Linacre Li(n)ES
Michaelmas
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A couple of times each year, I find myself truly at peace, both in mind and soul. I like to imagine that it is because my mind and soul are in agreement, if only to indulge me.

In one of these blissful phases several months ago, I was browsing through the New Scientist (only when I’m not engrossed with the Linacre Lines, of course) whilst walking to work. It just so happened that there were several brilliant articles dealing with the big questions on life, one of which caught my eye. It dealt with the ‘I’ and was written by a neuropsychologist. The author had stripped the body of a soul, and attributed the essence of one’s self to nothing more than a machine encased in a skull. A machine so craftily designed (by the hands of time, or god, if that helps) that it provides itself with a sense of an individual, an essence that is independent of the brain, the supposed soul.

Everything shook out of perspective. I could comprehend the article and found it very enlightening, but it was stirring a whole concoction of emotions inside of me, interfering with my chain of thoughts. I walked into the nearest café and sat down with a coffee. It felt like large pieces of a jigsaw were shuffling about inside my head. And when it stopped, there was a grin. There it was, the brain, registering and understanding everything it had read, and made perfect sense of it. And yet it had invoked a range of emotions to deal with the new ideas, to accept them, and to still preserve a sense of that individuality. Crafty.

So here we are, with an edition on ‘Senses’. A compilation of inspired interpretations of people and the world, written by those wily machines.

Enjoy,

Viknesh Sivanathan
When the London underground bombings took place a few months before we were due to travel to Oxford, we thought: “Just what we need at such a critical time for us - to turn people even more against Muslims!” A colleague of mine at Alexandria University who got her D.Phil in California suggested that I should adjust my headscarf so it didn’t look like a traditional Hijab, or maybe replace it with a cap or bonnet so I wouldn’t look so obviously Muslim. Another colleague, Nihal, who got her DPhil from Aberdeen, emphatically objected: “Believe me,” she said, “you’ll be more dedicated to your faith in England than you ever were in Egypt!” Weird, huh? I thought so too. It’s particularly hard to believe if you come from a country where three quarters of women are wearing hijab, calls to prayer are heard on the street five times a day and religion generally lies deeply rooted to people’s beings.

And then we arrived in Oxford “just in time for the daffodils to show their yellow heads and with that to usher in a new spring, which is the best of English seasons” (to quote the Oxford Director of Graduate Studies in his last e-mail to me before travelling.)

“you’ll be more dedicated to your faith in England than you ever were in Egypt!”
Naturally, you can only be impressed with the sheer beauty of the place and the incredible efficiency of the science-making machine, and the tolerance of the people. When my husband and I recalled again the July bombings our first distinct thought was: “There’s a lot of injustice going on in the world but these people certainly don’t deserve to be bombed in a subway!”

But the infatuation gives way to homesickness, loneliness, and the notorious “cultural shock”, so that you end up wondering how on earth you can pray your five compulsory prayers a day when there’s no prayer room anywhere near your department. And what will the celebration of Eid be like for your children when there’ll be no-one to share it with and it’s not even a public holiday?

The answer to all these questions and many more came with the holy month of Ramadan, followed by the celebration of Eid, to unexpectedly wash away all traces of the cultural shock. When you fast from dawn ‘til sunset (and that includes anything that goes through the mouth except air) and your work colleagues take their lunch to a different room out of respect for what you’re doing, you can’t help feeling that’s more than you hoped for. At sunset you can break your fast with a delicious three course (sometimes free!) “iftar” shared with 50-100 people at Wadham College, Oxford Brookes, Summertown Hall (actually a church), or the Asian Cultural Centre down Cowley Road. But that is not all. Every night the three Cowley Road mosques as well as the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies on George Street all come alive with sounds of Taraweeh Prayer (a non-obligatory 1-2 hour prayer on all Ramadan nights), hosting hundreds of men, women, and children. Maybe, just maybe, Nihal was right after all.

And there’s more. There’s room for personal development that makes you easily and painlessly able to acknowledge beliefs, habits and traditions that are different from yours. My husband tells me: “If people can accept you walking on the street wearing this, then we can certainly accept them.” So when these two Jehovah’s Witnesses knocked on our door one day, out of the blue, to discuss “scientific evidence pointing to the presence of a creator,” we were able to have a long, open and very interesting discussion with them although we naturally disagreed with some of their beliefs.

So when these two Jehovah’s Witnesses knocked on our door...

So where are we now? In the “happy ending” bit, I suppose. We made friends with those two Jehovah’s Witnesses and we meet every week and sometimes go out together.

At Cutteslowe Primary School, my children happily celebrated Eid with their friends and teachers, and the school asked a Muslim mother (who is also an Oxford D.Phil student) to make posters themed around Ramadan so everyone would know what it’s all about. After asking some fellow Muslim students and poking around a bit, I realised there is always a free seminar room or meeting room in my department where I can pray undisturbed.

My son has also planned a Christmas dinner with his school friends, although Christmas is not something we normally celebrate. The same lesson I learned probably got through to him too:

Different is not always wrong.
We humans are a naturally inquisitive species of animal. Our capacity for developing a scientific understanding of the world is one of our defining features, distinguishing us from the other hairier and smellier apes. Several centuries ago, it was assumed that the world was created for our benefit and that we exist to serve some higher purpose. Unsettlingly, however, a number of scientific discoveries shattered our anthropocentric worldview and brought upon us the profound realisation of our insignificance. Copernicus effected the abandonment of the geocentric model of the universe, Roger Bacon challenged our entrenched anthropocentrism and advocated empirical objectivity, Charles Darwin demonstrated that we are but a very young twig on the great tree of life, and now evolutionary psychologists and sociobiologists are revealing the mechanistic underpinnings of complex human behaviours. In this new millennium, with the sequencing of the human genome, we finally have the opportunity to expose the genetic programme behind our manufacture. In losing our special place and coming closer to ‘know[ing] the mind of God’ (in the words of Stephen Hawking), are we losing our souls and our sense of purpose? I accepted the challenge by the editor of Linacre Lines to attempt to provide an evolutionist’s perspective on this issue.

Most of the world’s religions ascribe some sort of special place and divine purpose to humans, offering their followers something to satisfy their innate need for a meaning in life. As a result, there has been stubborn opposition to the rise of scientific and secular humanism, a comparatively mechanistic philosophy devoid of transcendental explanations and justifications. In many countries, including the United Kingdom, a significant proportion of the population is unconvinced by evolutionary theory, perhaps for these reasons. Recently, the attack has come from advocates of intelligent design, which postulates a theistic explanation for the origin and diversity of life on this planet (Robin Freeman wrote an excellent piece on this in the Michaelmas 2005 issue of Linacre Lines, explaining why it is irredeemably unscientific).

