



OXFORD
and the Decline of the
Collegiate Tradition

**TED TAPPER and
DAVID PALFREYMAN**

OXFORD AND THE DECLINE OF THE
COLLEGIATE TRADITION

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Preface

In the early 1980s the first Thatcher government cut the annual recurrent state grant to the universities and, ever since, the British system of higher education appears to have been in a state of flux, with the recent publication of the Dearing Report, and more recently the Bett Report, adding further fuel to the ongoing debate. Whatever the underlying causes of change may be, it is undeniable that higher education in Britain has been restructured thanks to protracted state intervention. Successive governments, both Conservative and now Labour, have sought to refashion higher education in ways which supposedly will make it more responsive to the needs of society and more accountable to the state. There are three particular developments that are most pertinent to the concerns of this book: the rapid expansion of student numbers (thus, 'massification'), the need for higher education institutions (HEIs) to operate effectively within the financial and administrative parameters established by the funding councils that in turn are dependent for their very existence upon the successful implementation of politically derived policy goals (thus, 'managerialism' and 'accountability'), and the increasing competition between HEIs for both state and market resources (thus, 'marketisation').

The purpose of this book is to examine the development of the collegial tradition in British higher education and how it is being transformed in response to the pressures of, what are perhaps simplistically but certainly conveniently termed, massification, managerialism and marketisation – the dreaded '3 Ms'. How is collegiality influenced by and responding to the new environment? Inevitably, much of our focus is upon the ancient collegiate universities of Oxford and Cambridge (and more the former than the latter), but we are keen to stress that collegiality is an idea which has penetrated thinking about higher education very widely, and not just in the United Kingdom. Hence there is a comparative dimension to this book, including the recognition of very important differences in the interpretation of the collegial tradition between the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. Indeed, it is a central sub-theme of the book that the University of Oxford, for better or worse, represents the most complete expression of the collegial tradition amongst contemporary institutions of higher education. In the postscript we present

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the idea that Oxford's collegial tradition is perhaps in the very process of evolving towards Cambridge's model of collegiality.

This book builds upon our article 'Continuity and Change in the Collegial Tradition' (Tapper and Palfreyman, 1998). In Chapter 1 we discuss the origins of the idea of collegiality, the form it took at the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and the reasons it survived at those two places but, in its fullest and purest form, disappeared elsewhere. It is part of our argument that, while Oxford and Cambridge have always been collegiate universities, and with aspects of their collegiality being replicated elsewhere, the collegial tradition in its most pristine form emerged in the latter half of nineteenth-century England. The two universities were responding, albeit reluctantly, to increasing government intervention, by way of Royal Commissions, in their affairs stimulated by the political pressures exerted by an ever more forceful bourgeoisie. The collegial tradition developed as Oxford and Cambridge shed the functions they performed for the established church and became universities serving the wider society. This was the revolution of the dons; clergymen became dons and donnish dominion reigned supreme (Engel, 1983; Rothblatt, 1968). Rudolph (1990) describes a similar process of change in the USA, albeit one without government intervention. Thus the emergence of the collegial tradition was a response to broad societal change, encompassing the leading public schools as well as the ancient universities.

It is evident that the collegial tradition has never been a static entity; indeed traditions that survive must be responsive to the changing needs of society. Immediately the question is raised as to whether key educational ideas – such as the collegial tradition, university autonomy, or a liberal education – have any integral meaning or whether they are infinitely malleable? In Chapter 2, therefore, we look at the question of continuity and change within the collegial tradition. Is change simply the pragmatic response to diverse, at best interrelated, pressures or can those pressures be linked to one another in such a fashion that a theory of change can be constructed?

