

## Hooked!

A treatise on the benefits of crocheting during termtime

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## The darker side of tennis players' earnings

"A system which has failed the players"

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Georgie tries expensive truffle pesto so you don't have to ...

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Vol.299

5th Week | MT 23

Friday 10th November 2023

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## Feeling Blue? A deep-dive into Oxford sport

Anika Gupta reports.

You leave Oxford with a First, a spouse, or a Blue. The last of the three, a Blue, is the highest honour granted to individual sportspeople at Oxford University. It is highly prestigious and sought-after. With its history tracing back to the early 1800s, its relevance in Oxford students' day-to-day lives, social activities and career prospects cannot be understated. However, this elusive award and the culture revolving around it remains largely unknown to the average Oxonian, despite numerous Blues being awarded every year. You have probably seen them, without fail, every Wednesday night frequenting Parkend's Tiki Bar in classic social attire, leaving many to question what sporting prowess has given awardees the right to wear the notorious dark blue blazer. What does one have to do to get hold of one?

### What is a Blue?

Coming in a couple of variations, a Full Blue, a Discretionary Full Blue, or a Half Blue, a Blue is an award handed out as an acknowledgement of achievement within a sport.

The term "Blue" can be traced back to the early 1800s from historic sporting fixtures between Oxford and Cambridge. In the boat races between the two boat clubs, the first one being in 1829 over Henley Bridge, a Cambridge oarsman tied light blue ribbon to

the bows of the Cambridge rowing boats to represent the colours of his school, Eton College. A dark blue colour was then ascribed to Oxford, as the colour of Christ Church College, and the Oxford crew sported white jerseys with dark blue stripes during the race. These colours, and the merit associated with them, still exist

today. Indeed, those who achieve a Blue are entitled to wear and show-off these colours in their blazers.

Further, the start of the Oxford-Cambridge competitive "Varsity" match tradition can be traced back to June 1827. This is when the two universities challenged each other to a two-day cricket

match at Lords. Nowadays, Varsity games often attract huge crowds of students and alumni. This can be seen through the annual boat races and the rugby matches played at Twickenham, engaging a crowd of over 20,000.

### How to get a Blue

The ability to obtain a Blue (Full/

Half) depends on the status of each sport. Traditionally-played sports such as football, athletics, and rowing allow for Full Blues; while more fringe sports, such as clay pigeon shooting, only allow Half Blues to be attained. The criteria for attaining them also differs between sports, mainly...

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## Multiple subjects to introduce typed exams

Anika Gupta reports.

The University has recently confirmed that multiple Preliminary Exams and Finals will be assessed as in-person, computer based exams in 2023/24. These include English, Classics, Biochemistry, Theology, and the MBA. Preliminary exams "across a number of subjects" and "several Social Sciences Division and Humanities MPhils" will also be typed.

For English, students were made aware of this decision in October 2023 ahead of the May 2024 exams cycle. This is a result of an English Faculty decision, the discussion of which started when the possibility of typed exams was raised in the JCC meeting in May 2023.

The University has stated that the decision to move exams on-line (in-person) has come "following a successful launch involving more than 6,000 exam sittings in 2022/23, the University has extended invigilated, typed exams to a wider range of subjects. The exams reflect the experience of most students who now type essays and other submissions, and also provide more legible scripts for assessors."

Previous typed exam sittings involved 1,903 individual candidates and 22 exam boards...

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## Over 1,900 Oxford students, faculty, and alumni urge University to endorse ceasefire in Gaza

Oliver Adelson reports.

A petition for the University to endorse an immediate ceasefire in Gaza has garnered over 1,900 signatures from Oxford students,

faculty, and alumni.

Representatives from Rhodes Scholars for Palestine and Oxford Palestinian Society released the petition titled "ACT AGAINST GENOCIDE" on 26 October. The demands include calls for the Vice-

Chancellor "to speak and act against the ongoing genocide enacted by Israel against the Palestinian people" and for the University to "issue a strong and clear call urging the UK government, led by Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, to immediately adopt

and endorse a policy of ceasefire in Gaza."

The petition went on to cite a Human Rights Watch report on Israel's use of white phosphorus in Gaza and Lebanon.

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## Four Oxford graduates shortlisted for Waterstones Book of the Year Award

Jennifer Yang reports.

Four Oxford graduates, Alice Winn, R.F. Kuang, Katherine Rundell, and Chris van Talleken, were among the fourteen authors shortlisted this week for the Waterstones Book of the Year award. The Waterstones Book of the Year, established in 2012, has booksellers nominate and vote to determine the winners and finalists for the prize. Waterstones' website states that "this year's shortlist highlights the breadth and quality of 2023's publishing."

Greta Thurnberg, J.K. Rowling, Thomas Piketty and Margaret Atwood have previously been on the shortlist, and previous winners include Paul McCartney, Philip Pullman, and Sally Rooney.

New York Times and Sunday Times bestselling author, R.F. Kuang, explores white privilege and questions the "objective standard of authenticity to which we can hold writers" in her novel *Yellowface*. A graduate of University College, Kuang has written extensively about her time at Oxford, and her fourth novel, *Babel*, is set in a fictionalised version of Victorian Oxford which got her shortlisted for the prize last year.

Currently a fellow at All Souls College,

lege, Katherine Rundell graduated from St. Catherine's College. She made the list for her newest children's book, *Impossible Creatures*, which chronicles a saga through a world of exotic animals.

Rundell says that the book is not only intended for children: "I wanted... to write an adventure that would grab children by the wrist and pull them into a world of magic and mythical creatures: and which would also give adults, if they were to read it, a story about love and power and humanity's capacity for both evil and miraculous bravery." She previously won the Waterstones Children's Book Prize in 2014 for her novel *Rooftoppers* and was shortlisted for the 2022 Waterstones Book of the Year for her book *The Golden Mole*.

Doctor and television presenter Chris van Tulleken made the list for his book *Ultra Processed People*, which presents the science, economics, and history behind the production of ultra-processed food. He studied medicine at St Peter's.

Alice Winn made the shortlist for her novel *In Memoriam*, a tragic story of love between schoolboys caught in the horror of World War I. Earlier this year, she also won the Waterstones Debut Fiction Prize. Waterstones has since announced *In Memoriam* as the winner, calling it "a bestseller from the start."

Image credit: Michael-Akolade Ayo-deji



Over 1,900 Oxford students, faculty members, and alumni urge University to endorse ceasefire

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The petition condemned these tactics, saying "both the United Nations Commission on Human Rights and the European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs have stated that targeting civilians in these ways constitutes a clear violation of international humanitarian law."

Of particular concern to those who wrote the petition was the role Oxford University plays in the Israel-Palestine conflict. The petition stated: "Oxford is not just silent in the face of Israel's genocidal military campaign against Gaza; it is actively complicit and implicated in it: A Freedom of Information Request sent by AOA (Action On Armed Violence) found that Oxford is in

the top 5 universities in the UK to accept arms funding (2013-21) from companies found by Amnesty International to fail to 'demonstrate adequate human rights due diligence.'"

Joumana Talhouk, a Lebanese DPhil candidate in International Development, was among the students who met with the Vice-Chancellor last week to discuss the petition. Talhouk told *Cherwell* that "the Vice-Chancellor justified the University's silence in the meeting by stating that the University is a non-political organisation."

Talhouk continued: "The Vice-Chancellor said the University's unequivocal condemnation of Russia's invasion of Ukraine was 'different' given the UK's sanctions against Russia. This response begs the question of whether the University of Oxford merely mirrors the UK government's political position, thereby jeopardising its independence, self-governance, and integrity

## Oxford turns to the public to collect artefacts for new digital World War II archive

Sophie Magalhaes reports.

Their Finest Hour, a University of Oxford project launched in July 2022, has received funding from the National Lottery Heritage and will be made accessible from the 6 June 2024. The online archive aims to catalogue local stories and relics from the Second World War, documenting human stories through everyday objects. The project follows the hugely successful Lest We Forget online archive for artefacts from the First World War.

The project focuses on community archive collection as it builds an archival database. It will run a series of events and digital collection days scheduled at museums, libraries, and heritage centres across the UK. Organisers encourage members of the public to bring in their war-related stories and objects - whether this be documents, medals, letters, photographs, or stories passed down throughout generations. Dr Stuart Lee of the Oxford Faculty of English said "our aim is to empower local communities to digitally preserve these stories and objects before they are lost to posterity."

