, most notably St. Michael’s church on Cornmarket Street.

“The U.K. loves being in the middle, between the social welfare of Europe and the market driven capitalism of America.”

The fair trade movement has come a long way over the last decade. It now has a well-recognised symbol for food products, and has taken a strong foothold in the European food market. All the major U.K. supermarkets now have fair trade ranges. But the fair trade community is currently split as to how it should approach the future. Many people believe that the movement should avoid the mainstream, citing the recent example of Tesco, which now stocks its own fair trade lines even though it has a mixed record of dealing with its suppliers. The fair trade philosophy is one of co-operation and long-term contracts, and if this is not shared by everybody in the company, then it should not be dealing in fair trade products. Other people believe that the fair trade movement has to allow such impurities in order to survive and prosper in an increasingly competitive business environment.

As with many debates, this is at heart an argument about politics. For Fair Trade, the term ‘going mainstream’ is code for positioning your products to appeal to people from the middle or the right of the political spectrum, thereby taking the movement away from its natural habitat, the left. But for the U.K., I think the debate is outdated, as from my experience, the U.K. market is now overwhelmingly constituted by people from the ‘middle’. The U.K. loves being in the middle, between the social welfare of Europe and the market driven capitalism of America. Tesco’s success has been down to taking advantage of a gradual erosion of political parties, manifested most brilliantly by New Labour, which is everything to everybody. As a result, there is little chance of ever having a generation of 100% Fair Trade Consumers, or alternatively, of the Fair Trade movement being sabotaged by cash-hungry vultures counting their millions in the City.

You may have seen me selling from my irregular stall on Cornmarket Street, a spot that I think is invaluable for learning about the state of the market. I have found that most of my customers buy the products because they like them, and also because it is for a good cause (in that order). Nobody buys just because they are fair trade products. If people ask me about how the company is fair trade I will tell them, but I don’t like the guilt-centred form of selling, which almost bullies customers into buying. Such a negative form of selling will I think ultimately turn people off the idea of fair trade.

I prefer to increase my sales by focusing on improving my company at every opportunity. I have found that long term contracts with suppliers, when managed well, are ultimately more rewarding than constantly changing suppliers. Our main suppliers in South America can initiate more ambitious social projects as they know that they are guaranteed a set number of orders. At our end, we are guaranteed high quality products, which are very unique and individual, reflecting the creative talent of the artisans.

We also strive to minimise our costs by outsourcing as much of the work as possible to South America. For instance, we recently had the company re-branded by a very talented designer in Santiago, which was ten times cheaper than the quotes we were given by U.K. based designers. Along with the strong sterling, keeping these costs low allows us to offset our higher labour costs, and remain competitive in a market where many people still think of fair trade products as being too expensive.

Our next move is to open an e-commerce site in time for Christmas. If you ever go to a social event run by the Oxford Entrepreneurs, you will find that 90% of the conversation is about e-commerce, and how it will make you your first million. My assessment is more sober, but I do think it is a great way of keeping down overheads, and of showing customers how the fair trade process works. Our site, for instance, will have artisan profiles, showing our customers how their decision to purchase directly improves the lives of people less fortunate. I really enjoy social enterprise, and would recommend it to anybody who would like to make a difference – and some money – at the same time.

LL
The Future of Board Games

Simon Ho likes a good challenge

In recent years, computer programs have reached a point where they are even able to overpower world chess champions. The well-publicised matches between Garry Kasparov and Deep Blue in 1997, and more recently between Vladimir Kramnik and Fritz, showed the world that computers are now able to match the human intellect in a game considered to be among the most respected gauges of cerebral power.

The remarkable success of computers in chess has been matched in a number of popular board games, including draughts, but not in others (most notably the Oriental game Go). Why is this so? In order to answer this question, we must look at the complexity of some of these games.

The most straightforward indicator of a game’s complexity is the number of different games that are possible. This is determined by the number of legal moves in each player’s turn and by the restrictiveness of the game’s rules. Having more restrictions will reduce the number of permitted moves during each game. In our consideration of these factors, we will ignore games that involve an element of chance, such as backgammon, bridge, and scrabble.

Simple games such as Connect-4, noughts-and-crosses (2-dimensional and 3-dimensional), and Nine-Men’s-Morris have small numbers of allowed moves. In these cases, both humans and computers are able to play perfectly, and the player who moves first can always win (or at least force a draw). In such cases, the game is said to be ‘fully solved’.

Draughts is a slightly more complex game, and there have been indications that it may be ‘solved’ at some stage in the future. At present, the best computer programs can easily beat the world champion, but are not yet capable of perfect play. The game of draughts allows about 10^18 legal positions (although many of these would be unlikely to occur in real life), with about 10^31 different games that can possibly be played out.

In comparison, there are somewhere between 10^40 and 10^50 legal positions in chess, and about 10^50 possible games. Each game begins with 20 options for white’s first move and 20 for black (8 single-square

So what do all of these numbers mean? To put them into perspective, we can compare them to the oft-quoted figure for the number of atoms in the universe - 10^80 (Eddington’s number). Since this figure is smaller than the number of possible games of chess, Chinese chess, or Go, then it is impossible to ‘solve’ these games by knowing and recording all of the possible games that can be played – even if each individual atom could be used to record an entire game by itself! In other words, we must find other ways of ‘solving’ these games.