In the very throes of its nineteenth-century reconstruction the collegial tradition within Oxbridge was facing serious challenges to incorporate both the experimental sciences and, to a lesser degree, women: a male construct centred around teaching and scholarship within the arts was under pressure to include women and the sciences. It is our contention that change has been driven by the idea that higher education is essentially an economic resource; in particular, it has to respond positively to the demands of the labour market and society's need for intellectual capital. Thus the pressures exerted by science and women were manifestations of

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these deeper forces. The question was, and indeed still is, can the collegial tradition respond to these pressures in a manner that enables it to retain its essential characteristics while meeting new demands? Moreover, the collegial tradition has to marry these external pressures with the career interests of its own academic labour force. In the latter half of the nineteenth century it succeeded; whether it can continue to do so for the twenty-first century is more problematic. Contemporarily the problems of successful adjustment to changing circumstances are intensified by financial dependence upon a state which, with alternative models at its disposal, appears to have become increasingly unsympathetic both to Oxbridge's exceptionalism and to the manifestations of collegiality within the system of higher education at large. We pose the problem at the conclusion of Chapter 2 and return to it in some depth in Chapter 8. Indeed, we set out in the postscript 'a nightmare scenario' for the termination – say by 2025 – of the collegial tradition even in its Oxford heartland.

The major part of the book (Chapters 3–7) examines particular manifestations of the collegial tradition, the contemporary challenges the colleges face and the patterns of adjustment. Because the ancient collegiate universities of England have presented the fullest manifestations of the collegial tradition they provide most of the focus for this section of the book. However, collegiality – certainly with respect to how higher education institutions are governed – is under attack on a broad front, including, what, since the Further and Higher Education Act of 1992, have been known as the 'new universities' (Ryder, 1996; Warren, 1994, 1997). Therefore, the wider attack will be analysed in this section of the book; an attack that according to international surveys has left British academics amongst the most demoralised in the world (Altbach, 1997, p. 333).

The precise manifestations of the collegial tradition have been considered only rarely and we are interested to see in what ways our definition will be embellished and challenged. We have structured our analysis around the following ingredients: physical and temporal characteristics, along with commensality (Chapter 3); control of undergraduate access (Chapter 4); the pedagogical tradition of the tutorial system (Chapter 5); the self-governing academic community (Chapter 6); and the financial basis of collegiality, of which endowment income is a critical dimension (Chapter 7). What appears is a robust tradition, one that has been able to reformulate itself while retaining a recognisable form, one that has (so far) blended continuity with change. The Victorian tutor–don has become 'research active' but the tutorial system continues;

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graduate students appear en masse but most of the colleges are still dominated by the traditional 18–21-year-old undergraduate intake. ‘Big Science’ evolves in its enclave of specialist buildings but science academics still have college rooms and many lunch regularly with their arts colleagues. The college library is computerised, the internet reaches student bedrooms that are steadily ‘en suited’ and centrally heated, and although the college gates may slam shut at midnight students no longer climb over walls to get back in since they now have swipe cards. The JCR pantry and the hall buttery still sell port and sherry in bottles with college labels, but the students may prefer fruit-flavoured bottled lager, all purchased on the basis of electronic cashless vending. While many students still row and play rugger, others will enjoy such contemporary activities as bungee-jumping and para-gliding. The old members (alumni) return for the gaudy to wallow in nostalgia but are pursued professionally by the development officer for their donations and legacies, and the same old members may well attend the carol service in a timeless chapel now lit by fibre-optic cabling. And so it has gone on – changing but seemingly immutable.

In Chapter 8 and the Postscript we turn to the future. First, we examine the prospects for the collegial tradition within the two English collegiate universities. Oxford, rather than Cambridge, is our particular focus: because we regard Oxford as representing a purer form of collegiality, and because the University and its colleges are attempting to come to terms with the latest attempt at internal reform in the shape of the Report of the Commission of Inquiry (University of Oxford, 1997a). Within Oxford and Cambridge large segments of the membership of both universities are excluded from the benefits – or otherwise – of their collegial traditions. It is our central conclusion that this is a process which will be exacerbated in the future as the collegial tradition is increasingly centred upon those parts of the college system that have the resources to sustain it. In the past collegiality may have been able to prosper without the presence of substantial independent resources; in the future it will not be so fortunate. College resources will be needed to resist the blandishments of the state and to ensure internal loyalty as allegiances become more pragmatically determined. Moreover, some aspects of collegiality have a more viable future than others. Does the tradition assume so truncated a form that it is incumbent upon us to ask if anything really meaningful persists?