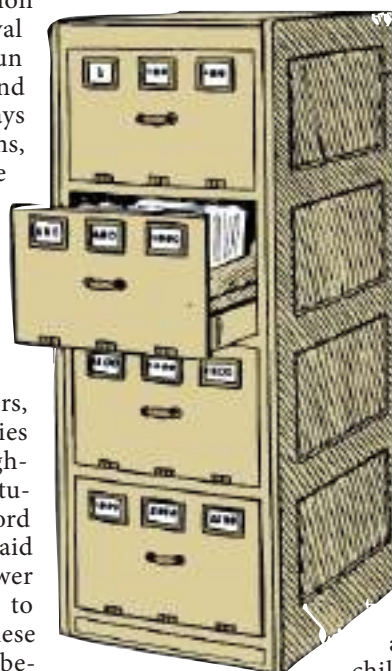
Organisers say a Second World War project will become particularly crucial as the number of people 1939-1945 generation declines. Stories passed on through children and grandchildren will become vital in preserving the experiences of the wartime generation. As a free digital platform, both Lest We Forget and Their

Finest Hour make wartime heritage accessible for all.

Items brought to a collection event in Gosport included a passport with a mysterious alteration. Valerie Cope, who brought in a British passport owned by her grandfather bearing visa stamps from locations in Latvia and Western Russia from the beginning of the war. His occupation was crossed out, a common identifier of wartime spies. Mysteries like this one will be researched and digitised by the database in an attempt to preserve stories and diverse narratives from the Second World War. Event volunteer Stephanie Cunningham said "we're in danger of losing [these artefacts] and we have many people coming to the events saying they didn't know where else to turn."

Organisers emphasise that they would like stories and artefacts from children as well as narratives from relatives who refused to discuss their wartime experiences. Narratives from underrepresented backgrounds in wartime heritage, including those from women and the commonwealth, are particularly encouraged.

Image credit: Cary Memorial Library / PDM 1.0 Deed via Picryl.com



## Cross-Campus

Calls for Harvard to return indigenous human remains

Calls for Harvard to return the remains of almost 7000 Native Americans, housed in its museum collections, were made last week at a conference on indigenous enslavement and indenture. Since 1990, federal law has required the university to return the remains which also include those of 19 slaves, but progress has been slow. Harvard president acknowledged "the pain and harm" caused, whilst activists called for more direct action from the university.



Berkeley to offer Taylor Swift course

Students will be able to enrol on "Artistry & Entrepreneurship: Taylor's Version" in the Spring, a DeCal or student-led course. Course founder Crystal Haryanto said: "I wanted to have a space where I can continue to use Taylor Swift, a phenomenal example of multiple disciplines, as a lens to teach and inspire others." The course will run for 13 weeks and feature weekly readings and lectures, two assignments and a presentation project at the end.



"Boycott Israel" projected onto King's College Cambridge

Last week, Cambridge students projected text saying "Israel is committing a genocide" onto King's college chapel. The Palestinian flag was also projected, along with text calling for Cambridge to "denounce the collective genocidal punishment" of Gaza, and "be on the right side of history." This comes after almost 1500 students and staff demanded Cambridge sever financial ties with Israel.

as a leading academic institution."

According to the drafters of the petition, the Vice-Chancellor issued a promise after the meeting to respond to the demands by 3 November. They report not having yet received any response.

In response, the University told *Cherwell*: "The Vice-Chancellor has been meeting with representatives of all the student groups affected by the terrible crisis situation in the Middle East. She will continue to do so going forwards. She is very grateful for the time the students have spent with her. The University has been clear in all its communications about its recognition of the desperate and tragic humanitarian crisis and loss of life, as well as the need for a peaceful solution for the peoples of Israel and Palestine."

"The focus of the collegiate university has been to ensure the community within Oxford remains together, has access to welfare support and other needs during this period,

and that there is zero tolerance for any form of Islamophobia or antisemitism within our university. The VC and student representatives of the petition discussed a range of issues and the explanation on various points mentioned was more detailed than that given here, notably on Ukraine. The petition deadline for response was one given by the students and the VC did not agree to respond by a specific date, as she has to discuss all such issues very broadly, as she explained to the students. She will respond directly to those students presently."

The call for a ceasefire comes at a time when the death count since 7 October has surpassed 10,000 Gazans, according to the Gaza Health Ministry, and 1,400 Israelis, according to senior Israeli officials. According to the Ramallah-based health ministry, over 150 Palestinians have also been killed in the West Bank (including annexed East Jerusalem).



Multiple subjects to introduce typed exams

*continued from front page*

including Politics, Philosophy, Medicine and Geography (Preliminary exams). The University has apologised that this information was not circulated earlier. While they have outlined that the exams will be invigilated “closed book” exams, and that students are able to book one-hour orientations to practice typed tests, current students are still raising concerns over the implementation of this new measure. English Finalist from St Hugh’s College, Lucy Phillips, told *Cherwell* that the decision “just seems really poorly planned, as though we were an afterthought. They neglected to tell us something that will be potentially catastrophic for many students’ Finals experience. Whilst the faculty email only came out this week, many more ‘prestigious’ colleges found out from their tutors earlier in the term, which

sets an unequal playing field ahead of exams.” She added: “This decision also disproportionately impacts state school students such as myself who oftentimes have less developed touch typing skills than their peers.” In response, the University told *Cherwell* that students can apply for an exam adjustment if typing is difficult or impossible for them. Phillips further reflected on the shift from traditionally

handwritten to typed exams, stating: “I also worry about the preservation of handwriting as a craft – surely the Oxford English course ... would want to maintain this historic practice?” The English Faculty have been made aware of these concerns and have released FAQs for timed exams in English in hopes to reduce apprehension over the year. *Image credit: Glenn Carstens Peter via Unsplash*



Oxford announces new AI Environment centre amidst wider UK investment

**Bea Keady reports.**

The University has announced plans to open a new “Intelligent Earth Centre” focusing on the intersection between Artificial Intelligence and environmental sciences. The centre will be funded by a £12 million grant from UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), with nearly £3 million more from the university itself and partners including Google DeepMind, IBM, the European Space Agency and the Met Office. The “Intelligent Earth Centre” is intended to train almost 100 PhD students to use AI technologies to tackle environmental crises over the first eight years. The announcement follows the recent AI Safety summit which signalled the UK’s determination to regain its dominance in the AI field. The centre is one of 12 new UKRI centres for doctoral training with over £117 million awarded, building on their previous 2018 investment of £100 million. Other centres include Biomedical Innovation at the University of Edinburgh, Sustainability at the University of Southampton, and Decision Making for

Complex Systems at the University of Manchester. This is part of an investment in British technological developments and comes amidst a wider industrial strategy shift as nations compete for dominance in the AI sector. The UKRI website states that: “The investment will continue to ensure that the UK has the skills needed to seize the potential of the AI era, and to nurture the British tech talent that will push the AI revolution forwards.” Similarly, Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, Michelle Donelan, said: “The UK is at the very front of the global race to turn AI’s awesome potential into a giant leap forward for people’s quality of life and productivity at work [and these plans] will future-proof our nation’s skill base, meaning we can reap the benefits of AI as it continues to develop.” Oxford claims the centre aims to address a “crucial skills gap” between environmental scientists and data scientists. It will do this through a multidisciplinary training programme and specific interdisciplinary measures. Each project is advised by both an environmen-

tal science supervisor, an AI supervisor, and an advisor from one of their non-academic partners as a secondment host. Training will be in both environmental science and data science and there will be entry streams for both “numerate candidates from environmental science backgrounds” and “for environmentally-driven candidates from computer science, data science, mathematics, statistics, or physics backgrounds.” The programme is also intended to be student-led with students being matched with supervisors and partners throughout the first year of training and developing their project proposal with their personal supervisory team rather than applying to a singular predefined project. The first PhD positions will start in September 2024 and applications will open later this month. According to the Director of the new Intelligent Earth Centre, Professor Stier, students are not just expected to graduate into a wide range of industries but “to drive innovation and found their own start-ups.”