While science is not cruel, it is certainly indifferent and betrays no partiality towards us. It has shown us that we are no more than intelligent apes, having existed for only a miniscule fraction of the Earth’s 4.5-billion-year history. Perhaps more disturbingly to some, evolution has no goal or end. There is no great chain of progress from bacterium to human; humans are not the paragon of animals. So evolutionary theory states that humans are not a finished product, but rather a fleeting step in the inexorable march of time. Indeed, the lack of a definable end product was one of the arguments used by the pre-Darwinian philosopher David Hume against the teleological justification for the existence of an intelligent designer.

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Simon Ho talks about being human
According to some evolutionary biologists, it is very fortunate that we even exist at all. Stephen Jay Gould, Agassiz Professor of Zoology at Harvard until his death in 2002, suggested that if we were to replay the last several billion years of the Earth’s history, it would be extremely unlikely that life would follow the same evolutionary trajectory again (meaning that we would probably not exist). On the other hand, Simon Conway Morris, Professor of Earth Sciences at Cambridge, has argued that intelligence is an inevitable product of evolution. Support for this comes from the various animals that have independently evolved some degree of intelligence: octopuses, crows, dolphins, and pigs, for example.

But science is not all about “unweaving the rainbow”, as Keats lamented when Newton reduced the rainbow to its prismatic colours, thereby destroying its mystical beauty. If it is any consolation, science has also shed interesting light on our place in the world. For example, fascinating results have been obtained from genetic analyses of human evolution, some of which point to how closely related we are to each other. Studies of mitochondrial DNA, which is only passed through female lines, have shown that we all share a common female ancestor who existed about 150,000 years ago. My recent research has demonstrated that this figure is more likely to be less than 100,000 years ago. Similarly, analyses of the Y chromosome (passed only through male lines) point to a common male ancestor existing as recently as 60,000 years ago.

An even more astounding result can be reached by looking at ancestry in a different way. Each of us has two parents, four grandparents, eight great-grandparents, and so on. Going back 23 generations, we each have eight billion ancestors, which seems incorrect at first glance because it is greater than the world’s current population. But this is only because we are making the assumption that all of our ancestors are unrelated to each other. For example, it is entirely plausible that one of our great(x10)-grandparents was a sister or brother or another one of our great(x10)-grandparents. I might share a great(x10)-grandparent with you (in fact, this is very likely if you are also of East Asian extraction). Recent research into this has shown, in this manner, that we all share an ancestor who lived only 2,000 years ago! As the authors of this study state: “we share ancestors who planted rice on the banks of the Yangtze, who first domesticated horses on the steppes of the Ukraine, who hunted giant sloths in the forests of North and South America, and who laboured to build the Great Pyramid of Khufu.”

Humans might not be an end product of evolution, but there is evidence that we have stopped evolving in some respects. Medical advances have enabled us to mitigate the unsympathetic operation of natural selection. We have vaccines against certain diseases that were once considered fatal. Thanks to the development of anti-retroviral treatments, HIV is not necessarily viewed as a death sentence anymore in the West, although it still exerts a ruthless selective
force in impoverished regions of Africa. Progress in various fields of science has enabled many seriously disabled people to lead relatively normal lives, and evolutionary disadvantages such as short-sightedness have now been reduced to the status of annoying inconveniences. Our dependence on technology could also be our undoing in the future, however, with some theorists believing that we will eventually become little more than domesticated animals.

Another interesting evolutionary prediction was reported in the news several weeks ago. About 100,000 years in the future, humans will split into two species: a tall, gracile elite and a lumbering underclass (sounding eerily similar to the Eloi and Morlocks described by H.G. Wells in The Time Machine). Eventually and inevitably, however, we shall follow in the footsteps of our hominid forebears, and fall into extinction. Until that day comes, we can give our lives meaning and purpose by striving towards a comprehensive understanding of the world around us, and by enjoying nature’s grandeur.

“The universe may have a purpose, but nothing we know suggests that, if so, this purpose has any similarity to ours”
– Bertrand Russell
Five years abroad has not numbed my fondness for home. Malaysia still flows in my blood and I can still smell the potpourri of spices emanating from roadside stalls, feel the glow of the evening sun (no Malaysian in their right mind would step out in the afternoon heat), and taste the complexity of flavours; and I truly love every bit of it. It is little wonder why I still always oblige and get excited by unannounced guests, and liberally drop the word ‘la’ (a colloquial suffix all too synonymous with the Malaysian identity) in daily conversation.

Malaysia is blessed with a history of delicately balancing its multi-racial population into a single ‘Malaysian race’ – a celebration of different ethnic groups, colour and cultures. The new year is widely celebrated four times annually, each one magically unconfused by the next. Our traditions and cultures have so smoothly and comfortably intertwined such that languages, gestures, clothing and food can no longer be singled out as representing one particular ethnic group. This is no small feat, and we never tire of telling about it.

However, recent visits back have contorted this (perhaps naive) view of home, hurtfully severing my 6000 mile-long umbilical cord. While changes are expected as Malaysia charges into the 21st century, many of these changes are intruding on what is fundamentally home.

Racial politics is slowly dividing the nation. A current of tension is steadily building amongst its people. It is eroding away our sense of unity; destroying our identity.

Corruption is costing us our social safety and security. I remember my carefree childhood, roaming the neighbourhood in search of stray puppies to look after, or playing tennis in the park and parents protesting over kids spending too much time in front of the television. This has been replaced by parents persuading children to stay indoors with their X-Box for fear of rampant roadside snatch thieves and teenage thugs.

Why is Malaysia home? Is it because of the incumbent feeling of gratitude for the country? Is it because my loved ones call it home? Or is it because I long for a sense of identity? I have battled emotions with logic, and I have no answer.

I do, however, know that I want to return home. I just hope it will feel like home.

The heart should not have to lie.
In an ideal modern day society, a person deserves the right to food, water, shelter, health, education and a vote. But aren’t all these things totally necessary to life as we know it? What else can we afford to have on our list of absolute human rights? Does a person need or deserve to fly at all, or perhaps a certain amount each year, or even a certain amount within their lifetime? A human right is something which cannot reasonably be denied to someone, and which they do not need to pay for. If everyone has a right to fly, then why, in worldwide terms, can only the rich afford it?