Second, we examine the future governance of higher education in Britain more generally. Is the centrally driven push towards managerialism so strong that those dimensions of collegiality that have penetrated British institutions of higher education are in terminal decline?

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Is it possible that the state, within a diversified model of mass higher education, will actually permit – even encourage – collegiality? Can high-quality teaching and research be delivered without being organised collegially? Will collegiality, perhaps conceived of in different ways, be demanded by the grassroots of HEIs? Alternatively, is ‘a nightmare scenario’ unfolding? Are we witnessing the disappearance of autonomous colleges at both Oxford and Cambridge through amalgamations and bankruptcies as the listed buildings become mere halls of residence? Is this linked to greatly enhanced central authority being located in the two universities while these two former collegiate institutions find themselves located within a wider system of higher education in which the state and the market reward those who can most cheaply (efficiently) deliver a national curriculum degree course and enhance their league-table positions in the research assessment exercises?

This is a book with the usual scholarly pretensions but, because it attempts to cover so many different themes, it cannot compete with more specialised texts. However, we do see the book as offering the first serious in-depth discussion of the idea of the collegial tradition. The intention is to encourage the reader both to interpret the histories of the two ancient English universities in a more reflective manner and to understand more fully the role of ideas in the process of educational change. By drawing attention to the collegial tradition we hope to have thrown a sharper light upon the current restructuring of the British system of higher education – to make us more aware of what we are in danger of losing. One of the authors is a full-time college official, the other a full-time academic and, consequently, we have different professional relationships to the current process of change in higher education. Not surprisingly, that has been reflected in our contributions to this book. But we have a common commitment to ensuring that the best emerges, both in terms of academic understanding and institutional change. This is a book written to appeal to the educated citizenry at large, and, above all, to those – like ourselves – who have been both seduced and infuriated by the magic of Oxbridge.

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As authors, we take full responsibility for all errors, omissions and interpretations – and for the prognosis given in the Postscript.

1

Collegiality Debated

For there is nothing in England to be matched with what lurks in the vapours of these meadows, and in the shadows of these spires – that mysterious, inenubitable spirit, spirit of Oxford. Oxford! The very sight of the word printed, or sound of it spoken, is fraught for me with most actual magic.

Max Beerbohm, *Zuleika Dobson* (1911)

For five hundred years they [the Fellows] and their predecessors had ordained at least some portion of the elite ... all of them imbued with a corporate complacency and an intellectual scepticism that desiccated change ... They were the guardians of political inertia ...

Tom Sharpe, *Porterhouse Blue* (1976)

This chapter sets the scene by considering collegiality as it has been defined and discussed:

1. by the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*Collegiality Defined*);
2. in English literature, and especially within the genre of the university novel (*Collegiality in Fiction*);
3. for Victorian Society by Cardinal Newman (*Collegiality for Newman: The Idea and the Ideal*);
4. in recent decades (*Collegiality for Pundits*);
5. by 1990s participants, the Oxford interviewees (*Collegiality for Contemporary Oxford Dons*);
6. in the literature of organisational theory and management (*Collegiality in Management Theory*); and
7. in a model which is offered as identifying the key criteria by which the health and strength of collegiality can be assessed (*Collegiality: The Model*).

COLLEGIALITY DEFINED

The *OED* (1989, 2nd edn, Vol. III, pp. 480–3) defines ‘college’, ‘collegial’, ‘collegiality’, ‘collegiate’, and the archaic ‘colleger’ and ‘collegian’. The first definition of college is given as: ‘An organised

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society of persons performing certain common functions and possessing special rights and privileges; a body of colleagues, a guild, fellowship, association'. Thus, references are cited to the college of the Apostles, the college of cardinals, the college of surgeons. The fourth definition is: 'A society of scholars incorporated within, or in connection with, a University, or otherwise formed for the purposes of study or instruction', *and especially* 'An independent self-governing corporation or society (usually founded for the maintenance of poor students) in a University, as the College of the Sorbonne in the ancient University of Paris, and the ancient colleges of Oxford and Cambridge'. The fifth definition is: 'The building or set of buildings occupied by such society or institution'.