*Image credit: Tara Winstead via Pexels*



BAME students constitute majority of UK applicants to Oxford for first time

**Grace Kyoko Wong reports.**

New data from the Universities and Colleges Admissions Services (UCAS) has revealed that, for the first time, UK applicants from ethnic minority backgrounds have outnumbered white applicants to “highly competitive courses” at UK universities. These include courses offered by the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, as well as medicine, dentistry, and veterinary degrees, all of which have an early application deadline in October instead of the regular January deadline. For the 2023-24 application cycle, 50.8% of the 51,890 UK applicants to these courses were BAME students, a noticeable increase compared to the previous year (49.3%) and significantly higher than the corresponding proportion in 2015 (32.1%). By contrast, the number of white applicants from the UK fell to 25,530 this year, the lowest such figure in over ten years. Moreover, this year marked a record high in the number of 18-year-old applicants from the most deprived regions in the UK, with 3,160 applications made to Oxbridge and medical degrees, which constitutes

a 7% increase compared to last year and is over twice the corresponding figure in 2017. Although applications from disadvantaged students have increased at a greater rate than those of students from the wealthiest areas, the latter are still much more likely to apply to highly competitive courses. Dr Mark Corver, managing director of dataHE, a higher education data analytics firm, stated: “The profile of applications to these courses remains highly skewed, with 9.2% of young people in richer neighbourhoods applying, compared to 2.2% in poorer areas, but this gap does not seem to be widening this year.” These findings coincide with the introduction of new outreach initiatives at Oxford, including the Astrophoria Foundation Year programme, which welcomed its inaugural cohort of students this year. The programme provides an opportunity for academically talented students who have experienced significant disadvantage or disruption during their education to obtain an undergraduate degree from the University, following a foundation year designed to bridge the gap between sixth form and undergraduate study.

Analysis: Universities have a class problem

**Raghav Chari comments.**

These findings produced by UCAS only go to show that class still remains the defining cleavage in British society. In a post-Brexit landscape, it’s not uncommon to hear that race, ethnicity, and immigration are the biggest divisions in British society. A modern, American-style identity politics has crossed the pond, they claim, and that the divisions of ethnicity matter more than divisions of class. But the UCAS data shows this is simply not true. BAME students are applying to these ‘highly competitive courses’ in numbers that show that they are leading aspirational, upwardly-mobile lives. In a country where BAME people comprise just 15% of the population, an application percentage of 50% shows that BAME communities feel able to climb the social ladder. Of course, the important factor here is that BAME communities instil different social values; it’s well known that BAME parents set higher expectations and demand more of their children, often to the detriment of their children’s well-being. But even with this in mind, it’s clear from the application levels that BAME communities do not lack for opportunity. On the other hand, the numbers on the class divide are clear. Yes, applications from economically

underprivileged students are rising. This is something to be unequivocally glad about. But at the same time, the numbers also demonstrate that these very same underprivileged students are still applying to aspirational courses in far lower numbers than students from much better off communities. Unlike with the story for BAME applicants, who are in fact heavily overrepresented, poorer students are heavily underrepresented at Oxbridge and in the medical sciences. Indeed, the myriad access programs at this University have not alleviated (or are probably a sign of) the significant disadvantages that poorer students still face when it comes to social mobility. Being a doctor requires years of (often expensive) study, and Oxbridge is still considered by many as the den of rich, private school students. Class is what still defines opportunity and livelihood in modern Britain. Universities have long focused on minority inclusion, and to their credit they have succeeded. Now it is time for them to instil that same inclusivity with regards to class, and to ensure that students of all backgrounds are able to gain the opportunities that they deserve.





Feeling Blue? A deep-dive into Oxford sport

*continued from front page*

due to the measure of success in each sport differing itself, and often between their men's and women's teams. In Hockey, for example, Full Blues are awarded to the starting eleven in the Varsity Match, as well as up to five substitutes in the Varsity Match at the discretion of the captain.

The awarding of this prestigious accolade and the management of the sports clubs is no easy feat and, like most things in Oxford, is governed by a committee. The Oxford University Blues Committee is made up of the current captains of the affiliated Blues-status clubs, alongside an executive committee made up of a President, Secretary, and Treasurer. As part of this, affiliated clubs must send one representative to a termly meeting and to those which review the status of their sport once every three years.

While the specifics of each sport's criteria are determined in these reviews, some general rules govern all Blues sports. Predominantly, no award (Full/Half Blues or first team colours) can be awarded to someone who does not compete in a Blues Varsity match. In addition, each team must clearly define what constitutes their Blues team in the Blues Varsity Match, reserves or substitutes who do not play cannot be awarded Blues, members of

“Like most things in Oxford, it is governed by a committee...”

a second team or equivalent cannot be awarded a Blue and all awarding criteria must be met within the same academic year as the Varsity Match, being verified by The Sports Federation.

The Oxford University Blues Committee Constitution sets out

other specific requirements for attaining a Full Blue. For example, the sport must be registered with the Sports Federation; there must be considerable College organisation, with recognised Colleges playing each other, and (not-surprisingly) there must be a substantial degree of athletic ability required. Additionally, adaptive or para-sports are still in their infancy at Oxford, with plenty of room to grow with support. Current high-level disabled athletes are able to attain a Blue but have to go through an “Extraordinary” route which is different to standard procedure. In conjunction with a Blue, a grant may be awarded to an exceptional sportsperson for future personal development. This may include new personal equipment, a training camp, or travel with a national team.

*Life of a Blue*

Now that one knows a little more about the history of a Blue and how to go about getting one, we can proceed to delving in more deeply into life as a Blues sportsperson. For these passionate athletes, the process starts early. The previous Women's Blues Football Captain, Jess Cullen, told *Cherwell* that “try-outs happen in freshers... generally we do a small section on skills and then go into matches. Choosing new players is a process all of the current players are involved in and we meet at the end of trials to discuss. In the end, the captain and coach choose the final teams.”

When asked about being able to manage an insane training schedule with rigorous academic work, Cullen said: “I train everyday in some format except Saturday. Sport keeps me mentally sane and gives me a community, so I couldn't not do it.”

Further, a current Amateur Boxing Blue and committee member reflects that while training is “hard work” with tough training

sessions in the early morning and late at night, he enjoys balancing sport with his role on committee.

“Sport keeps me mentally sane and gives me a community, so I couldn't not do it.”

This involves securing a new ring and investment for Oxford University Amateur Boxing Club, organising boxing events and an annual trip to Tenerife which provide a chance to meet and train with Olympians.

On maintaining a healthy sports-work balance, Men's Blues Rugby Captain, Jack Glover, told *Cherwell*: “The academic pressures that go hand-in-hand with being a student at Oxford University are very important when structuring training and players' workload. We are realistic in knowing that players will not be at every session, however, we try to adapt and be flexible to all their needs to ensure that they are getting the most out of being part of this club. As we are a player-led club, I feel as though we manage to strike an extremely well-balanced programme and that we are all very considerate to one another during term time.”

Glover added that matches are undeniably the highlight of being a Blue: “Some of our best matches include playing professional premiership rugby sides such as the Harlequins and Leicester Tigers. Other exciting games include those against the England U20s, an old boys team called the “Major Stanleys” - which welcomes back all OURFC alumni back down in Iffley. Of course, the big match that we look forward to is the Varsity Match against Cambridge. With so much history behind it, it is always one of the main highlights of any player that has represented

OURFC.”

With post-match rituals often including beers and dinner with the opposition, karaoke and a trip to the Vincent's Club – Blues matches, while unimaginably pressured, appear to always end well despite the outcome.

*A Blue social life*

Despite having a jam-packed schedule, for some reason, somehow, you will always find a Blues player out on a Wednesday night. Overlooking when strict pre-game drinking bans are in place, Blues sports culture is filled with events, socials, including crewdates at Oxford's finest institutions Angrids or Jamals. While initiations are technically “banned” for many of these groups, the Blues teams don't shy away from a vibrant social culture aimed at integrating all team members and other university sports teams.

The Vincent's Club (Vinnie's), is also regularly frequented. Pre-eminently a club for Oxford's sporting elite, Vinnie's was founded by Brasenose oarsman Walter Bradford Woodgate in retaliation to not wanting sporting matters being discussed at a suggested location, the Oxford Union. Woodgate famously said in reference to the Union, “I wouldn't be seen there at a dog fight” and proceeded to select forty people (from the sportiest Oxford colleges at the time – Merton, University, and Brasenose) as original members of his new club. This was set up at the club house above the publishers at 90 High Street, named Vincent, and thus the club got its name. Intriguingly, the club only welcomed female members in 2015, only recently allowing the Club to more properly represent the finest sporting talent at Oxford. Part of the reason for the little change in ethos probably lies in the fact that while the focus has always been on sports-minded people, there has never been a

sporting (Blues) qualification for membership.

However, women empowerment in high-level sport does not get overshadowed. Atalanta's is the leading society that promotes and supports the University of Oxford's women in sport. Founded in 1992, they now have a large network of resident members from over 24 different sports teams across the university, as well as a strong alumni database. Atalanta's aims to recognise and foster the impressive achievements of sportswomen across the University, helping to inspire other hard-working, skilled and like-minded individuals across all sports. It promotes the development of sportswomen at all levels of University sport, through

“While initiations are technically ‘banned’ ... the Blues teams don't shy away from a vibrant social culture.”

grants, scholarships and a vibrant social events calendar.