“there are somewhere between 10^40 and 10^50 legal positions in chess, and about 10 raised to the power of 10^50 possible games.”

Some of these games have been ‘partially solved’, meaning that victory can be guaranteed under certain conditions. For example, chess endgames involving 5 pieces or less have been solved. Computers can play perfectly on Go boards that are smaller than 5x5, but this is still only a fraction of the full-sized board.

On reflection, perhaps it is comforting to know that some games might never be solved – the next time we sit down for a game against our computers, at least we shall know that we have some chance of winning. Even if it’s only a tiny chance.

LL
The opening chapter of John Gray’s popular relationship-gospel *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus*, begins with the following narrative:

‘Imagine that men are from Mars and women are from Venus. One day long ago the Martians, looking through their telescopes, discovered the Venussians. Just glimpsing the Venussians awakened feelings they had never known. They fell in love and quickly invented space travel and flew to Venus.

The Venussians welcomed the Martians with open arms. They had intuitively known that this day would come. Their hearts opened wide to a love they had never felt before.

The love between the Venussians and Martians was magical. They delighted in being together, doing things together, and sharing together. Though from different worlds, they revelled in their differences. They spent months learning about each other, exploring and appreciating their different needs, preferences, and behaviour patterns. For years they lived together in love and harmony.

Then they decided to fly to Earth. In the beginning everything was wonderful and beautiful. But the effects of Earth’s atmosphere took hold, and one morning everyone woke up with a peculiar kind of amnesia – selective amnesia!

Both the Martians and Venussians forgot that they were from different planets and were supposed to be different. In one morning everything they had learned about their differences was erased from their memory. And since that day men and women have been in conflict.¹

A Linacre friend asked me to have a look at the first chapters of the book and give him my opinion on their content. Intrigued, as I had heard so much, I opened the book; read the introduction (pp. 1-8); read through chapter 1 (pp. 9-15), reaching some preliminary conclusions; skimmed through the rest of the chapters, confirming my preliminary conclusions; closed the book, deciding that its first 15 pages would be the most I could take. This short review forms my response.

Let us think of the longish passage from the opening chapter that I quoted above. How would it predispose a reader towards the rest of the book’s content? There are obviously many different responses that can be elicited - as many, in fact, as every single one of the different readers that will pick up and read this text. Every reading can claim an equally privileged position as all the other possible readings. Obviously, to judge by the book’s popularity, the passage has predisposed many readers positively. Not me, though. The reason has to do with some very clever tricks in the opening narrative that my nose (trained too much in the subtleties of literary language) annoyingly picked up.

“So to my friend who inspired this review I respond with the verdict: the book is trash.”

The opening narrative quoted above presents the reader with a sort of creation myth. This has many similarities with the story of Adam and Eve: the primordial happy existence (i.e. happy love for ever) in paradise (i.e.Venus, after the Martians emigrate to it), followed by the downfall, which coincides with the Martians’ and Venussians’ emigration to Earth. The only thing missing is the original sin – that wouldn’t quite fit the purposes of the narrative here. But the text bears even more exciting subtexts for the dabbler in Plato: the transition to Earth violently interrupts the original happy state, because it is followed by a ‘peculiar kind of amnesia.’ It is an amnesia that makes both Venussians and Martians forget of their differences, and, from then on, be doomed to constant conflict. What is lost is knowledge of their differences, knowledge that originally formed the basis of their mutual understanding and happiness. One cannot help thinking of the Platonic theory of recollection here: the human soul, in its pre-corporeal state living perfectly fulfilled in the world of the Forms, loses knowledge of this perfect world as it enters the human body. From the moment of birth on, life is a constant struggle to regain this original, violently, forgotten state of fulfillment.

Through this mythical garb, the text confronts the reader with an authoritative assertion of the (undeniable) fact that there are differences between the sexes. Furthermore, since myths are not science, and therefore they cannot be subjected to rational scrutiny, the text saves itself from the trouble of proving its main premise: i.e. that men and women are, in fact, different. Even further, by exploiting the Platonic overtones of the theme of knowledge as lost memory regained and reclaimed, the text establishes its own authority as the means and tool for regaining a supposedly lost knowledge. It would also be interesting to think of the text’s emphasis on difference as the foundation of primordial love-for-ever as a reversal of one of the myths about the origins of love told in Plato’s *Symposium*: in that myth, narrated by Aristophanes (one of the characters in the dialogue), love appears as the feeling through which humans desperately try to reconstruct their lost primordial unity as hermaphrodite beings, conjoining both sexes in one body form – the state of utter fulfillment, according to the speaker. Love is the pursuit of their other half in the literal sense. By supplanting unity and sameness with difference, the text further entrenches the idea of difference as the key to true love in its theoretical schema – and, of course, in the mind of its readers.