Leaving aside slang definitions, and the many combinations (including 'college pudding'), the essence of collegiality for the purposes of this book is of an organised gathering together of individuals located within a particular building who form an independent corporate body with academic duties. What will be explored throughout this book are these aspects of communal living and working, of independence in governance, of teaching obligations, and of the physical representation of the college both as a community of people and as a very specific purpose-designed-and-built building with special features.

The *OED* notes that the term 'college' as applied to Oxford was introduced only in the fourteenth century, citing the 1379 Patent Roll relating to the creation of New College and the subsequent New College statutes of 1400. Conversely, the reference to 'collegiate' in the sense of the administrative structure of a university being arranged, as at Oxford and Cambridge (and nowhere else), on a college system seems to date only from the mid-nineteenth century and then to be used more widely in the mid-twentieth century, judging by the *OED* citations. A final point to note from the *OED*, also explored as a key theme in this book, is the definition of collegiality as 'Colleagueship; the relation between colleagues', and the citing of a 1948 reference: 'Decision-taking and responsibilities were based on the "collegiality" rule ... rather than on the "one-man management" principle'. This citation from a book on the political system of the USSR seems especially apt in the context of the late twentieth-century debate on the role of the vice-chancellor as chief executive who manages the modern university. Collegiality might also be found, or might once have been found prior to the 1980s search for managerial efficiency, amongst law and accountancy partnerships, hospital consultants, the officers' mess, the keepers of the Victoria and Albert Museum or the British Museum, or even the chapter of a cathedral.

There is a further useful definition of 'the college' in Cobban (1988, pp. 112–15), placing its origins in 'the European collegiate movement'

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stretching back to the founding of the College of the Sorbonne within the University of Paris in *c.*1257/58 as ‘the most influential exemplar for the colleges of Oxford and Cambridge’: ‘In its most mature state, the secular medieval college was an autonomous, self-governing legal entity, solidly endowed, and possessing its own statutes, privileges and common seal’. Cobban stresses ‘the act of endowment made for educational purposes’ as complementing ‘the spiritual and charitable aims underlying collegiate enterprise’ – hence, for example, some lay colleges are also, in accordance with the intention of their founders and their original statutes, still to this day ‘choral colleges’ or chantry foundations (New College and Magdalen at Oxford; King’s at Cambridge). As Cobban puts it: ‘Generally speaking, whether kings, queens, high-ranking ecclesiastics [for example, William of Wykeham, Lord Chancellor and Bishop of Winchester, founder of New College – see Buxton and Williams, 1979] or statesmen, or wealthy members of the lay aristocracy, they regarded the establishment of a college as a charitable and pious venture which would enshrine their memory and which would result in a foundation in which masses would be said for their souls and for those of their relatives’ (1988, p. 113). At the same time, however, there was also a vocational, an instrumental objective in the production of a supply of suitably educated clerics, canon lawyers and civil lawyers to serve church and state: ‘the fusion of subjective spiritual motivation with objective educational purpose’.

Cobban goes on to identify the key features of college autonomy: the self-governing community of fellows organised on democratic lines within the parameters of the college’s royal charter and its statutes, and as supervised by the ‘visitor’ (for example, the successor Bishops of Winchester in the case of New College), with the right themselves to elect the ‘first-amongst-equals’ head of house (warden, provost, rector, master or president), and to add to their number (for example, New College fellows are elected and then admitted as fellows on swearing, in medieval Latin, an oath of allegiance to the foundation).¹ In short, they exercise the sovereignty of the governing body of the fellows acting as the corporation. Also, they appoint from amongst themselves the college officers (bursar, seneschal of the hall, senior tutor, chattels fellow, librarian and even nowadays the data protection officer), and select their students (‘the junior members’, comprising undergraduate commoners and scholars, and, these days, graduates studying for postgraduate degrees).