A simple ‘solution’ to the problem of air pollution which has been put forward is higher taxation on air travel. This would mean that it would become possible only for those who could afford the increases in price. I completely disagree with this in principal, which might appear to go against my capitalist inclinations. Yes, the rich should be allowed to spend their money how they choose, but only if their actions do not detrimentally affect the lives of other people. That is the crux of this discussion, and why it is fundamentally unfair to reduce air travel just by increasing taxes.

A much fairer solution is to limit the amount of air travel each person is allowed. Because it is by definition a global issue which involves each and every country, this would be a very complex solution. It would require total cooperation between hundreds of countries, and private, government and military flight would be even more difficult to regulate and reduce. Governments should aim to minimise their air travel as a matter of example and private flight would have to be included in a person’s quota. If people ‘owned’ the rights to a certain number of ‘airmiles’, what would be to stop the rich from buying unused ‘airmiles’ from the poor? Where would the line be drawn for a person’s quota? Then unspent airmiles would become more desirable than those already clocked up, as seems to be the case now. If a quota system was used to solve the problem then it wouldn’t be like anything ever seen before in a political sense.

What else do non-totalitarian governments set absolute limits on? Are people ever actually treated as equals in any other ways? The answer is generally no, except in freak cases like during a hosepipe ban, which is appropriate to mention in this discussion. What about the percentage the government takes of the money you earn in taxes? Well that’s not a quota in the true sense, as everyone contributes differing amounts overall. We are rarely treated as equal, because the selfish nature of humans means that people will never accept equality. The problem is that people feel they have earned the right to spend their money how they see fit. However, like smoking, if a person’s actions have a detrimental effect on others, then surely it is right to limit them? Using a hosepipe when there isn’t enough water for everyone to drink is unacceptable. Why is the question of air travel any different?
If you are politically liberal like myself, then you will view too much government intervention as inhibitory to the individual. This is why environmental politics are often associated with left-wing politics, because they are often seen as shackling to the individual and to business. However, realistically we live with rules and regulations in all aspects of our lives, so why should we be afraid of this? Surely we will just adapt to the new situation? To think we have a right to anything is utterly selfish when a lot of the people in the past, present and future enjoy so few of the privileges we enjoy every day. The people of the future are especially apt to consider, if we don’t do something about this issue sooner rather than later.

How often do governments pass laws which have more opposition than support in the general populous? Ruling parties usually focus upon their own survival, which is primarily dictated by short-term issues. Encouragingly, the Labour party have recently made noises on the subject of green taxes despite the fact that it is economically unfavourable, both to the individual and business in the short term. While this is a step in the right direction, for example in the case of heavier taxation for less efficient cars, it still appears to punish the poor more than the rich. Making flights more expensive than they actually cost economically may provide revenue for ‘green’ policies, but it will stop poorer people from doing it while the rich can still afford to do it as much as they like. No matter what your politics are, there is no justification for certain people damaging the planet more than others. People don’t enjoy a fair share of the earth’s resources in general, but we should at least strive to give everyone a fair share of life as we know it by not allowing excess air travel to cause climate change.

I see flying as a privilege, as a fantastic experience, and in many cases a necessity. Like all other global warming related issues, the answer is clearly not to blindly stop flight altogether as that is completely unrealistic and unnecessary. After all, the species of earth and the earth itself have been producing CO₂ for eons and nature has found a way of balancing this. The answer is to limit the sources of CO₂ and actively seek alternatives to these sources of CO₂, whether that be through greater efficiency or new innovations. Deforestation also disrupts the balance of CO₂ in the carbon cycle, and is a problem which needs to be addressed. However, we have to ask ourselves what part we as the individual can play, and we can all do something about the amount we fly. Living in Europe, it is ridiculous that it is cheaper to travel virtually anywhere within our small continent in a plane than it is on a train. Investment in promoting the alternatives and in new technology is paramount here, and also a major change in attitudes. The people who think that they don’t have time enough to take a ferry or a train should still halt the increase in air travel by choosing these alternatives - in a market governed by supply and demand, the consumer holds the power.

Looking to the future, it’s probably safe to assume that a similar situation will arise regarding petrol and other products which come from crude oil. Crude oil will run out because there is no way of off-setting its usage - it takes millions of years to form and seconds to destroy. Some kind of quota system would be fairer than increased taxation, and alternatives must be sought for when it does eventually run out. Other things like drinking water and even land may become issues of the same type, because life as we know it is not sustainable. Ask yourself what is worse, a world where there are some limits on what luxuries you can enjoy, or the one which environmentalists are describing is inevitable? I know that may be a way off, but I know which one I would prefer. If you think it is an issue which isn’t likely to affect you, then think about your children. Even the most selfish among us cannot deny that instinct.

The right to life is far more important than the right to fly.

That’s common sense.
Five weeks before the official opening at Linacre, I worked in the library every day. My books were the only ones there, and almost everyday I was visited by the Principal, the Vice-Principal or the housekeeper, Mrs Lowe. I also played the grand piano in the common room every day, and a few days before the first dinner, the few items of furniture in it had been removed and the floor was very shiny. As I tiptoed to the grand piano, I noticed my footprints left a track on the sticky surface. A few hours later, Mrs Lowe came anxiously into the library, urging me to leave the building at once, because there was a man downstairs who wanted to kill me! The poor man had polished the parquet for days and because I had broken the final sealing layer, he had to do it all again – so I inadvertently almost sabotaged our grand opening.

Which was quite overwhelming: after weeks of splendid solitude, there arrived multitudes of (to my naïve eyes) sophisticated, mature academics from all over the world. Even more impressively, in the first of many memorable speeches by our revered Principal, we were told that the common denominator of our success in being chosen – all being equal in academic prowess and potential – was... our beauty! In some cases, that must have been in the eyes of the beholder, who could envisage the beauty of the soul.

From the cornucopia of memories, I shall first pick out some of my favourite characters, with the apologies to the unmentioned ones. There was the daemonic Rashid Halloway, our first Common Room president, whose “Blueprints for Peace” were terrifying; Stan Zalewski, who went to school with the Pope, with a mysterious past as a tutor to European Royal families; someone (Basil Smith?) who worked on the first scientific approach to mysticism; a lot of real scientists like the accordion-playing David Scott and Ray Cruddace, obsessed by rockets and Richard Wagner, who donated Linacre’s first sporting equipment in the shape of his kayak (which was stored in the St Catz boathouse and was promptly stolen); several diplomatic bodies like Australian agricultural attaché Bill Granger and charming Gustov from Mexico; the oldest student in Britain, a 69 year old retired headmaster from Ireland; remarkable lawyers like Ben Nadel and Ken Lawrence, who wrote our first constitution and chose the Linacre colours with me (supposed to be gold, silver, and sable, approved by our Principal, as they reminded him of Wadham); and heart-throbs like Roberto Chadwick and Evan Davies, engineer-plus-priest-plus-bibliophile-historian.