Quite clever indeed. Even if I’m reading too much Plato into this tiny bit of text (which I probably am), the fact remains that our author is calling upon his reader’s understanding of some myth and, at least some philosophy, in his attempt to establish his basic theoretical premise. Myths (and especially creation myths) are powerful narratives, not least because they are not particularly concerned with making the reader ask questions about what is told. Rather, they are more interested in codifying existing knowledge (and opinions, and presumptions) about the world into authoritative versions of reality, ready to be instilled in the reader’s mind.

In this sense, the opening narrative of *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus* succeeds in instilling, in its readers’ minds, the presumption that the differences between men and women exist inherently and by nature, not as result of a set of beliefs and practices established by culture, education, and upbringing – a presumption that strikes one as quite anachronistic, and one I’m sure many modern feminists, sociologists, and sociolinguisists (some of whom study gender as something culturally constructed, rather than a priori defined by nature) would have great double accepting.

Further, and this time in a much more sly manner, the book attributes to each sex qualities that reproduce the perception of males as powerful, strong and active, and of females as weak and passive. Take their origins, for example: men are from Mars (i.e. powerful, warlike, masculine), and women are from Venus (i.e. erotic, sexualized, feminine). The Martians observe the Venussians through their telescopes, discover them, and then invent space travel in order to join them. The Venussians, on the other hand, are contented with being objectified (which is what being observed entails), and just passively await the Martians ‘with open arms.’ No telescopes for them, and no space travel – they’re obviously too stupid to invent such things. For our author, acceptance of these differences was the key to the two sexes’ primordial state of happiness. Quite paradoxically, he attributes the equality and mutuality of the two sexes’ state of ‘being together, doing things together, and sharing together’ to precisely this acceptance of their unequal, or differential natural state. The difference is the undeniable fact, not the case to be put to the test.

This set of presumptions, in its old-fashioned and anachronistic ring, forms the basis on which the rest of the book argues. ‘Martians value power, competency, efficiency and achievement,’ the author tells us a little later. Venussians, in contrast, ‘value communication, beauty and relationships.’ The many examples (from real life or from hypothetical situations) that the book provides neatly fall into the same schema. Men always feature as achievers, hungry for power and success, while women as weak, fragile, and often hysterical beings, the polar opposite of men. Take the two situations that the author describes in pp. 23-25, for example. In the first situation, Tom (a Martian) fails effectively to communicate with Mary (a Venusian), as, instead of empathically listening to her bitching and moaning, as the author suggests he should, he tries to offer solutions to her miseries. Mary, exasperated, gives up on him. In the second version, however, Tom just listens (with empathy), only commenting with occasional ‘hmmms.’ and ‘oh nos,’ and in the end makes Mary utterly happy by saying: ‘You are such a loving person. Come here, let me give you a hug.’ To which Mary, relieved in the arms of her strong protector, responds: ‘I love talking to you. You make me really happy. Thanks for listening. I feel much better.’

This is utterly ridiculous. Only in the author’s fantasy do all women expect to be pampered in this silly manner, and I suspect that his appeal to all men to behave like cheesy Hollywood characters will find few fans in the real world. And this was just one example. Throughout the book, the pattern, and the stereotypes that underlie it, is infinitely repeated, with just slight variations: strong, protective males support weak, and deeply emotional females. And the same weak females constantly pamper the inflated egos of stubborn, excessively self-confident males, by shutting their mouth and acquiescing to their partners’ (often) stupid mistakes, which they would rather die than admit.4 Surely, to take such patterns of behaviour as normative, and as expressive of the full complexity of male-female relationships would mean to conveniently reduce these relationships to a set of easily explainable, and utterly conventional, set of stereotypes. Precisely because such stereotypes have been out there for so long, and are so deeply embedded in our minds and in our perceptions of the other sex, that is why, I think, the book has been such a big success.

People prefer to make do with given facts, rather than enquire about deeper, and surely more elusive, issues. In this sense, the book is not about the reader who wants to understand the problem (if indeed there is a problem), and seek the answer that makes most sense to his/her own life. It’s about the reader who wants to be spoon-fed with easy, a suring, and widely applicable answers.

In my view, our author wants to reduce the problem of creating healthy and long-lasting relationships to a problem that concerns differences between the sexes. Surely it is an issue that has a broader dimension, and one that has to do with questions of values, culture, self-perception, emotional maturity, and willingness to commit to others. These apply to all sorts of relationships, including those with family and friends, rather than exclusively relationships between the two sexes. It stands as further proof of the book’s shallowness that it fails to grasp these self-evident fact.

So to my friend who inspired this review I respond with the verdict: the book is trash (hoping the author won’t read this review and sue me for libel). To those seeking healthy relationships with the other sex, but fail to establish them, I would suggest they look beyond simplistic answers, such as the ones this book tries to offer. Unfortunately, people as individuals (including ourselves) are more complex than we would sometimes like. Troublesome as this realization may be, we ought to accept it, instead of resorting to easy, sweeping generalizations.