Cobban sums it up: ‘Generally speaking, English colleges contrived to secure that the administrative burden in internal affairs fell with a distributed weight upon a broad section of the fellowship ... The powers of the head of college were hedged around with effective checks and

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balances, and, in the main, the fellows seemed to acquiesce in this form of contractual division of authority, worked out by the founder [in astonishing detail in the case of William of Wykeham's statutes of 1400 for New College, next used as a model for Madgalen a century later] and developed and adjusted in the light of experience ... The combination of the ultimate deterrent – the college meeting – and the operative principle of election to administrative office, ensured that a system of responsible government was [and still is, perhaps] firmly embedded in the constitutions of most of the English medieval colleges' (1988, pp. 127–8).

The *sui generis* legal status of Oxbridge colleges in the context of the law relating to corporations and of charity law has been dissected by Palfreyman (1996, 1998, 1999a, 1999b). Their legal identity is complex. They combine lay, eleemosynary (created by a founder to disburse his or her largesse on a perpetual basis), chartered and charitable (but as exempt charities rather than registered charities) elements. They may be corporations aggregate or, less frequently, sole (like a bishop). They will possess permanent endowment held effectively in trust for the fulfilment of the founder's charitable objectives and accountable not only to the founder's duly nominated visitor but also to the High Court via the Attorney-General as *parens patriae* and to a lesser extent via the Charity Commissioners. The head of house and the fellows who constitute the incorporated governing body will be responsible (certainly as fiduciaries, probably as quasi-trustees and possibly as *de jure* trustees) for the prudent management of the corporate assets as very largely permanent endowment; such endowment to be applied only for charitable purposes as prescribed by the charter and statues and within the regulatory regime of the Universities and College Estates Act, 1925 (amended 1964).

COLLEGIALITY IN FICTION

Consider the dust-jacket blurb for John Dougill's thoroughly readable *Oxford in English Literature: The Making, and Undoing, of 'The English Athens'* (1998):

Following the rise of the colleges, the literature becomes characterised by a sense of insulation, for the closed collegiate structure led to elitism and eccentricity. The notion of the university as a paradise of youth, beauty, and intelligence led to the so-called Oxford myth and the backlash against it after World War II. The underlying argument of Dougill's work is that the defining symbol of

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Oxford is not so much the dreaming spire as the college wall, for writing about the city has been shaped and defined by the enclosed nature of the collegiate structure. In Oxford literature the college is depicted as a world of its own – secluded, conservative, and eccentric, driven by its own rituals. Idealised, it becomes a cloistered utopia, an Athenian city-state, a fantasy wonderland, or an Arcadian idyll. Exclusivity led to resentment from those on the out-side, as is evident in Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*. With the advent of democratic and egalitarian values in the twentieth century, the privilege and elitism of the university has come under increasing attack.

Strong stuff, indeed and territory, if anything, more polemically explored in Ian Carter's *Ancient Cultures of Conceit: British University Fiction in the Post-War Years* which dissects 'the culture celebrated in British university fiction ... a culture rooted in the ivory towers of Oxbridge, a culture under threat from the proletarians, women, foreigners and scientists who flood the university' (1990, p. 87). Carter notes that, of some 200 British 'university novels' published 1945–88, nearly 75 per cent were set in Oxford or Cambridge, with over 50 per cent in Oxford itself, and with most of them being detective stories set inside colleges where the murder rate rivals the streets of New York in a bad year. Often they are written by Oxbridge dons, the exemplar for Carter being the Christ Church don, J.I.M. Stewart (thanks to his quintet *A Staircase in Surrey* – 'Surrey' being a quadrangle of the college). Stewart used his real name when writing his 13 Oxford non-crime novels and 'Michael Innes' as his pseudonym when writing his seven Oxford mystery stories, notably *Death at the President's Lodging*, 1936, and *Operation Pax*, 1951 (the latter climaxing with a 'shoot-out' in the bookstacks of the Bodleian Library deep under Radcliffe Square).