Among about a hundred male Common Room members, there were about 10 females, including two unforgettable American nuns. Sister Mary Paton gave the first Linacre Seminar on The Lord of the Flies; I gave the second on “Goethe as a Scientist”. The Sisters invited me to a specially arranged tea in the nunnery, to meet Lionel Trilling, because they thought we had so much in common! Little did I know that the room in which Mother Superior served us personally would become the Common Room of the present Linacre.

so I inadvertently almost sabotaged our grand opening.
But otherwise I felt quite overawed by such elegant and sophisticated women of the world as Kathleen, Harriet, Jennifer and Sylvia Moore, the most glamorous creature of all. And then there was Louis… colourful, pompous, extravagant, constantly arranging dinners, parties, concerts – once two organs were unloaded into the dining hall. His rooms became legendary: the real, fake, and self-made antiques, the portable four-poster bed, the heraldic standard flown out of his window in his Opus Dei phase… He also composed all the songs of our “Linacre Folly”, a musical in which an unemployed man called Thomas Linacre enters Linacre by mistake (the Employment Exchange then being next door), and is processed as a graduate, viva and all. Ironically, he was played by the most respectable Charles Swaisland, an ex-District Commissioner in Africa, who became our second Common Room president.

The first one was given by Brian Aldiss, I forget the topic. In retrospect, the most historic was perhaps one given by Robert Graves on the recently “discovered” mushroom drugs, during which we were old that the key to taking hallucinogenic drugs was to be in a “state of grace”, otherwise it would be unpleasant. The most important for me personally was the Linacre Lecture given by one of our founder fathers, Sir Isaiah Berlin on Romanticism, as it led to a life-long friendship (soon after that lecture, I gave him references of my Sturm und Drang bibliography, for his last book on J. G. Hamann).

Apart from all these social and academic happenings, a lot of practical things went on; books and furniture had to be chosen, a crest designed, in which scallops and greyhounds figured, and of course the colours and the constitution became established. Our first social acquisition was a big radio, and our first sporting equipment (apart from Ray’s kayak) a table tennis set. It is still quite endearing to recall that, as after-dinner entertainment, our often distinguished guests (like Nobel prize winner Krebs) ran round this table in a queue, to take a shot at the ball, drop the bat, so that the next person could have a go – such innocence!

Other more aesthetic endeavours included the building-up of an art collection, introduced seriously by Peter Millard and Sven, with continuing success. A very controversial painting attracted an anonymous slash and was even doused with beer – but others were good investments. I arranged the first international exhibition by Bavarian woodcutter Willi Wimmer (now very famous), during which one of our very serious Japanese students, Takashi Ueno, who helped to sell prints, confessed he had never talked so much in all his life.

we were a link in the chain of history

There were also impressive couples like the Shanmugasundarams, who had the first Linacre baby, and Harvery Nani Croze – eccentric zoologists living on a houseboat on the Thames with caged crows, a monkey, chickens in a tent and a python that got away – and the Passamanecks. I’ll never forget Steve, the Rabbi and Sheriff of Los Angeles, demonstrating karate kicks on the daisy-strewn lawn of Linacre.

Linacre soon became famous for its international social and cultural activities. Apart from our “in-house” events such as the Linacre Seminars, the political and sociological Hammerskjold and Bradwardine Societies (where Paul Merck en invited a businessman called Rovert Maxwell to tell us the new-fangled machinery called computers would one day take over the world), concerts (some starring the awesome Sylvia), debates, plays (like a memorable “Endgame” directed by Berent Enc), international evenings and fancy dress parties (Harriet came as Hamlet and was melancholy all evening), it was the Linacre Lectures that brought other college members flocking.

Linacre Lectures
On an even higher level, we had some very distinguished senior members and visitors indeed. It seems again naïve to recount how Leslies Cox, the first Professor of Numerical Analysis, proudly showed Karin Christenfeld and me the first computer of the university, huge monsters filling two rooms in a house where the Zoology Empire buildings now stand. He also forced me to become the secretary of the first Linacre cricket team – misguided trust, as I had to ask some spectators what “lbw” meant. At one of our first lunches, our Principal introduced me to one Professor Skinner, whom I innocently asked what his subject was – he was indulgent enough, but when I did the same to Bowra, he didn’t think it was funny. And the Inklings were still around: Hugo Dyson, on one of his visits to Linacre, warned me never to mention The Hobbit nor The Lord of the Rings to Tolkien at Merton (where I was teaching), as he loathed their increasing publicity. In the ranks of “our” institution were Gilbert Ryle, Alan Bullock, Martin Aitken, the Hickses, Dorothy Hodgkin, Hugo Blaschko (who once could not remember for which subject he got an honorary doctorate at Heidelberg University) – we took them all for granted.

And the heart and soul of this corporate body was John Bamborough, or Bam (meaning “older brother” in Rashid’s language), who once famously said that the first years of Linacre were like holding a tiger by the tail. He even made the tabloid press once when he sheltered Elizabeth Taylor with his umbrella. However, it was not all challenging in a positive sense – he also had to deal with our first unexpected death and suicide, and assist and comfort many, usually behind the scenes. And apart from all this, he also compiled his own contribution to human knowledge in an epic edition of Burton’s Anatomy of Melancholy.

So Linacre House thrived and became a “proper” chartered college, with its institutional hierarchies and development office. Little did we know in its early years, that we were making history as the first international postgraduate, interdisciplinary Oxford college. From archaeologists to zoologists, physicists to foresters, monks to metallurgists, practically all aspects of research seemed to be there, and most problems could be tackled, at least theoretically. Even more than that, it was a living example of international cooperation. For example, in my case meeting Colonel Wallach from Israel, Man Mohan explaining the wars between India and Pakistan, Jose Morales pointing out the physical benefits of monasticism, Redi cooking some of us our first curry… Linacre was truly a microcosm of the big wide world for me, and I’m sure for most other founder members too.

If Linacre is loved and supported by all the members of its foundation, then this is mainly to the credit of its truly remarkable first principal, John Bamborough.

It is difficult to imagine now, that we had no high table at first, and hardly any ceremonies except grace at dinner. After our first matriculation ever, Rashid suggested we should look at the painting of Thomas Linacre in All Souls College – which brought home to me for the first time that we were a link in the chain of history. But what impressed other graduate student visitors most was that you could not tell the difference between senior and common room members, as we really were one big international family.
“So, what do you do?”