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A winter’s afternoon in Oxford
By Asif Memon

*Long stripped of their cloaks, the naked trees*

*Bathe in the rain; sway in the gentle breeze*

*Much higher, the spires embrace the grey*

*And accept the gift of a winter’s day*

*Covered to the hilt, with hurried pace*

*Sandal in hand and frown on face*

*Scurry back to lab or dreary essay*

*And accept the curse of a winter’s day*
Once I began to appreciate the full requirements of the task that lay ahead of me, I was beginning to think maybe I should have taken a little more time to deliberate upon my decision prior to accepting the role. I’d never photographed naked men before (in fact, I’ve never taken photos of naked women either, but that’s not the point). I had so much to learn… It all started a month or so earlier. Louise was leaving and we had to come up with a special way of saying ‘thank you’. Everyone knew that Louise had fond memories of ‘accidentally’ catching Mike Anstey on his way to the shower when visiting 8 Bradmore road and from somewhere the idea had sprung that a framed photo of such a view would make a great leaving present (non-explicit, of course…). In the course of discussing this great idea over a bit of knitting in the CR, names of other Linacre men that might look good naked started to be mentioned. As the list grew longer, it quickly became clear that we didn’t have to stop with just a photo of Mike in the altogether – there was enough muscle rippling around Linacre to fill a whole calendar!

Kate had come up with the idea of him sitting on a bench in the garden with a well-placed laptop to cover the appropriate bits. So Jeremy is sat on the bench, which has now moved next to the fountain for a more interesting background, and we’re asking him to kind of pull his shorts up a bit to hide them behind the computer. Then he says ‘It’s OK, I’m a Rugby player, I’m quite happy to take the shorts off!’ Next thing I know Kate’s running one way murmuring that she doesn’t want to see this, mentioning something about keeping a look-out in case anyone is coming, and there’s a pair of shorts flying in the other direction. I then find myself stood in front of a naked man, bits mostly hidden by a laptop, with a camera in my hand. I then started to get slightly concerned as to what the residents of the Bamborough building would think I normally did in my spare time. It must have been quite a sight to wake up to on a summer Saturday morning! Needless to say – it was quite a photo…Once we had Jeremy’s photo to demonstrate to the other models that they wouldn’t be the only ones to depart with a bit of clothing here and there, it suddenly seemed that much easier. I also found that getting convincing smiles in the pictures was that much easier when there’s a guy stood outside at dinner time, in full view of the main road, washing Louise’s car **au naturel**.

Before we knew it, we had shot everyone. Well, almost everyone. Having bonded in quite a special way with so many Linacre men for such a special cause, and with ‘do unto others…’ in the back of my mind, I suddenly found myself in the Dining Hall lying atop the Linacre piano, not wearing very much. All that remained on my part was to pick out the best of the photos, turn them into a tasteful sepia, and with a touch of judicial Photoshopping I removed the odd bit of tell-tale underwear here and there. Gareth and Kate then did a great job turning a pile of photos into a professional-looking calendar. And the look on Louise’s face when she saw the results made it all worthwhile! I have to admit, that I would never have guessed that coming to Oxford could have been my first step towards a career in pornography…

‘It’s OK, I’m a Rugby player, I’m quite happy to take the shorts off!’.

A task-force was formed (Kate H, Gareth and myself) and we set about recruiting models. It was deemed prudent to leave the bulk of this job to Kate (it seems that in Kate we inadvertently uncovered a remarkable talent for persuading men to shed their clothes). Eventually we had accrued enough volunteers to fill a calendar – so the shoots began. Fortunately, the first shoot went remarkably well. Jon H was to appear in the Linacre pool room – and we were able to get quite a lot of flesh in the picture without him even having to take his trousers off. Not too embarrassing on either side. One down. The next shot was Jeremy Taylor.
Executive Introductions

They are smart. They are hot. They are funny. They are the new Exec.

WELFARE SECRETARY: ELLIE PAGETT

Who are you?
My name is Ellie Pagett (although my full Christian name is actually Helen). I am originally from a little hamlet in the North of Shropshire. I studied for my Undergraduate (Natural Sciences) and Masters (History and Philosophy of Science and Medicine) at Grey College, University of Durham. I have just begun a DPhil in History and Medicine, in which I am researching nursing in Kenya in the colonial period. At University I enjoy singing in Linacre’s and Teddy Hall’s Choir. I also play netball and row for Linacre. My claim to fame is that I sang with Roy Wood of ‘I Wish It Could Be Christmas Everyday’ fame on television when I was ten with my school choir.

What do you hope to bring to your new post?
As the new Welfare Rep I hope to continue with the good work which Annette has done. I want to organise some interesting talks next year on sexual health, first aid and self-defence. For families I’m hoping to work with Annette on completing a mailing list for just families. I am also eager to try and get more families involved in college life with lots of family parties and events. As well as this I am always available for anyone to come and chat to about any issue, come and find me in my room, email me or ring. All things discussed will be completely confidential.

On a Saturday night we will most likely find you .......
On Saturday night you’ll most likely find me at a bop/the bar/some other social event.