Members from the Oxford University Yacht Club (sailing) have told *Cherwell* that one of Atlanta's dinner events was “very fun, definitely a bit daunting at first but once you get chatting to everyone, all very friendly. There were lots of different sports and different age groups, including a few alumni, and also a mixture of 1s, 2s and 3s sporting teams.”

*Final reflection*

With this whistle-stop exploration into Blues sport, it begs the question: are you feeling Blue? All you need is insane athletic ability, unwavering motivation and commitment, a capacity to drink your weight in alcohol and a love affair with Parkend. Easy stuff.

ASEAN Secretary-General gives lecture in anticipation of Oxford Southeast Asian Institute

Anuj Mishra reports.

The Secretary-General of the Association of South-east Asian Nations (ASEAN), Dr Kao Kim Hourn, addressed a group of students and academics at an event taking place on 1 November in the Divinity School. The event was organised by the Oxford School of Global and Area Studies (OSGA) and was also attended by UK Ambassador to ASEAN, Sarah Tiffin.

Kao's lecture, entitled “The Future of ASEAN: Challenges and Opportunities Beyond 2025”, outlined upcoming ASEAN initiatives, spoke on the future of the UK-ASEAN partnership, and reaffirmed the commitment of the bloc to collaborative decision-making. It also celebrated Kao's appointment as an Honourable Member of the International Advisory Board of the Institute of

ASEAN Studies.

Kao's invitation to speak at Oxford is the latest in a list of public figures from the region who have spoken in anticipation of the establishment of the ASEAN Insti-

tute. In an article on the event, OSGA clarified the terms of Kao's appointment at the request of Cherwell, stating that Kao will sit on this advisory board once the ASEAN Institute is established.



No members have yet been publicly appointed to this board, aside from Kao.

An undergraduate student in attendance at the event expressed their disappointment at Kao's failure to address the devolving state of democracy in Myanmar, following the imprisonment of Aung San Suu Kyi after the country's 2020 general election. The student told Cherwell that: “[Kao] definitely glossed over a lot of the deeper strains in ASEAN, and only got around to addressing the situation in Myanmar following a question on the subject from an audience member.”

The Institute, which will run as a part of the OSGA, was announced to great fanfare in 2018 at an event attended by HRH Sultan Nazrin Shah, the Deputy King of Malaysia. The mission statement for the Institute announced that six associate professorships were to

be established under it, and that its research areas would span the sustainable development, politics, culture, and history of Southeast Asia. The statement also predicted that the foundation of the ASEAN Institute would “create research and teaching opportunities to be shared across several departments.”

Although five years have passed since this announcement, there are still no full-time faculty-members at the ASEAN Institute – which is alternatively referred to as the Institute for Southeast Asian Studies – and the OSGA have not released any timeline for its full establishment publicly. When approached for comment on this by Cherwell, OSGA gave no indication as to when the institute will be established.

Image credit: Gunawan Kartapranata, CC BY-SA 3.0 via Wikimedia Commons



## Is there enough diversity in Oxford's nightlife?

### What's ATIK next to a pint at a pub?

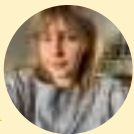
Oliver Sandall



The beauty of Oxford's nightlife is that you aren't limited to the frankly sub-par clubbing experience; jazz nights, fashion galas, and balls certainly diversify what you can do with your free time away from the library. And we haven't even started to discuss the array of pubs in and around Oxford. Often very historical, I'd happily spend an evening sipping on some propa' British ale in a warm (yet admittedly overpriced) pub, rather than listening to the same fifteen-track playlist on the Cheese Floor in Atik.

### Look beyond nightclubs

Violet Aitchison



Unless you actively seek it out, your initial impression of Oxford nightlife might be dominated by a group of clubs that appear quite similar. Atik stands out as the larger venue compared to Bridge, and its numerous rooms might make it feel like you are having a more varied experience. But don't be fooled. For most part, these rooms and clubs tend to feature similar genres of music and play the same tunes week after week. Student-led events like 'Martian Moves' provide a respite from this monotony, drawing in a lively crowd and featuring impressive mixes perfect for dancing. However, such events are unfortunately infrequent, leaving us with limited options when it comes to diversifying our nightlife experiences here in Oxford.

### Bring on the cringe

Kate Monaghan



Of course the nightlife scene in Oxford leaves a lot to be desired. Park End is the kind of club most people grow out of before they're 18; Bridge is basically a smoking area. Home friends who go to university in real cities have burst out laughing when I told them about bops. But isn't this part of the charm? We have years to go to good nightclubs. This may be the last time in our lives when it's acceptable to wear fancy dress and get plastered at what is essentially a school disco. Instead of bemoaning what we don't have, we ought to embrace what we do.

## The French Left: its own worst enemy?

Alex Dunn

For as long as the left has existed, leftist infighting has existed with it. To say that the French left has a political unity problem would be an understatement. On the 17th of October 2023, the French Parti Socialiste (Socialist Party) suspended its membership of NUPES, the broad left-wing opposition alliance, after Jean-Luc Mélenchon, the leader of the alliance's largest party, refused to refer to Hamas' recent attacks against civilians in Israel as "terrorism". Mélenchon, the leader of La France Insoumise (France Unbowed) said that his position had been misrepresented. He condemns Hamas, but considers their recent actions to be war crimes, and not terrorist attacks. The Socialist Party, on the other hand, was unequivocal in their statement, which "unreservedly" condemned "Hamas' terrorist attack against Israel". After the fallout, Mélenchon and the Socialist Party leader, Olivier Faure, accused one another of sowing division. Former Green presidential candidate, Yannick Jadot, has called for his party, Les Écologistes (The Ecologists), to suspend its partnership with NUPES. Le Parti Communiste Français (French Communist Party) has recently adopted a resolution condemning the "hegemonic will" of France Unbowed within the alliance, and calling for a "new type of union" on the left. The perception that the French left has a Mélenchon problem is now fairly widespread. "We cannot work with someone who decides everything for everyone", said Socialist Party

politician Johann Cesa. "What the French people want [...] is for us to put forward a common programme, with a single candidate [for the presidency] in 2027." Mélenchon may be the most recognisable figure on the French left, having come third in the 2022 presidential race, but he is no longer seen by his alliance partners as a unifying figure. If "radical change" in the left alliance comes to pass, it is possible that another figure will emerge as the left's candidate for the next presidential election.

Just over a year on from its founding, NUPES appears to be on the brink of collapse. Arguably, its unity has been fractured from the very

**"Mélenchon...is no longer seen by his alliance partners as a unifying figure."**

beginning. Founded in 2022 to contest the June legislative elections, NUPES brought together France's main left-wing parties. These parties became deeply divided following the political realignment effected by the victory of Emmanuel Macron's centrist En Marche! party in 2017. The left-wing vote was split between six candidates, which, if consolidated into one, would have won the first round, preventing the far-right Marine Le Pen from contesting the presidency in the second round. Something had to change. Mélenchon took the initiative and entered into talks with other left-

wing parties to find a common platform on which to fight the upcoming legislative elections.

However, this offer did not appeal to the French people enough to secure the parliamentary majority which the alliance had hoped for. NUPES candidates won 131 of the National Assembly's 577 seats, far behind Macron's party, which was able to form a government through an alliance with other centrist and conservative parties. At this time, NUPES's tensions were already beginning to show. Mélenchon had proposed that the newly elected NUPES MPs should form a fully fledged parliamentary group, but was shot down by the junior parties in his alliance, who stressed the importance of a "plural" left.

Suspicion of Mélenchon's party has run deep within the alliance since its inception. A 2022 poll indicated that 51% of Socialist Party supporters and 43% of Écologistes supporters considered France Insoumise to be "dangerous for democracy". The same poll found that a majority of Socialist Party supporters disapprove of the way France Insoumise conducts itself in parliament, and find its views "too radical". Although NUPES seemed to converge in the fight against Macron's plan to raise the retirement age from 62 to 64, their strategy was not coherent. Communists sought to vote on the bill as soon as possible, in the hopes that it would fail, whilst the other parties flooded the floor with amendments, aiming to avoid a vote and build momentum among protestors. Mélenchon openly criticised the Communist Party during this process, further

alienating his NUPES partner and laying bare the internal division plaguing the alliance. Despite a mass protest movement against Macron's plans, NUPES was unable to prevent the bill's passage and to gain the political initiative. Opinion polls show no significant rise in support for the alliance in the wake of the protests, despite a marked decline in Macron's popularity.