It’s the inevitable conversation-opener in freshers’ week, and a question I have come to dread. It’s not that I don’t want to meet new people, nor that talking about myself isn’t one of my favourite pastimes, but it only takes a few blank looks and feigned interest before you begin to regret telling people that you study Material Anthropology and Museum Ethnography.

“So, what does that involve?”

I usually explain it as the interpretation of objects in the context of museums, and conclude with a characteristically self-deprecating summary of my discipline as ‘stuff in museums,’ or more succinctly, ‘Pitt Rivers studies.’

Another blank look. “Where are the Pitt Rivers?” as if it’s a series of tributaries in the Amazon basin. Rather, the Pitt Rivers Museum (on Parks Road) is one of the most famous ethnographic collections in the world, and where we material anthropologists spend most of our time. And so when thinking about ‘senses’ as a topic for this issue of Lines, the first thing to come into my mind was how useful they are in my line of work, studying ‘stuff’.

What Senses Make of Things

Museums are well-known for their ‘do not touch’ signs, but it is only by touching and smelling and examining an object using all the senses that you can really begin to see it. And museums across Oxford have taken this on board. As a volunteer in the University Museums it is interesting to note that once the (visual) ‘wow’ factor of walking into the museum has died down, what everyone wants to do is touch something.

Today, one of the first things you see when you walk into the Natural History Museum is a stuffed Shetland pony, and next to it a cheetah and a snake-skin. Not so unusual in a natural history collection, but unconventionally these specimens have signs that read ‘Please Touch!’ Similarly, between the dinosaurs, there are more taxonomical and geological specimens to get your hands on, and along the back wall of the museum is a set of boxes in which can be found bones and stones and insects and other objects for visitors to hold, smell and even taste, should they so wish.

In the Pitt Rivers Museum too the handling collection has proved very popular with visitors, who can play lamellaphones and smell Kenyan gourds, complete with the reek of ‘ethnic dirt’ (as it is known in the museum trade).

On the other side of Magdalen Bridge, Science Oxford has taken this idea even further, hosting an exhibition called ‘Art and the Senses’. From drawings by a blindfolded artist to a cluster of conifers and coral which you can touch, smell and even hear, this exhibition explores how we use our senses and how we interpret the incoming signals.

One of my favourite items – and by far the most comfortable to sit on – is a sofa situated between four flasks, from each of which issued a different scent. On the wall opposite is a chart explaining the ‘smellscape’ around you. Upon sitting down, most ‘smellers’ (as opposed to viewers) tend to shuffle to
the right where the odour is less unsavoury.

But the most fascinating (and mouthwatering) piece is in fact one of the most familiar: the Radcliffe Camera... as a celebration cake. The architecture of James Gibbs crafted in white icing, accompanied by a workbook detailing the research process and the recipe used for the sponge inside. This culinary delight serves to remind the viewer that just as little pieces of icing daily fall from the cake and the sponge grows stale, so too do the bricks and mortar of our own Camera gradually decay.

But wait – I said ‘viewer’. Indeed, despite the unconventionality of this same exhibition we have returned to the old days of museum display, with objects locked away and ‘Thou shalt not,’ written over the door.

It certainly seemed a shame that the only tasteable exhibit should be shut away in a glass case; thought-provoking but inaccessible to all but the eye.
Does Art Make Sense?

by Sonia Scott-Fleming

‘Does Art Make Sense?’ I think it does...but in different ways to different people. This is why I organise art exhibitions in our common rooms: it is for everybody to decide if they are pleased by it; made, perhaps, to think about what it means; made, perhaps, to think about what the artist means, to wonder if the artist makes sense with, say, an abstract image or a seemingly ‘mathematical’ composition of images. Perhaps above all, it is there to provoke discussion and interest of any kind.

But first it may be of interest to describe how these common room art exhibitions came about... I suggested to the then head of the Ruskin School of Drawing that it would be interesting for us, here in Linacre, to have a variety of art for our pleasure and discussion, and that it might be considered a good idea by the Ruskin students to be offered a venue for their work. No other college was providing this at the time, which was many years ago. The Ruskin head thought this would indeed please the students.

The students arrived in numbers...spread their canvases on the common room floor, and started to paint. I pointed out that - as we stepped precariously around balancing our coffee - interesting though this was, and would most certainly produce an input of discussion, I had actually meant that we wanted to have the finished works. The Ruskin students left, looking displeased. They didn’t come back.

I decided to fill their slot with the work of a local artist. Then another. And so it has been, ever since: every four to six weeks a new exhibition.

Does that make sense? To me it did at the time. And to me it has done ever since. Apart from anything else, it is interesting to see the reactions to the very varied exhibitions we have had. Reaction of almost any kind means, I think, a success - we have had, each time, reaction. And discussion. For there is a great deal of varied/interesting/talented work produced in and around Oxford.

...music invokes different colours - the painting in our reception was painted by a synaesthete
And college members have been excellent in suggesting artists they know of, and in general being good contacts.

Linacre being a very international college, I have tried to have works from as many other countries as possible, the ‘possible’ being somewhat circumscribed by the lack of funds to bring work here. But we have, all the same, managed to vary the nationalities of artists, with the help of students and their contacts.

It is essential, I think, that art in the common room should be experimental. That is to say, art that may be controversial, as what art can ‘please’ everybody? And would it be an experience - as some would agree that art should be - if it was always safe and ‘pretty’? As you study carefully, or merely glance at the pictures on the wall, what do you think is most important? Is it the colours used? Is it the composition? Abstract or figurative? Above all, what emotion is influenced by the art? An emotion is difficult to describe - do you think there is a language to describe the emotion triggered by a work of art, whether you enjoy that emotion or not?

At one venue in Art Weeks some years ago there was a vast air-locked tent, by that I mean a tent with separate compartments, each so ‘locked’ as to contrive completely different atmospheres and colours. And the effect on mood brought about by each colour was a fascinating experience - and, of course, different for each person. To be, for example, in the one where the air/atmosphere was completely red, brought a sensation of panic in some; to be in the blue one seemed soothing to some, but cold, to others. The yellow caused anxiety, but only for some. The colour green was the most ‘popular’ for producing calm.

For some, music invokes different colours - the painting in our reception was painted by a synaesthete - or he would be one such, if I could spell synaesthesia… Anyway, some artists use music to inspire and to generate the colours and forms that he or she uses in the image produced. The music of Olivier Messian is most often ‘used’ by our artist, Mark Rowan-Hull, and most probably it was used for our picture in the Lodge.