Contact me at: helen.pagett@linacre.ox.ac.uk

BAR SECRETARY: TIM BOWKER

Who are you?
Hi, I’m Tim your new bar sec. I’m from a small town in the Cotswolds and am currently studying for a DPhil in Engineering Science.

What do you hope to bring to your new post?
First of all I’d like to say a big thanks to Kate for doing a great job over the past year and helping me get to grips with everything. Although I’ve only been around for a short while it seems to me that the Common Room gets used well during lunchtime but not so much in the evenings. So, drop me an email with any comments or suggestions so that we can see more of you down in the bar - I don’t want to have to resort to swapping the signs of the bar and library!

On a Saturday night we will most likely find you .......
On a Saturday night you’ll most likely find me watching Zoolander.

Contact me at: timothy.bowker@linacre.ox.ac.uk

LINACRE LINES EDITOR: VIK SIVANATHAN

Who are you?
By day I Phil’d’ lab over at microbiology with joy, laughter and non-pathogenic bugs, masquerading by weekend as a photographer who’d like to get paid besides having his thoughts said, his tea made, and anything else that rhymes.

What do you hope to bring to your new post?
I am hoping that Linacre Lines will remain part of college life, bringing joy, laughter and non-pathogenic bugs into the heart of college. Oh wait, I’m getting confused. I look forward to filling my shoes and the Lines with your thoughts and stories! Cheers for the votes, it’ll be hunky dory.

On a Saturday night we will most likely find you .......
On a Saturday night you’ll most likely find me very persuasive. Look into my eyes, look into my eyes, the eyes, the eyes, not around the eyes, don’t look around my eyes, look into my eyes, you’re under! I have not been taking your underwear home on Saturdays, putting it on in my bedroom and then parading up and down in front of the mirror. Three, two, one... You’re back in the room.

Contact me at: viknesh.sivanathan@linacre.ox.ac.uk
ACCOUNTS

SPORTS SECRETARY
KEVIN BRENNAN

Who are you?
I’m studying for an MSc in The Science and Medicine of Athletic Performance.
My parents have always lived abroad, but I went to boarding school in Sheffield, so I suppose that is where I am from. I am a keen sportsman and my main hobby is Rugby. My claim to fame hmmmnnnnnnmmmm......is being in the Blues team for the Varsity game last Tuesday, only the 2nd person form Linacre to ever get in.

What do you hope to bring to your new post?
My position has been run very well by Adam previously, but one thing I would hope to bring to the position is an increased awareness of sports club captains, who they are, what they look like and how you can get hold of them. Other than that I am hoping to carry on where Adam finished.

On a Saturday night we will most likely find you another day.
‘On a Saturday night you’ll most likely find me relaxing as I normally have a blues game on a Monday. Out of rugby season you’ll probably find me at one of the college bops.’

Contact me at: kevin.brennan@linacre.ox.ac.uk

PUBLICITY SECRETARY: MARIANA LUNA BARROS

Who are you?
Recently imported from Mexico, Mariana Luna Barros has been tipped as one of the hottest arrivals at Linacre this year. Already renowned for her Latina spirit, she is the one to watch. Huge football fan, tequila connoisseur, and a freak for jigsaw puzzles; she is also doing a D. Phil in Inorganic Chemistry synthesizing really cool looking stuff.

What do you hope to bring to your new post?
As the new Publicity Secretary I look forward to collaborating with the Social Secretaries and make Linacre’s events the envy of other colleges. I’ll strive to involve as many people in college life as possible. I am already working on getting the White Stripes to come and play a gig in the Common Room!!

On a Saturday night we will most likely find you another day.
On a Saturday night you won’t find me!!!

Contact me at: mariana.lunabarros@linacre.ox.ac.uk

SOCIAL SECRETARY
CLINT SIEUNARINE

Who are you?
I’m from Trinidad in the Caribbean (and we just qualified for our first ever world cup!). I’m doing the MSc in Software Engineering by Research at the ComLab and did my undergrad degrees at MIT in Boston. Graduated with double majors in computer engineering and management science with double minors in economics and mathematics. I then went on to take up 3 years employment with Texas Instruments in Toronto, Canada as a software developer having interned with them for three summers in Houston and Dallas, Texas. My hobbies and interests include reading books about world military history, eastern philosophy, and general theology. I love football, ice hockey and golf!
So I guess my claim to fame is that I have girl friends/wives in 4 different countries (lol, just joking!) :)

What do you hope to bring to your new post?
I hope to bring a fresh caribbean experience to Linacre - it’s a tall order to fill as the previous social secretaries were awesome so I’m going to try extra hard this year to unite the student body by organizing uber-cool events with Cass.

On a Saturday night we will most likely find you another day.
On a Saturday night you’ll most likely find me in the Goose and then in some random club in the area. Although lately I’ve been in my room trying to save the world.