It is clear, then, that the recent Socialist-NUPES split is a symptom of historical division, infighting, and political failure. Whether the Hamas controversy was the last straw, or simply a convenient excuse for the Socialist Party, is largely unimportant. What matters is how the dust will settle. Mélenchon, a veteran of the French left, doubtless sees himself as the natural rallying point for progressives in the next election cycle. But the animosity which has grown between him and the other left-wing parties has cast doubt on this order. A left-wing alliance that can pose a real threat to the centre and the far-right must succeed first in making all its parties feel like valued contributors to its goals and strategy. It must shun the curse of leftist infighting and stand united around a clear, popular political project. Currently, French law prevents Macron from running for re-election in 2027. In fact, he has recently indicated that he will step away from politics altogether after the end of his second presidential term. This could be the opening the left needs to climb their way to the presidency, provided they rally around a figure who is not an "obstacle", but a lightning rod for progressive energy.

## The Debate Chamber

Adam and Alicia go head to head, debating if the Union should invite controversial speakers

In its commitment to the protection of 'freedom of speech' it may be inevitable that controversial speakers will speak at the Oxford Union. Controversy is not necessarily the problem. The Union has previously been guilty of failing to recognise the difference between controversial speakers and hateful speakers. It is important that when controversial issues are discussed they are done so in the right format and by the right people.

Oxford has a history of rigorous debate, and it would be unreasonable to suggest taking that away. However, controversial issues should be handled in the correct manner - by inviting experts of the relevant fields, and allowing structured and balanced debate in which the views of any speakers are rigorously analysed and challenged. Tackling controversial issues may occasionally mean inviting controversial speakers - therein is not where the issue lies. Issues largely arise when controversial figures are invited for speaker events, where other experts and students are not

given the opportunity to properly challenge the arguments of the controversial individual.

When discussing controversial issues and inviting controversial speakers, it is also important that the welfare of marginalised communities is taken under consideration. The Union should consider what they hope to achieve from the debates and events they run, and always prioritise the welfare of individuals over making it into news headlines. As such, the decisions about what events the Union chooses to run should be taken with the student body as a whole in mind - especially because the actions of the Union often end up affecting a wide range of individuals, member and non-member alike.

From Stock to Shapiro, the Union term card never fails to include a particular speaker generating considerable tumult within the student population - sometimes even the general public. Controversial invitations, however, always seem to be loyally defended with a now familiar claim: the Chamber constitutes the 'last bastion of free speech in the western world'.

The concept of 'controversial speakers' may appear, in theory, as something inherent to the pursuit of free speech. University should logically be the time and place to come into contact with different ideas and beliefs. But this is not the full picture.

What has caused outrage among students is not just different opinions, but the Union systematically providing a platform for speakers whose main appeal is singling out and antagonising vulnerable communities. This particular brand of 'controversy' (see: sensationalism) which is sometimes present in the Chamber entails allowing fellow students to be treated like essay topics and exposing them to potential abuse. The argument that this is a necessary casualty in upholding free speech is unconvincing if we want to prioritise a formative but safe education for all.

One must also wonder whether free speech is always a priority when putting term cards together. Is inviting speakers to present rogue claims as conclusive solutions for century-long debates an exercise in ideological diversity, or a strategic move to boost engagement? The ultimate question for the Union is inevitably whether any press is, indeed, good press.





# Decline and fall: James O’Brien’s *How They Broke Britain* review

Hassan Akram

National decline is a difficult thing to prove, because at every point in history there have been those who idealise the good old days and lament the way the world is going. This is especially true in Britain. In the 1540s, East Anglian peasants under Robert Kett revolted because food prices were no longer what they had been. In the eighteenth century, especially after the territorial gains of the Seven Years’ War, there was a widespread bitterness that the country had branched off from its constitutional roots; and against this background the historian Gibbon wrote his six-volume *Decline and Fall*. In the first half of the twentieth century, the death of Empire occasioned a similar feeling that the nation’s identity and power had somehow collapsed. By the 1970s Britain was the “sick man of Europe”.

Today, in the wake of Brexit, Britain is once again broken – so argues commentator James O’Brien in his new book, *How They Broke Britain*.

In writing this history of especially the last thirteen years, O’Brien seems to have modified Carlyle’s famous dictum: “History is but the biography of nasty men and a woman”. Ten chapters detail the ten nasty men and women whom he holds responsible for the decline in the economy, the media and politics. And, significantly, all of his points are packed with enough evidence and examples to show that the decline is provable and measurable.

In terms of the economy, O’Brien deconstructs the links between various free-market thinktanks, Murdoch-owned journalists, and government policymakers which have led to decline. Austerity programmes since 2010 reduced the annual rate

of increase for public spending, which not only meant that transport, health, and social care services became weak from undernourishment, but that they eventually buckled under the COVID crisis. Brexit, which made us the “first country to impose economic sanctions on itself”, only added to government debt. Then an estimated £30 billion was flushed away by Liz Truss’s mini budget.

O’Brien’s revelations about the Murdoch-owned media and the Daily Mail under Paul Dacre certainly deserve to be public knowledge. He demonstrates several links, some of which date back to the Thatcher era, between the interests of the Murdoch press and Conservative Party policy. The way in which ideological and commercial agendas are set above the truth is frankly disgust-

“... the most diehard Brexiteers, Tories, Corbynites and the Murdoch press are sure to revile it.”

ing. All of the blame for absolutely anything is shifted away from the lawmakers responsible and onto a giant conspiracy made up of immigrants, lefties and ‘remoaners’. When O’Brien compares the Mail’s anti-immigrant headlines of the 1930s to its almost identical ones of today, the whole thing becomes downright depressing.

The chapter on Boris Johnson is a dossier of corruption and amorality, which should be read by anyone who still believes that Alexander Boris de Pfeffel was fit for office. The real highlight, though, is the section

on Nigel Farage. There is nothing O’Brien does better than pick apart the lies and prejudices of that man. He sees him for what he is: a cartoon villain whom everyone took way too seriously. The flashbacks to Farage’s schooldays, to his later “assassination attempt” in France, and to his constant pandering to bigotry, are related with a blend of comic irony and genuine concern at the fact that this man was allowed so much influence over British politics. He is, after all, responsible for what O’Brien calls the “Faragification” of the Tory Party; its increasing appeal to the far-right.

O’Brien, a man of the Left, is not a one-note pigeon, and he lays into Jeremy Corbyn as fiercely as into any one of the right-wing conspirators. And, even aside from the ten people who get their own chapters, the smaller fry is not spared either, whether political bullies like Dominic Raab or hatemongers like Douglas Murray.

The saddest thing about this story of national decline is that none of the right people will ever read it. There will remain those who believe that austerity was the right decision after Labour “maxed out our credit card”; who continue to harp on about Brexit benefits; and who say Liz Truss really had the right ideas but was brought down by the “left-wing establishment”.

The journalists, think-tankers and politicians who broke Britain have all delegated the blame for it onto the “wokerati”. To these people – all of them right-wing,

and most of them Tory – I would put only one question. O’Brien does not specifically ask it. Nonetheless it is an important one to raise. The question is: Given that wokery came about on the Tory Party’s watch, how can they seriously fight an election on an anti-woke platform? I once asked this of a Conservative MP who was giving a talk at my college. He couldn’t give an answer.

The real answer is that wokery is the merest deflection. It is a scapegoat for these people’s own failures. Yet the myth of the woke mob has eagerly been assimilated by the readers of the Murdoch Press, who now feel threatened if schoolchildren are told about Mary Seacole as well as Florence Nightingale, or if library books now contain the kinds of trigger-warning labels that used to be on DVD cases.

O’Brien’s book is excellent. It is true that the most diehard Brexiteers, Tories, Corbynites and the right-wing press are sure to revile it. O’Brien does not write as well as he speaks on the radio; but that is largely because he speaks so well. He remains unmatched among modern broadcasters for impassioned analysis, biting irony, heartfelt sympathy and sheer rhetorical flourish. His trademark warmth, lucidity and wit – and above all his power to call an idiot an idiot – make *How They Broke Britain* immensely readable.

Image Credit: Roger Green/ CC BY SA 2.0 via Wikipedia

## A laugh, stifled?

Mahdi Ghuloom

Comedy can help people make sense of everyday developments, and it can help to release tensions during tough times and suffering.

“I have seen this movie before.” On the 18th of October, Egyptian comedian and public figure, Bassem Youssef, used these words on Facebook to imply that people will turn against him once more, even if they cheer him on in the present. Bassem recently became one of the most watched guests on the Piers Morgan show, when his satire and political commentary on the Gaza-Israel Conflict went viral.