Do any of us hear music when a picture is experienced? Or see colour when we listen to certain music? Or any music? Do we perhaps think in colour and images? For example, when thinking ahead to the days of the week, I mentally visualise the days in different shapes and colours, so to find it easier to count the days and make appointments - which I miss, of course, having visualised the wrong colour or shape of the days, because I might have been immersed in thinking or looking at a picture (it might just be better were I to learn to read). Do you think in images? Or in written words - is any of this in colour? Do we know if we dream in colour? Do we experience art in any form that enhances our experience of how we live? How important is art to us?

Does any of this make sense?
It took three minutes to fill the 1200-seat conference hall; another thousand physicists squeezed between the rows and more fought at the doors. The hysteria at the American Physical Society Meeting in New York on March 18th, 1987 was seen at similar gatherings across the globe: the physical science community had been elevated into a state of universal excitement.

Only a few months earlier, Georg Bednorz and Alex Müller reported what was to be one of the major scientific revolutions of the century: a total loss in resistance to the flow of electrical current at a temperature 30 degrees above absolute zero (-240°C) in a dull-black ceramic oxide based on lanthanum, barium, copper and oxygen.

The phenomenon- superconductivity- is not defined by an absence of resistance alone. While this feature is exotic enough in its own right, it is accompanied by a show of perfect diamagnetism. An applied magnetic field induces an internal one exactly equal and opposite in direction. The resulting force is sufficient to cause levitation.

The unveiling of ceramic superconductivity shattered the assumed temperature barrier together with all preconceptions about what good superconductors should look like. Prior to this, and since the discovery of superconductivity in mercury at -266°C in 1911, the phenomenon was prevalent in metals and metallic compounds, not ceramics.

Bednorz and Müller shared the Nobel Prize for their discovery a year later. In the meantime, a race began to find similarly superconducting oxides. A cascade of frantic activity brought the breakthrough responsible for the March 18th awakening: superconductivity at a temperature above the boiling point of liquid nitrogen (-196°C).

The race to room temperature continues today; the highest recorded superconducting temperature to date stands at -135°C. As this temperature increases, so does the plausibility for the exotic property to become routinely used in technology. The possibility of cooling superconductors with liquid nitrogen, rather than helium, holds huge economic benefit and when supported by further development in the processing of the high temperature superconductors into user-friendly forms, large-scale application will follow: transmission lines that pass electricity without energy loss and computers that apply superconducting electronics to perform calculations at unimaginable speeds, will become commonplace.

Until then, “conventional helium superconductors” will remain in MRI scanners and Japanese railway prototypes. Trains on the Yamanashi Maglev Test Line have reached speeds of 361 mph. This forerunner of things to come employs superconducting magnetic levitation to produce frictionless motion with minimal noise and heat loss.
“Magnetic levitation and power lines remain genuine possibilities for the high temperature superconductors,” says Professor Robert Cava who was awarded the Matthias Prize for the discovery of new superconducting materials in 1996. “In the past five years the amount of current that can be carried over long distances in high temperature superconducting wires has gotten much larger. This is taking much longer than everyone thought it would, but I believe that real applications will eventually happen.”

As this temperature increases, so does the plausibility for the exotic property to become...

Current research focuses not only on the discovery of higher temperature superconductors but also on attaining greater understanding of the mechanism behind the phenomenon in the ceramic oxides. This is clearly different from that which is well established for the conventional superconductors. In particular, the relationship between magnetism and conductivity, described by Cava as the “Jekyll and Hyde” of oxide superconductors, remains uncertain.

With no universally accepted theory for why the ceramic oxides superconduct, scientists turn to structural insight to assist them in their hunt. Beneath the bewildering structural complexity presented by these compounds (some contain as many as seven different elements!) lay certain unifying structural, magnetic and electronic properties. The most obvious common feature is the presence of copper oxide sheets alternating with other layer types.

Dr Simon Clarke, at the University of Oxford, heads research into an exciting family of similarly layered compounds containing oxygen and sulfur: “We know so little about why the complex copper oxides superconduct, and at such unexpectedly high temperatures, that all sensible attempts to synthesise new classes of complex solid state compounds might potentially lead to superconductors.”

While the search for even-higher-temperature superconductors continues, science students remain captivated by the traditional recipe: mix copper and yttrium oxides with barium carbonate, heat with oxygen at 950°C for a day, then slowly cool. The powder won’t taste as good as cake, but will conduct electricity like iron and float above magnets when cooled in liquid nitrogen.
There must have been a certain element of catharsis involved when we applied to be on the University Challenge TV show. After all, who would want to put themselves through an oral exam including anything and everything on national television, especially when the examiner is someone as unforgiving as Jeremy Paxman?

Actually, displaying our knowledge, or lack thereof, on the telly was not in the fronts of any of our minds when the quiz team first met up. We initially got together to compete in the annual inter-college quiz league run by the university quiz society. After getting through the group stages we lost to the eventual winners, Balliol, but in fact were the only team in the whole competition to lose to them by fewer than 100 points! Buoyed by this moderate success we decided to finish what we’d started and filled out the application form and sent it to Granada TV.

In mid-May we attended an interview with some of the show’s researchers, as did all of the other Oxford college teams at some point, during which we had a written quiz and were then asked several not-very-searching questions about how we’d met, why we’d be a good team, etc. We were also asked about our outside interests, and the interview panel were particularly intrigued by Katie’s hobby of bird-ringing. There must have been something about us that the researchers liked, because a few days later we were told that we’d made it through.

At this point we panicked. There were (and still are) huge swathes of general knowledge about which we had general ignorance, and I think we all had visions of terrible questions about 18th century prime ministers or Roman architecture, about which we knew nothing. How embarrassing would it be if we couldn’t answer any questions? We resolved, therefore, to divvy up all of the ‘standard’ question subjects such as English monarchs, American presidents, Shakespeare, and so on, with each person taking responsibility for reading up a little on several subjects. The idea was to be able at least to guess intelligently when we didn’t know the answer to a question.
Somehow there wasn’t quite enough time to commit to memory all of the world’s major bodies of water, nor to remember brief biographies of significant composers. Before we knew it we were on the train to Manchester, equipped only with some pages printed from Wikipedia and the Pears’ Cyclopaedia of curious facts. I don’t know about the others, but I can’t remember anything from my hasty cramming, except for the fact that the Baltic States are in alphabetical order north to south.

Once we arrived at the studio we were soon whisked into a dressing room and then on to makeup – which was rather an unnerving experience for me and Peter! All the while there was a live feed of other matches going on ahead of ours, which at least allowed us to work out that we would not be asked to identify designer handbags from their pictures as that set of questions fell to another team. Overall there was not too much time just to sit around and get cold feet, and it was good to see that all of the other teams hanging around looked at least as nervous as we did.