Mortimer R. Proctor in *The English University Novel* (1957) provides a more measured analysis, again noting the dominance of Oxford over Cambridge as the setting for 'the university novel' and the greater propensity of 'Oxford men' to write of their undergraduate and college days than for 'Cambridge men' to put pen to paper. He quotes from Gerald Hopkins, *A City in the Foreground* (1921): 'He has fallen prey to the first infirmity of Oxford minds – he is writing an Oxford novel'. Proctor thus identifies 'the Cult of Oxford', and within that 'a series of romantic novels glorifying college life' (notably Max Beerbohm's 1911 *Zuleika Dobson*), which effectively means the cult of the college. Here he makes a link to the Victorian debate about the relative value of a liberal over a vocational

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education: Newman and Arnold vs Bentham, Huxley and Spencer. Proctor even speculates that Cuthbert Bede's *The Adventures of Mr Verdant Green*, published very shortly after Newman's *The Idea of a University*, 'represents a waggish reply to the notion that one's college chums could in any way prove elevating ... they did indeed teach him many things, not one of which was desirable' (1957, pp. 196–7).

Similarly, Dougill, quoting from *Zuleika Dobson* ('Oxford! The very sight of the word printed, or sound of it spoken, is fraught for me with most actual magic'), asserts that: 'The magic derives from the myth, and the myth derives from the literature' (1998, p. 1). Again, Dougill notes the Oxford bias within the genre of the university novel, the Oxford novel typically comprising 'a variation of the Dick Whittington theme in which an innocent youth goes to university with great expectations and learns the way of the world ... Discovery of Oxford and discovery of self: here then are the twin themes of the Oxford novel' (1998, pp. 92–4). The sub-themes for Dougill are 'the student hero', 'the championing of a laddish brotherhood', 'dull, despicable, ridiculous or criminal' scientists, 'cultural warfare between two opposing sets' (aesthetes vs hearties), 'unabashed snobbism', 'drunken exploits', 'social pretences', 'leisured affluence', and 'a fabled land of decadent youth'.

Yet a reaction to this myth, this cult, this 'delightful lie' has occurred; there has been disenchantment, leaving the mythical Oxford of *Brideshead Revisited* (Waugh, 1945) 'today in a shaky state of uncertainty, in danger of collapse yet sustained by its own dazzling legacy' (Dougill, 1998, p. 136):

For the post-war generation the notion of an English Athens did not seem so appealing, and for the 'angry young men' of the 1950s the lie was distasteful rather than delightful. The walls of the enclosed [college] garden could no longer keep out those who had for so long been excluded [Ian Carter's 'Barbarous Proletarians', 'Barbarous Scientists', 'Barbarous Women', and 'Barbarous Foreigners'], and those on the inside were less forceful in asserting their superiority. The Oxford myth was seen as an anachronism, the pretensions of which were absurd. (Dougill, 1998, p. 180)

Part of that reaction has been the above-mentioned tidal wave of Oxford detective novels drawing 'on notions of an academic Wonderland in which manic professors mix with absent-minded dons in a realm of antiquated customs, peculiar practices and strange language' (Dougill, 1998, p. 202). We are presented with 'a potent concoction' of 'dons, death

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and detection' culminating in Colin Dexter's 1990s worldwide publishing and TV success with 'Inspector Morse'. But Dexter's view of the University is not as respectful as that of the earlier Oxford crime novel; his Inspector Morse, although cultured, is impatient with dons in their ivory towers, suffering from what in one Dexter novel is termed 'the Oxford Disease – that tragic malady which deludes its victims into believing that they can never be wrong in any matter of knowledge or opinion' (*The Jewel That Was Ours*, 1992). If Dexter's dons get a pretty bad press, it is nothing compared to the television portrayal of the college bursar: in one episode a bursar is part of a satanic-rites cult; in another he spends much time taking pornographic photographs.