I remember waiting eagerly for the uploads of his talk show during the aftermath of the Arab Spring in Egypt – it was called El-Bernameg – and as it translates to “the program”, it really was the program in the Middle East and North Africa for those in-

terested in political satire. A show with a live audience, very akin to shows hosted by formidable comedians such as Jon Stewart. Bassem is no longer in Egypt, having moved to the United States after his show was cancelled. Bassem was victim to censorship and ostracization in a changing socio-political landscape.

I will deliberately not go into the details that led to his censorship, but the story goes as most stories of censorship go: he picked his battles, and a large section of society did not appreciate taking the hit.

But I started this article with Bassem’s overt prediction that his resurgence as a popular figure is temporary, and indeed it may very well be. I fear for comedians because their profession is misunderstood. Bassem has repeatedly said, as have most comedians, that he has no political ambitions, nor is he a political player. Comedians

like Bassem, as with many comedians that face calls for censorship in the West, are not out to appease everyone: they are out to make

“I fear for comedians because their profession is misunderstood.”

fun of our ideas, conceptions, and norms. This will offend, but offence is a part and parcel of the profession. Do not exercise your power to censor someone because one of their jokes does not sit right with you at the time. The fact of the matter is that comedians talk on an endless range of topics, and eventually they may rub on you.

In fact, they may touch on the very points you have felt it so hard to express before and agree with wholeheartedly that you forget their previous offences. Bassem is a case in point. His censorship may have led to him quitting the pro-

fession altogether, and that would have deprived many of his commentary lately. Bassem has been exercising his freedom of expression through comedy, even if it’s not always in purely democratic contexts. The importance of comedy lies in allowing us to go where we cannot in regular conversation and in allowing us to have difficult discussions without having them, thereby being an instrument of democracy and progress. Indeed, the failure to do so is a failure to sustain the lifeblood of democracy – civil discussion, disagreement, and exploration.

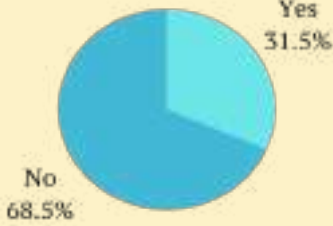
Perhaps Bassem was wrong to predict the same movie being played in his life again one day. I hope he was. Perhaps his appearance on Piers Morgan’s show was a sign of progress and the acceptance of satire in the Arab world. However, let’s not forget that in some parts of the world, this acceptance has been a given. It has been around for a long time, and it seems like it may just be at risk of fading away. I can only hope that I am wrong.



Cherwell asked your opinion on the latest issues, big and small...

### Do you go to JCR meetings regularly?

This poll is a resounding declaration against JCR meeting attendance. An incredible (or perhaps quite credible) 68.5% voted ‘no’, against 31.5% who voted ‘yes’.



### Do you have a strong understanding of what the SU does?

The SU does not occupy the place in students’ hearts it might like to. 86.9% voted ‘no’, against a just 13.1% for ‘yes’.



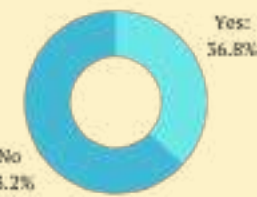
### Where’s the best night out in Oxford?

In one of our most divided polls this term, the winner is Atik! At 36%, the esteemed Park End Street establishment beat Bridge by 15%, Plush by 17% and other clubs by 13%.



### Is sharking always wrong?

Sharking appears more acceptable than one might think. 63.2% of respondents have decided that sharking is not always wrong, whilst only 37% have adopted a position of absolute opposition.





# “UK Black Pride is your home”: In conversation with UK Black Pride 2023

Deborah Ogunnoiki and Ruby Duncan speak with the organisers of this summer’s Black Pride UK.

**B**lack Pride took place on August 20th in Queen Elizabeth Park, London. It began in 2005 and was co-founded by Lady Phyll, a human rights and queer activist, who saw a gap in the experience of queer people of colour at other Pride events. She realised that queer people of colour needed a space of their own to be proud in their identities as both queer people and as people of colour. Black Pride 2023 drew together crowds of people of colour from all over the country to celebrate Pride. There was food from the Caribbean, Africa, and all over the world, representing many global cultures, and many queer charities and organisations came to participate and share the work they do with the community. Ruby and Deborah, representing *Cherwell*, were given media passes to talk with the attendees and those who ran the event from behind the scenes.

**Queer Refugees Unite (their names are omitted for their protection)**

*Deborah:* What does your organisation do?

*Vol-*

*unteer 1:* Our organisation is called Queer Refugees and we are an asylum group for people seeking asylum in the UK and those who are refugees in their own countries. We offer support to gay, lesbian, and trans asylum seekers and ref-

**“... It made it easier for me to talk about being queer and made it easier for me to say ‘I’m out and I’m proud!’”**

ugees. We give them guidance and offer community so that people don’t feel alone. We help them go through the asylum process and encourage them to ensure they know they’re not alone. The asylum system is really harsh, especially for those who come from

non-English speaking countries.

*Volunteer 2:* And not just that, even when you’ve gotten your status, you still need support in terms of housing, documents, paperwork, and maybe even enrolling into university.

*Ruby:* Did you use the services? Is that how you got involved and what did it mean to you to know there was a group like this?

*Volunteer 1:* I was very excited because without them I don’t think I would’ve gotten my asylum case. Because when you first come over you don’t know what steps to take, you don’t know anything other than calling the Home Office that you need asylum. Queer Refugees Unite guide you on getting legal aid and help you process your case.

*Volunteer 2:* For me, I had already done most of that before I joined the group. However, being from Nigeria, being out in that country

**“Being here is one of the most exciting times, but I also feel very bad.”**

is not exactly what you want to do. I’ve been in the UK for over 15 years, but even in the Nigerian community here, you can’t come out. I wanted to be in a group with people who are like me. It made

it easier for me to talk about being queer and made it easier for me to say “I’m out and I’m proud!”

*Deborah:* And what does being here at Black Pride mean to you?

*Volunteer 1:* Being here is one of the most exciting times, but I also feel very bad. I’m excited but also very pained in my heart. Because so many gay people in my country, when I see what happens to them... If we could use these platforms to show the world that we are not only caring, but we are good people, that they should not label people based on their gender or sexuality. Because that is what people back home are facing, they don’t have the opportunity to be who they are, so coming to an event like pride, and seeing how other people enjoy the freedom of being gay...it has been so many feelings, mixed feelings.

**Lolade (he/she/they), Just Like Us**

*Deborah:* What is the name of your organisation?

*Lolade:* The name of this organisation is ‘Just Like Us’. We are a charity that gives talks in schools, we basically reach out to 18 to 25-year-olds to volunteer and talk about their LGBTQ+ experience.

*Deborah:* And so what does Black Pride mean to you?

*Lolade:* This is my first Black Pride. So it’s very nice to see so much diversity within blackness. It really reminds you that Black isn’t just a monolith and there’s a lot of community, you just have to look for it.

*Ruby:* And what do you think the difference is between a Pride event like the one in July and a Black Pride event?

*Lolade:* I’m definitely feeling understood. I feel like when going to a ‘normal’ Pride event, it’s almost like, I feel have to prove my queerness, but at Black Pride, I can just be me.

**Max (He/Him) BBC Sounds Extra**

*Deborah:* What does it mean for you to be a white queer person here at Black Pride?

*Max:* That’s a big question. I just think it’s beautiful to see so much

difference everywhere, and so much love everywhere. The atmosphere that I can see is just full of love and vibes. I see how important creating these spaces is.

*Ruby:* What do you think can be done within the white queer community for the queer people of colour to feel more welcomed within the wider community itself?

*Max:* There’s a lot of answers to that. But I would say be comfortable knowing that every space shouldn’t be yours. I think that the main thing about some events is that I’m coming into a space here, knowing that as much as I am queer, it’s also not

**“It really reminds you that Black isn’t just a monolith and there’s a lot of community, you just have to look for it.”**

a space that’s designed for me. And I think that’s really important in order to understand how important these spaces are, white queer people need to be okay with not having spaces for them, and not taking up space and leaving space for queer people of colour to be able to come in and be themselves and feel safe. And I also think we should read, talk to people, know your history, know why these spaces are important, and know why there aren’t a lot of these spaces.

Ruby went behind the scenes to talk to the names and faces behind Black Pride UK. She was invited by Lady Phyll after meeting her at Worcester College, during a talk where Lady Phyll expressed a desire to work with more young people, particularly those of colour and identifying as queer.