Contact me at: clint.sieunarine@linacre.ox.ac.uk
ACCOUNTS

Who are you?
I’m a first year DPhil student at the Environmental Change Institute studying carbon credit schemes and their implications for development, particularly in Latin America. I was previously at King’s College in London, UEA in Norwich and UBC in Canada doing various eco-evolution-human-dancing activities (I wrote my first dissertation on if people dance to attract mates in nightclubs... it’s a little jump to climate change!). From: Hastings (small town about 60 miles south of London), but have most recently been living in London. Hobbies: playing guitar (badly) and the drums (and forming numerous absolutely terrible garage bands as a kid) and sports, in particular skiing which means I slope off (excuse the pun) as often as I can for a cheeky few days in the winter season. Cosy winter pubs and nightclubs every now and then are also good fun...
Claim to Fame: Fell off my bike in London this summer and then got onto a BBC1 live TV show, ‘City Hospital’, when I went to hospital to have stitches. Mostly I just looked a little stupid, because you’re not meant to fall off your bike when you’re 26 years old, especially because the reason I fell off was because I was doing a stunt. Don’t try this at home, kids.

What do you hope to bring to your new post?
I aim to bring some experience from both the business and academic world into this position (I previously worked in advertising and partnership building). I aim to use my ability in communicating effectively to help better represent the CR to the OUSU and use my skills to bring the CR and the development office closer together to help the overall promotion of Linacre. This is an excellent college and truly deserves recognition and reward for its achievements.

On a Saturday night we will most likely find you .......
On a Saturday night you’ll most likely find me merrily drinking and dancing away (preferably to very cheesy music!) so please come along and join me!

Contact me at: adam.bumpus@ouce.ox.ac.uk

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aaron.kahn@linacre.ox.ac.uk
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The Chronicles of Linacre

The duck, the wigs and the wardrobes
Every year, on the last Thursday in November, Americans take off from work and school to celebrate Thanksgiving. “What is Thanksgiving?” you might ask, and “What exactly are Americans giving thanks for?” Well, I can tell you. The standard story commemorates a feast held jointly by the first English settlers and members of local Native American tribes, who had taught the newcomers how to grow corn, build suitable dwellings, and prepare in other ways for the fast-approaching Massachusetts winter. The message is one of cross-cultural harmony and genuine appreciation for abundant harvests and good health.

‘...in America it doesn’t really matter, because no one knows anything about our history anyway: we are all just in it for the food.’

The truth is a bit different. In a typically imperialist American fashion, what this holiday “really” celebrates is the effective eradication of the Native American population from the North American continent. It remains a celebration of plenty, however; because of the wholesale slaughter of the native population plenty of room was left for European settlers to move in. Either way, whether you choose to accept the sugary legend or the darker truth, just know that in America it doesn’t really matter, because no one knows anything about our history anyway: we are all just in it for the food. Following are a few recipes for dishes served at any traditional American Thanksgiving meal. Try not to think about the injustices of colonization and enjoy!

**PUMPKIN PIE**

Pumpkin Pie is another Thanksgiving favorite. According to my extensive research, 1. Most people in the UK have never tried it, and 2. It is yummy.

These findings lead me to believe that people in the UK ought to try pumpkin pie. It’s in their best interest, really.

**INGREDIENTS**

**Crust:**
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/8 tsp salt
- 1/3 cold butter
- 2 to 3 tablespoons ice water

**Filling:**
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 1 can (15oz. or 425g) pumpkin
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon ground ginger
- ¼ ground nutmeg
- ¼ ground cloves
- ½ pint evaporated milk

Preheat oven to 425°F (220°C or gas mark 7). Mix crust ingredients (begin by mixing flour and salt, and then cutting in the butter. “Cutting” means either using two knives until the mixture is grainy like sand or using your fingers and achieving that consistency using a crumbling motion. Can’t explain it any other way… add the water and mix until it is dough consistency). Knead, chill if necessary, roll out on floured surface and line pie plate. Mix filling ingredients and pour mixture into pie crust. Bake for 10 minutes and then reduce the oven temperature to 350°F (180°C, or gas mark 4) and bake for 40 – 50 more minutes, until a knife inserted in the center comes out clean. Serve (either hot or chilled) with whipped cream.

**CRANBERRY BREAD**

Cranberry Bread is a staple on the Thanksgiving menu. My British friends insist it is actually cake rather than bread, but they are wrong. In America it is bread, and if you want to eat it, you will call it bread too.

**INGREDIENTS**

- 2 cups flour
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 ½ teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- ¾ cup orange juice
- 2 tablespoons shortening (or butter)
- 1 tablespoon grated orange peel (optional)
- 1 egg, well beaten
- 1 ½ cups coarsely chopped fresh or frozen cranberries

**DIRECTIONS**

Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C, or gas mark 4). Grease a 9 x 5 loaf pan. Mix together flour, sugar, baking powder, salt and baking soda in a medium mixing bowl. Stir in orange juice, shortening or butter (which I like to melt first), orange peel and egg. Mix until well blended. Stir in the cranberries. Spread evenly in loaf pan. Bake for 55 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Cool on rack for 15 minutes. Remove from pan and cool completely before serving.
**Stifado**
Greek Beef Stew. This winter, do it in greek style!