Similarly, Dougill notes that Veronica Stallwood's half-dozen 1990s Oxford crime novels 'feature women detectives, a pluralist city and a determinedly female point of view ... far removed from the self-congratulatory tone and inside perspective of earlier fiction' (1998, p. 235), recognising Oxford's transformation from a university city of dreaming spires to a crowded commercial and tourist city of exhaust fumes, litter and screaming tyres. Hence, 'Though colleges continue to provide a haven of peace in a traffic-thronged world, glorification and idealisation are hard to find these days' (1998, p. 245). For Dougill, then, there has been a welcome and realistic reaction against the Oxford myth, against the cult of Oxford, against the sanctity of the college, and against 'a national propensity for exclusivity and cliquishness'. There has been a 'process of demythologising' which has been 'part of a wider move in post-imperial Britain to shake off the past', and hence the 'rejection of the English Athens can be seen as part of the process of discarding outgrown myths', as 'the Oxford myth of college-bound stories and utopian visions' is undone and gives space for Oxford to be 'reimaged' as 'an altogether different kind of Oxford' (1998, pp. 257–8).

For Dougill, like Carter, about the only defender of the Oxford myth in recent decades has been the stalwart Christ Church don, J.I.M. Stewart/Michael Innes. This is especially so in the quintet of novels *A Staircase in Surrey*: 'a sustained exploration of university life', 'a gourmet feast ... shared with the most erudite of companions, whose conversation sparkles with wit and learning ... a world of well-meaning dons with well-apportioned lifestyles in well-endowed colleges' (1998, p. 207). At the centre of this 'reflective, urbane and droll' world is the college and its 'dazzling discussions at high table':

Stewart's college is not a bureaucratic institution – but an organic body that adapts and evolves to changing circumstances ... Change

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within continuity is the keynote of Stewart's college ... Indeed, Stewart's novels can be seen as the fictional exposition of 'The Idea of a University' for the celebration of college life is central to his concern, and his books comprise the most imposing literary monument ever raised to the institution. (Dougill, 1998, p. 210)

Yet this pinnacle of defence, this unashamed celebration of collegiality, this 'gourmet feast' with 'the lush prose, the ponderous thoughts, the lavish meals, the sumptuous architecture, the privileged circumstance, the erudite wit, the obscure quotations' (Dougill, 1998, p. 211) risks surfeit, and meanwhile Carter's *Barbarians*, stretching back to outsiders such as Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* (1895), are pushing at the stout oak gates and tapping at the barred windows, while Dexter's Inspector Morse has a warrant demanding entry to 'a patrician paradise increasingly difficult to defend' in 'an age which sought greater informality and inclusiveness' (Dougill, 1998, p. 211).

Clearly, a key theme for this book is the degree to which Carter's *Barbarians* and Dougill's *Uninvited* have now acquired squatter's rights within the enchanted collegiate ivory tower and creeper-clad quadrangle. Moreover, have the changing demands of modern academic life also meant for Oxford dons a general process of disenchantment with Proctor's *Cult of Collegiality* and the *Myth of Oxford*? Does post-war output of fiction in the genre of the university novel represent in microcosm the evolution and freeing-up of British society since 1945?

COLLEGIALITY FOR NEWMAN: THE IDEA AND THE IDEAL

John Henry Newman (1801–90) published *The Idea of a University* in 1852, a book that Sheldon Rothblatt claims is 'unquestionably the single most important treatise in the English language on the nature and meaning of higher education' (1997b, p. 287). Newman's idea of, and ideal of, a university is very English, and, moreover, very Oxford, deriving from the college life he led in the 1820s, with the university staff pursuing knowledge and with the teaching, undergraduate college ensuring the development of young men's integrity and character; the former representing change in academe and society, the latter providing stability and 'well-being'. Thus the college, in return for security, sanctuary, retreat, and community on a human scale, engenders great loyalty and affection amongst its alumni (old members), whilst providing a crucial