Finally we were ready to go on. We lined up just outside the studio next to our opponents, UEA. Their captain, the hilariously named Mr Brain, was smoking a pipe and the rest of the team seemed to be rather more chatty than we were, almost like they were old hands at this sort of thing. The Linacre team all exchanged a look which seemed to say “why are we doing this to ourselves”, and then we were called on to the set. The first thing we saw as we entered was the huge banner made by Ellie and Cass and I think the sight of that calmed us down a little, maybe making us feel that the rest of Linacre was behind us. After getting seated there was lots of techie fooling around with microphones and cameras, and then suddenly, after a brief practice, the quiz had started!

I can’t remember much about what happened during the quiz, apart from the fact that about a third of the way through I stopped Jeremy Paxman mid-question on behalf of Katie to argue about whether our previous answer was right or not (this bit was cut, obviously). There followed a pause of about ten minutes as the production team discussed amongst themselves whether we were right or not, but in the end we didn’t get the points. However at that stage our opposition had just been getting going, and the stoppage had the effect of taking the wind out of their sails for a while, which was good for us!

At the end I looked at our score and thought that we might be in with a chance of being one of the high-scoring losing teams, however when Paxman said that he’d have to say goodbye to Linacre I got the feeling that maybe we hadn’t done enough. It turns out that our score would have been good enough to bring us back as one of the high-scoring losing teams in the previous four series’, but not this one…

Backstage afterwards we wound down with a few beers and some food before the long trip home. After the filming of the final match Paxman came into the teams’ room and congratulated or commiserated with everyone. He was rather a personable chap, not at all like the brash inquisitor of Newsnight, and it was nice of him to take an interest in the teams. He does have a disproportionately large head though.
M: So Clint, How many tattoos do you have?
C: Hang on, let me count… five!

M: How did you come to decide about getting your first tattoo?
C: I really wanted to mark significant events in my life, both positive and negative. I guess they are like battle scars that remind me of life and that I shouldn’t make the same bonehead mistakes twice. In a way with these tattoos, I silently express myself.

M: Which one is your first tattoo?
C: This one is no big deal; it’s an official UPC barcode, which I did in Toronto circa 1998. This one marked a positive event - my freshman year at M.I.T in Boston, having a great time. The numbers on the barcode digitise my birthday – something a bit geeky, I know.

M: What is the significance of the armbands?
C: Ok so the armband on my left arm signifies another brilliant time in my life – a beautiful relationship, which sadly ended many years ago in Toronto. On my right arm are the seven heavenly virtues written in Japanese Kanji characters: faith, hope, charity, fortitude, justice, temperance, and prudence. That marks yet another relationship hiccup in Trinidad, which was quite a learning experience. God why can’t I be NOT single?!

M: And what about your dragon?
C: Because everyone needs a lucky dragon! God alone knows I need as much luck as I can get. If you look closely, this tattoo closely resembles the one that Angelina Jolie has on her arm – but I got mine first!

M: So that just leaves the two symbols on the inside of your right arm. What are they?
C: Yup. Those mean “strength” and “honour”. (Clint’s face lights up)… Like a gladiator!
I got those after I moved to Toronto from Boston, a
change that required overcoming several difficult hurdles - like graduating, hehe.

M: Do you have any advice for anyone thinking of getting a tattoo?
C: Well it’s a bit permanent, so you should think long and hard about getting one. More importantly, decide on what you want because it’s there forever. Also noteworthy, you can bleed a lot while being inked and possibly pass out like I did when I had my first one, so definitely choose a decent place
to get it done – with smelling salts.
Getting slapped is not nice.

M: What do you want people to think when they see your tattoos?
C: Honestly, I don’t care what people think – but I do like to arouse interest and pique curiosity. Hmmm, ok you caught me. It helps me pull women. There I said it. Ladies if you’re reading this, I’m single and Clinty has so much love to give.

M: Do you think you will get any other tattoos?
C: Most definitely, I’ve been scoping out reputable tattoo parlours in the London area to see what they can offer.

M: Any idea of what you will get next?
C: Not sure, but certainly a design of Indian style. Perhaps a proverb done in Hindi – we’ll see.
Friday 10th of December, 2004
After enjoying two rounds of frost/defrost in Ottawa, my Canadian adventure was approaching the end. I booked a 9 am flight to Hong Kong and the departure date was Friday 17th of December. Miss Carolyn, my landlord, agreed to drive me to the airport.

2 a.m. Friday 17th of December
Everything was ready and I decided to have some sleep. I set the electric alarm for 6:00 am and adjusted the volume to maximum. It sounded like a prison siren and woke me up every time.

8:00 a.m.
“Xun, your father’s on the phone!” I woke up and realised that I had missed the plane since it takes at least 1 hour to drive to the airport. I had told my father the departure time and he called to check whether I had left. I said “I missed the plane” to the receiver and hung up.
“What happened?” “I missed the plane.”
“Your flight is on Saturday isn’t it?” “No it is today.”
“Oh God damn it! I thought it was tomorrow! You didn’t set the alarm?”
“Yes I did.” I took a look at the alarm. The number on the screen was “12:00 am”, which indicated that there was a power outage sometime after 2:00 am and the clock setting returned to default.
“So what are you going to do?” “I want to go to the airport.”
“Why? Isn’t it too late? I think you should call Air Canada.” “No. I just want to go to the airport.”
“Okay Xun don’t panic. I will be ready in 5 minutes and we will go to the airport.”

9:00-10:00 a.m.
(In front of the ticketing counter) “No no no we can do nothing about your ticket because it was purchased through the internet. You’ll have to contact Air Canada on XXXXXX.”
(In the telephone booth) “Go directly to the check in. Your plane is still on the ground. There has been thick fog around the suburb of Ottawa this morning and all the flights have been delayed.”
(In front of the check-in counter) “Yes your Ottawa-to-Vancouver flight has been delayed. In fact, you will not be able to catch the Vancouver-to-Hong Kong flight today. We are terribly sorry for this and will arrange the flight for the same time tomorrow for you.”

At this time I realised I have left my rucksack beside the telephone booth but it wasn’t there anymore when I looked back. The girl behind the check-in counter reminded me that “any unattended luggage will be removed immediately” and fortunately when I rushed to the airport security it had not been destroyed.

6:00-8:00 a.m. Saturday 18th of December
I had a big hug with Carolyn in front of the airport entrance and saw her car disappearing in the darkness. Then I realised that I had left my passport and purse (with almost all my money and bank card in it) on the table of the living room. I rushed to the Bureau de Change and changed all the money I had (10 Hong Kong dollars in my pocket) to Canadian coins. Carolyn did not have a cell phone so I had to wait an hour before calling. That was the longest hour I’ve ever had in my life.