**INGREDIENTS:**
- (A) 1lb (910 g) Veal Shoulder (or other red meat)
- (B) 6 medium-size Tomatoes
- (C) 1 medium-size or large Onion
- (D) 2lb (910 g) Baby Onions
- (E) 2 or 3 Garlic cloves (optional)
- (F) 1 cup (250 mL) of Olive Oil
- (G) 1 cup (250 mL) of Wine (Dry Red preferred, White will also do)
- (H) Salt, Pepper (optional), Cinammon (optional)
- (I) 1 or 2 Bay Leaves (optional)

**DIRECTIONS:**
1. Peel and grate (or chop) the tomatoes. Peel and chop the medium-size or large onion. Cut the meat in large chunks. Chop the garlic into tiny pieces.
2. Brown the meat in olive oil, then add the chopped onion. Brown them both a while longer, then add the wine. A minute later add the tomatoes, the bay leaves, the garlic, 3 pinches of salt, pepper and water. Cover and bring to a boil.
3. Lower the heat and add the rice and lentils. Gently simmer for about 2 hours until the rice has softened and the soup has become thick and creamy. (Skim off any foam that may rise to the surface, and stir occasionally to make sure that the rice does not stick to the bottom of the pot.)
4. When the soup is creamy, remove the chicken wings from the pot. Discard the skin and bones, shred the meat, and return it to the pot. Taste and adjust for seasonings. Serve hot.

Recipe contributed by **Miltiadis Kokkonidis.**

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**Shorbat Dejaj**
Iraqi chicken soup for the cold winter!

**INGREDIENTS:**
- 1/2 cup basmati rice (although you can use long grain if you prefer)
- 2 tbsp. vegetable oil
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 1-1/2 pounds chicken wings
- 1/2 tsp. turmeric
- 1-1/2 tsp. ground cardamom
- 1-1/2 tsp. salt, or to taste
- Freshly ground pepper to taste
- 10 cups water
- 1/2 cup red lentils, well washed

**DIRECTIONS:**
1. Wash the rice several times to remove starch. Place it in a large bowl of cold water and soak for 2 hours, then drain and set aside.
2. In your soup pan fry the onions until soft and translucent. Add the chicken and lightly fry this for a few minutes. Then add the turmeric, cardamom, salt, pepper and water. Cover and bring to a boil.
3. Lower the heat and add the rice and lentils. Gently simmer for about 2 hours until the rice has softened and the soup has become thick and creamy. (Skim off any foam that may rise to the surface, and stir occasionally to make sure that the rice does not stick to the bottom of the pot.)
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Recipe contributed by **Thabit Al-Mourani.**

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Recipe contributed by **Thabit Al-Mourani.**

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**Potato Latkes**
This traditional Hanukkah dish makes for good noshing, hot or cold, usually served either with applesauce or sour cream and chives. For a more creative spin on this customary recipe, substitute sweet potatoes for regular potatoes and serve with honey mustard.

**INGREDIENTS:**
- 2 cups peeled and shredded potatoes (food processor or grater: both work)
- 1 tablespoon grated onion
- 3 eggs, beaten
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1 1/2 teaspoons salt
- 1/2 cup vegetable oil

**DIRECTIONS:**
1. Place the potatoes in a cheesecloth and wring (or just drain thoroughly), extracting as much moisture as possible.
2. In a medium bowl stir the potatoes, onion, eggs, flour and salt together.
3. In a large heavy-bottomed skillet over medium-high heat, heat the oil until hot. Place large spoonfuls of the potato mixture into the hot oil, pressing down on them to form 1/4 to 1/2 inch thick patties. Brown on one side, turn and brown on the other. Let drain on paper towels. Serve hot!

Recipe contributed by **Andrea Miller.**

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**Smoking Bishop**
Enjoy this festive recipe in true Dickens style!

**INGREDIENTS:**
- 5 unpeeled oranges
- 1 unpeeled grapefruit
- 36 cloves
- 1/4 pound of sugar
- 2 bottles of red wine
- 1 bottle of port

**DIRECTIONS:**
1. Place the potatoes in a cheesecloth and wring (or just drain thoroughly), extracting as much moisture as possible.
2. In a medium bowl stir the potatoes, onion, eggs, flour and salt together.
3. In a large heavy-bottomed skillet over medium-high heat, heat the oil until hot. Place large spoonfuls of the potato mixture into the hot oil, pressing down on them to form 1/4 to 1/2 inch thick patties. Brown on one side, turn and brown on the other. Let drain on paper towels. Serve hot!

Recipe contributed by **Andrea Miller.**
Ultimate Frisbee
Max Rutherford is a Frisbee Freak

Ultimate Frisbee is a sport that has, contrary to what you might think, been played for several decades, and is rumoured to have been founded after pie dishes were thrown around by American Students in the 60s. The sport now has around 100,000 players worldwide. It was, however, new to me until I came to Linacre, and experienced the game that combines netball and American football at our college’s annual sports day in October. Having expressed an interest in playing more often than once a year, the Linacre Ultimate captain asked me to play in Oxford’s Ultimate Cuppers tournament in November.