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counterpoint to the essentially and inevitably utilitarian objectives of the university. The goal is a 'liberal education':

This process of training, by which the intellect, instead of being formed or sacrificed to some particular or accidental purpose, some specific trade or profession, or study or science, is disciplined for its own sake, for the perception of its own proper object, and for its own highest culture, is called Liberal Education ... And to set forth the right standard, and to train according to it, and to help forward all students towards it according to their various capacities, this I conceive to be *the business of a University*. (Newman, 1959, pp. 170–1, emphasis added)

The debate about just what is higher education, what is a university, and the relevant merits of a vocational education versus a liberal education, of course, continued (Flexner, 1930; Jaspers, 1946; Whitehead, 1932) and continues to this day (Barnett, 1990; Giamatti, 1988; Kennedy, 1997; Oakley, 1992; Pelikan, 1992; Rosovsky, 1990; Rothblatt, 1976; and Ryan, 1998, to select but a few).

So, Newman's Liberal Education would produce the civilised Victorian gentleman: 'Liberal Education makes not the Christian, not the Catholic, but the gentleman. It is well to be a gentleman, it is well to have a cultivated intellect, a delicate taste, a candid, equitable, dispassionate mind, a noble and courteous bearing on the conduct of life; – these are the connatural qualities of a large knowledge; they are the objects of a University; I am advocating' (1959, pp. 144–5). And that gentleman would benefit from the perfect amalgam of the differing qualities of Newman's ideal university and its related colleges:

A University embodies the principle of progress, and a College that of stability; the one is the sail, and the other the ballast; each is insufficient in itself for the pursuit, extension, and inculcation of knowledge; each is useful to the other. A University is the scene of enthusiasm, of pleasurable exertion, of brilliant display, of winning influence, of diffusive and potent sympathy; and a College is the scene of order, of obedience, of modest and persevering diligence, of conscientious fulfilment of duty, of mutual private services, and deep and lasting attachments. The University is for the world, and the College is for the nation ... It would seem as if a University, seated and living in Colleges, would be a perfect institution, as possessing excellences of opposite kinds. (1902, pp. 221–2)

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In return, that gentleman would for evermore protect the interests of the college:

There is no political power in England like a College in the Universities; it is not a mere local body, as a [municipal] corporation or London [livery] company; it has allies in every part of the country. When the mind is most impressionable, when the affections are warmest, when associations are made for life, when the character is most ingenuous, and the sentiment of reverence is most powerful, the future landowner or statesman, or lawyer, or clergyman comes up to a College in the Universities. There he forms friendships, there he spends his happiest days; and, whatever is his career there, brilliant or obscure, virtuous or vicious, in after years, when he looks back on the past, he finds himself bound by ties of gratitude and regret to the memories of his College life ... their shade becomes a sort of shrine to which he makes continual silent offerings of attachment and devotion. (1902, p. 227)

Not surprisingly, in view of such positive associations, Newman sees the ex-student defending his Alma Mater should it be threatened:

When then he hears that a blow is levelled at the Colleges, and that they are in commotion – that his own College, Head and Fellows, have met together, and put forward a declaration calling on its Members to come up and rally round it and defend it, a chord is struck within him, more thrilling than any other; he burns with *esprit de corps* and generous indignation; and he is driven up to the scene of his early education, under the keenness of his feelings, to vote, to sign, to protest, to do just what he is told to do, from confidence in the truth of the representations made to him, and from sympathy with that appeal. He appears on the scene of action ready for battle on the appointed day, and there he meets others like himself, brought up by the same summons ... Thus, wherever you look to the North or South of England, to the East or West, you will find the interest of the Colleges dominant; they extend their roots all over the country, and can scarcely be overturned, certainly not suddenly overturned, without a revolution. (1902, pp. 227–8)

It is interesting to speculate whether some 150 years on, the colleges would be wise to assume that they can rely on being ‘the best protected interest in the whole country’.