Read the full article at [cherwell.org](https://cherwell.org)  
Image Credit: Deborah Ogunnoiki and Black Pride UK 2023.







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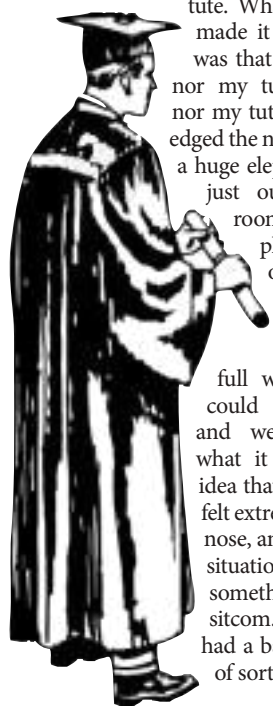
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## Tute notes...

In a tute recently we were discussing the presentation of erotic themes in a particular work of literature. I'm quite awkward when it comes to things like this, and the author in question was really amping up the steaminess, Lady Chatterley's Lover-style. It didn't help that my tutor seemed to be having a great time discussing the material. You know that thing, where you're discussing someone, and then that very person happens to walk by? Well, that's sort of what happened during this tute... Let's just say that the stuff on the page started to materialise in real life. The tutorial room is on a corridor where students live, and shares a wall with a student bedroom. We begin to hear certain noises coming from the room, of the Lady Chatterley sort. It was rather loud, and went on for a good chunk of the



tute. What somehow made it even worse was that neither me, nor my tute partners nor my tutor acknowledged the noises - it was a huge elephant in (or just outside?) the room. We simply carried on with the tute, although we all knew full well that we could all hear it, and we all knew what it was. Every idea that was shared felt extremely on the nose, and the whole situation felt like something out of a sitcom. At least we had a backing track of sorts.

# CHERBADLY

## Pembroke College revealed to not actually exist

In a shocking revelation, Pembroke College has been exposed as an elaborate hoax. The 'college' does not actually have any students or do any academic work whatsoever.

A recent investigation has unearthed that the college was set up circa 1925 by a group of rogue academics as a scheme to get paid by the University without having to do any actual work. The chief instigator of the hoax is understood to have been author J.R.R. Tolkien, who created the hoax in order to have more time to write his fantasy novels.

Over time, the hoax appears to have spread into an extensive network of falsehoods and deception, which has included the publishing of fraudulent articles in academic journals, the hiring of professional actors to pose as Pembroke affiliates and repeat claims of its existence, and the erection of several fake buildings from polystyrene, all funded by royalties from Tolkien's Lord of the Rings media franchise. It is understood that the college's strong ties to E&M courses were forged in order to support its fi-

nancial affairs.

The investigators were first alerted to the hoax after a number of students raised questions about having never met anyone from Pembroke or ever actually having been there. After visiting the supposed site of the 'college' and finding it entirely inaccessible, they arranged an interview with Pembroke College Master Sir Ernest Ryder. However, after Sir Ernest arrived concealed underneath a sheet and failed to respond to any of their questions, the investigators discovered that he was in fact just a mannequin, a fact which proved the crucial evidence for their case.

Asked why they thought it took so long to uncover the truth about Pembroke, one investigator answered, 'It was very cleverly done. They designed it to be as bland and forgettable as possible, so most people would just overlook it - naming it after a more famous Cambridge college was a particularly neat touch.'

While most of the perpetrators have been arrested, students have been advised to be wary of anyone claiming to be from Pembroke or associated with the college in any way, as they are probably either trained actors or deluded conspiracy theorists. The investigators have also warned of another potential college hoax on the horizon, after a student was overheard claiming to attend a college called 'Green Templeton', which nobody has ever heard of before.

# John Evelyn

10th of November 2023

## Autobinification Adjective:

1: To place oneself in the bin

2: Actions witnessed in fifth week CC  
Indeed, Style-Without, seen downing a large glass of wine moments before his episode, discovered that Substance abuse can't give you something you lack - some are born failures, some achieve failure, and some have failure thrust upon them. Backed up by his loyal aide(e), committee witnessed the world's most petty tantrum. One expects 'Oak' to create oxygen, but in CC he only wasted it lashing out at his elders and betters, and leading Monica Lewelfare to announce one term was Ke-nough for him - whether that was the original plan or otherwise. JE wishes Style-Without-Substance luck with his JCR presidential run, it's the only election he'll have a chance at now. In response, the Highly Developed Spy attempted to smuggle a 'quick rules change' though (famous last words), hardly surprising given his adoration for using disciplinary procedures to further his ambitions.

Uncontested elections provide fruitful ground for independent Standing candidates, and Jevelyn, ear close to the carpet, can report several bids so far. Nick Fuentes, the black sheep of OUCA, is leaving Black Sheep Coffee for an attempt to snatch relevance in the Union, let's hope he doesn't try and snatch our ballot boxes again. Union Tweed, complete with his dodgy dossier, is hoping the graduates he has so wooed with tours ad-infinitem, might select him as their champion - if

so, prepare to reach a point where when you hear Select Committee, you reach for your revolver. Crawling out of the woodwork of two terms of retirement on Wine and Spirits, the Cork Collector is throwing her hat back into the ring, after all, hacks grow tired of sleep, love, singing and dancing sooner than elections. Caesaraea took the ball's Regency theme a little too closely to heart, aping the weak and ineffectual leadership of the mad king George III, presiding over a severe case of hypogonadism (non-functioning balls). Attendees, emerging from a queue that would make the M25 blush, were met with No-Go Karts and a rather



er too silent disco when electrical failure caused a premature ejaculation, ahem, evacuation. Jevelyn didn't know that Caesarea was a gastronome, yet apparently, she's a fan of the slow food movement. JE is somewhat confused though, as any epicure would know that 'cooking' generally implies that food be served hot (or at least warm).

Despite Venus Flytrap and the Comandante's best efforts, yours truly remains a modern Procopius, a secret mystery, writing the Union's not so secret history. So as 7th-week approaches, in case you're irritated by the cannon fodder seccies nominating, your feed becoming a crowded jungle of endorsements, and new friends' intent on having a coffee with you, remember: there is only one thing in the world worse than being hacked, and that is not being hacked at all.

Yours, a most clandestine,  
John Evelyn

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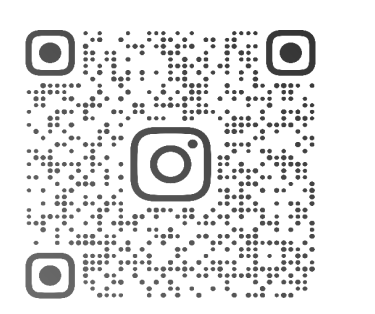
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**Thomas Bristow**  
*Editor-in-Chief*

If anyone managed to get through my article in the last print, they may have guessed that I am very much into football. It has got the point where it has become a source of great distraction for me and I usually end up getting absolutely no work done. I'll watch pretty much anything so long as it involves o jogo bonita (The Beautiful Game), and so when the top Premier League or Champions League football isn't available I'll usually look to Brasil. The Campeonato Brasileiro Série A is one of the world's most famous leagues, for it's connection to the most historic football nation and for the legendary players that have passed through its clubs over the years.

The league is quite different to what we're used to. The games are on at strange times in the UK, some

of the football is questionable and the commentary unintelligible to non-Portuguese speakers. But I believe this league, more than any, truly exemplifies what The Beautiful Game is about. It is a pool of great talent, and many exceptionally gifted young players are quickly snapped up by the biggest teams in Europe (think Neymar to Barcelona around 10 years ago, or the 17 year old Endrick, who is soon to move from Palmeiras to Real Madrid). What is also clear is the passion. Football fans are invested all around the world, but in Brasil it is rendered most clearly. Along with the fluctuating and famously zealous commentary, the matches are entertaining even when the football itself is lacking. With a great number of historic clubs, the league is also very competitive, and there have been 5 different champions in the last 10 years.

There is just something about watching a league on the other side of the planet, with little idea of what is being said that strangely appeals to me. Perhaps it's because football is a universal game, and so it really can be enjoyed by anyone. But Brasil seems to offer something nostalgic. It is tempting to think that football has survived here in a more or less authentic form, and that the love of the game has always taken precedence over money and corporations. But, as with anything nostalgic, this may just be a rose-tinted view, though I'd like to think otherwise.