On arrival at the nominated sports ground, the sight of around 150 Frisbees soaring through a misty November morning sky at first looked like a low-budget 1930s science fiction movie, but was in fact the warm up for an all-day, exhausting inter-college competition.

Our team of 6 arrived, just enough players to put out a team. It was a high-spirited, and, most importantly, a fun day.

Corpus/Linacre Football
Patrick Travers is quite optimistic

The start of the Corpus Linacre football season has mimicked Jose Mourinho’s press conferences: in most cases the best team lost. After a shaky start, however, the team has started to play with a sense of style and panache that would make the boys in blue jealous. Although the league is probably beyond our reach, strong performances in the cup mean that another trip to the final is a real possibility. There are several reasons for this resurgence in form. An unusually large contingent of Canadians has provided some steel in the rain, sleet, and snow. Our two new Kevs have contributed goaltending of a standard rarely seen in the MCR league and tireless running all over Crouch but more prolific, has added strength to the defence and played more than a few pinpoint 70 yard passes to create beautiful route one goals. The veterans haven’t been quiet either. Manny’s tremendous burst of pace continues to trouble defenses and Dan’s personal quest for wonder goals is well on its way. Last year’s captain, Stu, is still leading by example, setting high standards and playing with complete commitment. Thabit’s organizational abilities have kept us all on our toes.

The story of the term, though, is less about individuals and more about a big group of players starting to play well as a team. Key contributions have come from those jumping into the side when they managed to avoid injuries and international commitments, not to mention girlfriends and fiancées. As a result, the best training team in the league has become a force to be reckoned with once again.

Linacre Netball
Sarah Staton is positive, too.

This season the Linacre netball team has been in division 2. Well, it is true to say that we have been consistent (we haven’t won a match yet!) but everyone on the team has had fun playing and has given a massive effort in each match. Two games were nail-bitingly close, the score in both was 7-6 which was very frustrating!

The standard of play in this division is quite high so everybody has done really well at keeping up morale. We have some fantastic individual players in all areas of play but hopefully some practice sessions out of term time will improve us as a team. So well done everybody and better luck next season!
Men's Boat Club

Rob Barnes and his men had a great summer.

The summer period and Michaelmas term have been exciting times for Linacre Men's Boat Club.

After many months of rowing in freezing temperatures, it was a wonderful experience to row in beautiful sunshine, the slightly messy application of suntan lotion and rather bizarre tan lines being a small price to pay for glorious rowing conditions. The senior men took full advantage of the weather and competed in numerous external rowing regattas over the scorching months of June to August. These included Reading Amateur, Reading Town, Maidenhead, Marlow and the qualifier for the prestigious Henley Royal Regatta. Racing also took place on the Isis with entries into Oriel regatta and the Oxford City Royal Regatta.

The largest ever influx of students into Linacre College was reflected in a healthy number of men wanting to try Oxford's favourite sport. Good coaching and superb training facilities at Godstow have allowed our Linacre novices to develop quickly, reflected in the crew reaching the last 16 of Christ Church regatta this year. We now look forward to the start of our training for Torpids 2006.

LL

Women's Boat Club

Helen Fletcher has a really large squad.

The women's boat club had a reasonably relaxed summer just going to 2 regattas (Stourport and Oxford City). We then launched into Michaelmas term and had a busy few weeks where we had 19 women in a try-row session. 18 of these 19 women became our novice squad and we were able to enter 2 boats into Christ Church Regatta. We gave a fantastic performance in Christ Church Regatta, both women's boats winning their first race and the A boat making it through to the final 16.

To keep our spirits up in the cold weather we've also had a busy social calendar, including a pasta party and crew date. I'm pleased to say that many of the novice squad will be continuing on to row next term and we expect to do well in Torpids!

LL

Marlow Regatta: Half way through our 2nd 2 km race of the day on the world renowned Dorney Lake.

Novice A crew after a Christ Church race

Novice B crew listens to coach David.
**AMUSEMENTS**

Xmas Sudoku and Kakuro

Chris Higham’s festive challenge

**SUDOKU RULES:** 1-9 in each row column and square (3x3)

I have checked my first ever hand-crafted sudoku (the left one) on www.sudokusolver.co.uk and it claims there is only one unique solution.

**COMPETITION!!!!**

COMPLETE ALL 3 PUZZLES BY FRIDAY THE 16TH AND SUBMIT THEM TO THE EDITOR’S PIGEON HOLE WITH YOUR NAME AND EMAIL ADDRESS FOR YOUR CHANCE TO WIN A BOTTLE OF WINE OF YOUR CHOICE FROM THE LINACRE BAR!!!!!!

This time you have to use the letters C H R I S T M A X (sorry couldn’t think of a festive word with nine letters and no repeats)...

The object of the kakuro is to insert the digits 1-9 into the grey cells to the total clue (numbers in the top right above the slash relates to ‘across’ clues and those in the left corner to ‘down’ clues.) associated with it. However, no digit can duplicated in an entry e.g. for a total of 6 can be 1 & 5 or 2 & 4 but not 3 & 3.