“Carolyn?”
“Your passport and purse is now in my hand. I will meet you at the airport. Bye.”

One hour later she re-appeared at the entrance for the third time in the last two days and handed me my passport and purse through the window.

“Thank you Carolyn, you are my life-saver.”
“It is okay. Take care. Bye.”
A Global Community

Can we achieve a global sense of community?

Increasing contact with other people in other societies, lands and continents is having a massive effect on the way the world works and how we interact with each other.

As a child, the first people you know are the people who look after you, usually your family, a small group of people. Gradually as you grow up, you meet others – the children on your street, the children at your school. Your world is limited to your street, your school, your area but as a child, you meet new people and new ideas all the time. Everything is foreign, strange, and the child has a developed curiosity to deal with this. Eventually the time comes to move school, usually a bigger school, further away, which furnishes the child with a whole new array of experiences. As you grow up, become an adult, everything expands. University, in another city or even land, then work. More responsibilities, greater possibilities. Geographical constraints dwindle, beginning with being allowed to cross the road alone for the first time, to walk to school, leading to driving lessons and plane tickets. First a visit to another town, then another city, land and continent. We meet people, make friends and acquaintances. With this process comes the ability to deal with increasingly complex issues, a greater thoughtfulness and academic ability.

This is mirrored in the world. The increasing capabilities for travel and information exchange allow a lot more communication between previously distinct locations. We meet people from far-flung places much more often and multicultural societies are the norm. The world’s horizons have been broadened and are continuing to expand. We meet people and see things in our lives today that are incredible in their scope. Will the world grow up and learn to accept these new ideas and neighbours? Can we expand our sense of community even wider than before? Can we appreciate the different views and experiences of others as we do at the local level? Can we achieve a global sense of community? What would a global sense of community achieve?

There is no need to detail even a few of the problems facing the entire planet. A sense of sharing something may seem a very instable basis for starting to deal with these very major difficulties. Yet for each person who has respect for another – perhaps even with a touch of childlike non-judgemental curiosity – makes a small difference. The world is made up of people, and every last one matters. Many small differences make a bigger difference. What we do at the individual level does have an effect on the global level, if there are enough of us. Even a reduction in enmity between nations or peoples can have a significant effect. Traditional rivalries tend to have a very long life, but these cycles can be broken. Each small step on a local level is a step on the way.

There is no intrinsic reason why a global community is not possible. A global community need not necessarily involve a world government and all that that entails. In fact, no formal structures at all are necessary to achieve the breakdown of social barriers between people – the actions of every individual who does not discriminate on the grounds of origin or socio-cultural background are important. We need not get rid of nations, borders, flags and the paraphernalia of regional identity. We need not renounce our identities. We just need to be a little more accepting of others in our daily lives, wherever we are, and ignore the pessimism of the media.

We need to just continue our own personal development and the development of our world.
**Goals:** Produce a wildly erratic, moderately comprehensible, occasionally humorous, sometimes useful, publication which I shall call... “Linacre Li(n)es”.

What are you doing in Oxford?
*Literature, English Literature*

Finish the following sentence.
“If I was Santa Claus... I would not exist. Sorry kiddies, I’m having an existential crisis right now. My book, ‘Beyond Naughty and Nice’, will be released shortly. Great to kick start the new year.”

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**Goals:** I intend to have satisfied the College’s collective thirst.

What are you doing in Oxford?
*A D.Phil in Comedy in the Old Testament & some oriental studies*

Finish the following sentence.
“If I were the Queen of England... I would breed a pack of genetically modified attack-corgis to set on my enemies.”

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**Goals:** Aim to continue and improve the current standing of Linacre sports teams in collegiate competitions. Let’s show those undergrad colleges that just because we’re old, doesn’t mean we’re useless.

What are you doing in Oxford?
*Clinical Medicine*

Finish the following sentence.
“If I was Tony Blair... I’d make access to all white water rivers in the UK free and I’d spend the majority of the Olympic budget on a white water course in the Lee Valley.”
Goals:
I will continue the excellent Linacre social life by organising the usual mix of bops, parties, exchange dinners, and random events (e.g. wine tastings). I will try to organise events that are appealing to the whole of the college so people can get to know each other! I am also interested in organising events that might get some of the fellows involved since they aren’t often seen around college!

What are you doing in Oxford?
I am doing a D.Phil in Inorganic Chemistry studying catalysts for polymerisation.

Finish the following sentence.
“If I were George Walker Bush… I would paint my tanks and planes pink.”

Goals:
I hope I will be able to bring members of the Common Room closer to the Development Office since there are many great opportunities to get involved in shaping the future of our College.

What are you doing in Oxford?
I am reading for a D.Phil in Zoology. More precisely, I am looking at the evolution of emerging diseases. Aside from that, I’m trying to have a good time.

Finish the following sentence.
“If I were Kim Jong-il… I would use my nation’s fortune to get plastic surgery to make myself look like George Clooney and would try to be elected as the OUSU Representative/Development Officer for Linacre College. There are so many great things that can be achieved!”

Goals:
I aim to continue to help people have fun, both in the conventional borderline-alcoholic sense, and with the introduction of new and funky events such as open stage nights. Watch this space.

What are you doing in Oxford?
I ask myself the same question every day. I think the answer involves a D.Phil in physiology, but I could be mistaken.

Finish the following sentence.
“If I were Angelina Jolie… I would become lesbian, buy a mirrored ceiling and never leave my bedroom.”
In the mornings, I love to come into college to read the papers, any day, but Saturdays and Sundays are my favourite. Like walking into your own living room, it is nice to enter a tidy common room, be able to get the papers and sit where ever you want. I took my parents to college to show them what it is I care about, where I spend most of my time and where I hang out with my friends.

About 300 students make use of college facilities like the library, the television room and most of all the common room. There is a shared responsibility for those shared spaces. Using the Linacre Lines, I would like to bring to your attention that college belongs to all of us. The shared responsibility involves returning your cups after coffee and tea, returning your glasses to the bar from the television room and the pool room.

When you leave the CR you might want to think about putting the chairs back to the way they are usually grouped and returning your papers to the table where they are usually stacked.

I really think it is great that in this year so many people have started using the CR as their base and their home. But this also means that there is more of a need to look after the CR, more as a group and as individuals. If we all put in a little effort, everybody will able to enjoy the CR to the fullest!

Your president,

Maartje Klapwijk