**Anya Biletsky**  
*Deputy Editor-in-Chief*

I began rowing just over a year ago. Joining my college boat club, I swore to myself that I would only ever row "socially" - week-end outings, during the day or in the evening, and absolutely no early morning starts. Fast forward a few weeks, and I am waking up to my 5:30AM alarm, about to go on my second morning outing of the week. I was even rowing after nights out - nothing more delightful than being in Bridge at 2AM knowing you need to be up again in less than four hours' time. But I loved it. What they say about the rowing bug is true: it is easily contracted, and difficult to suppress once you've got it.

This term, rowing has been more



**Suzanne Antelme**  
*Editor-in-Chief*

This week's form of essay avoidance has included scouring the internet for a precise definition of the elusive 'lounge suit' dress code. To my untrained eye (fashion is not my passion), 'lounge suit' for women seems to be black tie's temperamental, time-sensitive evil twin. According to the great authority of Google, I can wear a smart trouser set if it's a daytime event, or a dress with a floral print. In the evening florals are suddenly off limits, solid colours strongly recommended, and before you know it, you're back to long black dress and heels.

Oxford is fond of dress codes. I remember squinting at the college freshers guide in first year, puzzling over 'sub fusc', wondering if people really wore colour-coded

flowers into their exams. Rushing from a tutorial or the library to a candlelit formal draped in your academic gown with those strange tassel-sleeve-things sticking out like an extra set of arms is the quintessential, what-they-put-on-the-brochure Oxford moment. I'm fairly sure in my first formal as a fresher we all swore some sort of Latin oath of loyalty to the college - although perhaps that was the wine. Now that the end of my degree is in sight, I'm wondering if I've crammed in enough of these 'Oxford moments' betwixt the essays.

Last week I attended my second ever Oxford ball, which is supposed to be the pinnacle of dress codes and escapism but which I cannot in all honesty - now having done it twice - recommend. I bought a ticket against my better judgement, propelled by a mix of early onset nostalgia for a university life I am still living and just enough selective amnesia about how disappointing the first ball was. For any would-be ball goers, you can recreate the whole experience at a much more attractive price by dressing your best, mixing a cheap cocktail, and standing in various queues all night until everyone finally gives up and goes home. Bonus points for authenticity if you can somehow make the cocktails toothpaste flavoured (cruel and unusual, I'm impressed).

than an opportunity for fitness. My workload is at an all time high, and I have taken on a bunch of extracurriculars, as well as balancing a social life which has seemingly taken two years to kick off to its full extent. However, my love for rowing has grown twofold since the beginning of term, and I think it is partly to do with this strenuous work-life schedule, so typical of Oxford. In the boat, on the river, you feel very apart from Oxford and all its stresses. There is focus and concentration, but on the rower in front of you, on the click-clack of the blades as they feather 'n' square. You are aware of a trillion details while forgetting a trillion to-dos. I have even downloaded Strava, which has given me

yet another platform on which to document yet more aspects of my life, this time of the sporting variety (those on my Instagram will know how much I love posting). I have also come to the hitherto undiscovered realisation that fresh air does wonders.

I do not intend for this to be an attempt to convince anyone to take up rowing, and, contrary to how I have presented myself here, rowing is not my "only personality trait", or so I hope. What I do think is important is finding something outside of work which affords time and space to fully detach yourself. And there is nothing that does the trick quite like the semi-constant, latent fear of capsising.

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Cartoon by Amelia Dovell

# An American's take of the Americans' take

**Amelia Bishop**

reflects on the Oxford interest in the two sides - Pelosi and McCarthy - of Speaker of the House

This term, the Oxford Union has planned to host two former United States Speakers of the House, Nancy Pelosi and Kevin McCarthy. In an already star-studded term card, the Union is bringing not just trailblazing Pelosi, but at the time it was released, they were to host the current (now former) Speaker of the House for the United States. In the post-Trump era it is truly significant for the Union to provide an opportunity for members

to hear from former office holders of America's third most powerful political position. You might line up for hours to attend the event. So, as an American in Oxford, I hope to share the importance of Speaker Pelosi and Speaker McCarthy coming to the Union, especially given this time of continuous political turmoil across the pond.

Former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi is a Democratic Congresswoman who has represented San Francisco in California's 11th Dis-

trict for nearly forty years. Her political career has been host to many milestones and in 2007 she made history by becoming the first woman to become Speaker of the House. She got her start as a bit of a political nepo-baby, as her father was a Representative for Maryland, and eventually the Mayor of Baltimore. Upon moving to the West Coast, she became active in the Democratic Party in San Francisco, becoming head of the California Democratic Party in 1981. After

the death of a friend holding California's Fifth District, Pelosi ran in a special election to fill the seat, becoming a Congresswoman in 1987, at a time when only a handful of women held seats in the house.

A strong supporter of LGBTQ and immigration rights, Pelosi had stood behind issues like the legalization of same-sex marriage, and publically disagreed with Republican immigration policy leading to the separation of families on the Southern Border. The Affordable

Care Act of the Obama administration was practically made possible thanks to her consistent push for healthcare reform, and ability to gather the 219 votes needed for the bill to pass.

This achievement was one of the most significant outcomes of the Obama Administration and was part of an effort to give all Americans the healthcare they deserved, not just the wealthy, emphasising Speaker Pelosi's fight for progress throughout her tenure



as she consistently looked out for the interests of all. She also notably participated in the passage of the post-economic collapse Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform Act and the Recovery Act of 2009, plus the repeal of Don't Ask Don't Tell, showing just a glimpse of the magnitude of her tenure and its impact on America as a whole.

In terms of breaking glass ceilings, Nancy Pelosi has shattered them. She joins the likes of Vice President Kamala Harris and Former SCOTUS Justice Sandra Day O'Connor in being the first woman to hold her position, something to celebrate in a country which is yet to have a woman president. Her commitment to her career and steadfast support of what the Democratic Party stands for has gained her acclaim and awards worldwide. To have her speak at the Union is an honour for us to witness, and a priceless chance to hear from one of the greatest political figures of our time, and a woman who rose to the top of the inherently patriarchal system that is government.

Some may feel I am waxing poetic, but the role Speaker Pelosi has played in expanding women's and girls' idea of what is possible in my country is paramount to her political career. She paved the way for progressive women in Congress, leading America to accept female leadership in positions of power, bringing us to the 118th Congress of today which boasts the largest number of women in Congressional history. This is her legacy, not only her policy, but what she has represented for millions of Americans as an impactful leader, and an inspiration for many young girls to grow up and study politics because she showed them they could. Nancy Pelosi can be heard at the Union's annual Benazir Bhutto Memorial Lecture on the Thursday, 9th November.

**“McCarthy’s departure from his former role as Speaker of the House has made headlines around the world”**

A fellow Californian, Kevin McCarthy is the Republican Congressman for California’s 20th district, in the Central Valley region. He climbed the political ladder, being elected to the California State Assembly in 2002, and becoming a US Representative in 2006. His time as House Speaker was a matter of mere months thanks to the ongoing polarisation in American Politics. He is a long serving Member of Congress and has served as both House Majority Leader from 2014-2019, and Minority Leader from 2019-2023. In his time as Minority Leader, McCarthy remained a staunch Trump supporter, particularly in the face of his impeachment and loss of the 2020 election.

He was one of many Republicans who signed an amicus brief supporting Texas v. Pennsylvania, a lawsuit filed at the Supreme Court which contested the results of the election, a choice which is judged by anyone with the sense to recognize a fair election or mature enough to be a

House has made headlines around the world, as Congress descended into an unprecedented level of chaos. By doing what one would expect of a politician and cooperating on a bipartisan plan to prevent a government shutdown, McCarthy lost the support of some of his most conservative party members. With a motion from Congressman Matt Gaetz of Florida demanding his removal, McCarthy’s role as speaker was in the hands of his colleagues.

On the third of October, the House voted to oust Congressman McCarthy from his role of Speaker, in an incredibly close 216-210 vote influenced by several far-right conservatives, who joined the Democratic Congress Members. It may have taken fifteen rounds of voting for the former Speaker to gain his status, but only one vote led to his re-

Pelosi and McCarthy provides a rare chance to hear from some of the United States’ most powerful people during the politically turbulent years of the Trump and Biden Administrations and to hear the perspective of both parties from their former leaders. While Speaker Pelosi’s career accomplishments certainly outshine those of McCarthy, his appearance at the Union is no less impressive as the most recent person to hold the position of Speaker, and an influential Republican through the last decade, providing listeners with a better perspective of what the Trumpian party actually believes from one of its own, especially through the intense factionalism within the party itself.

While discussing politics of the recent years here, it seems that the subtleties of the Republican Party have been

**“The Affordable Care Act of the Obama administration was practically made possible thanks to Pelosi’s consistent push for health-care reform”**

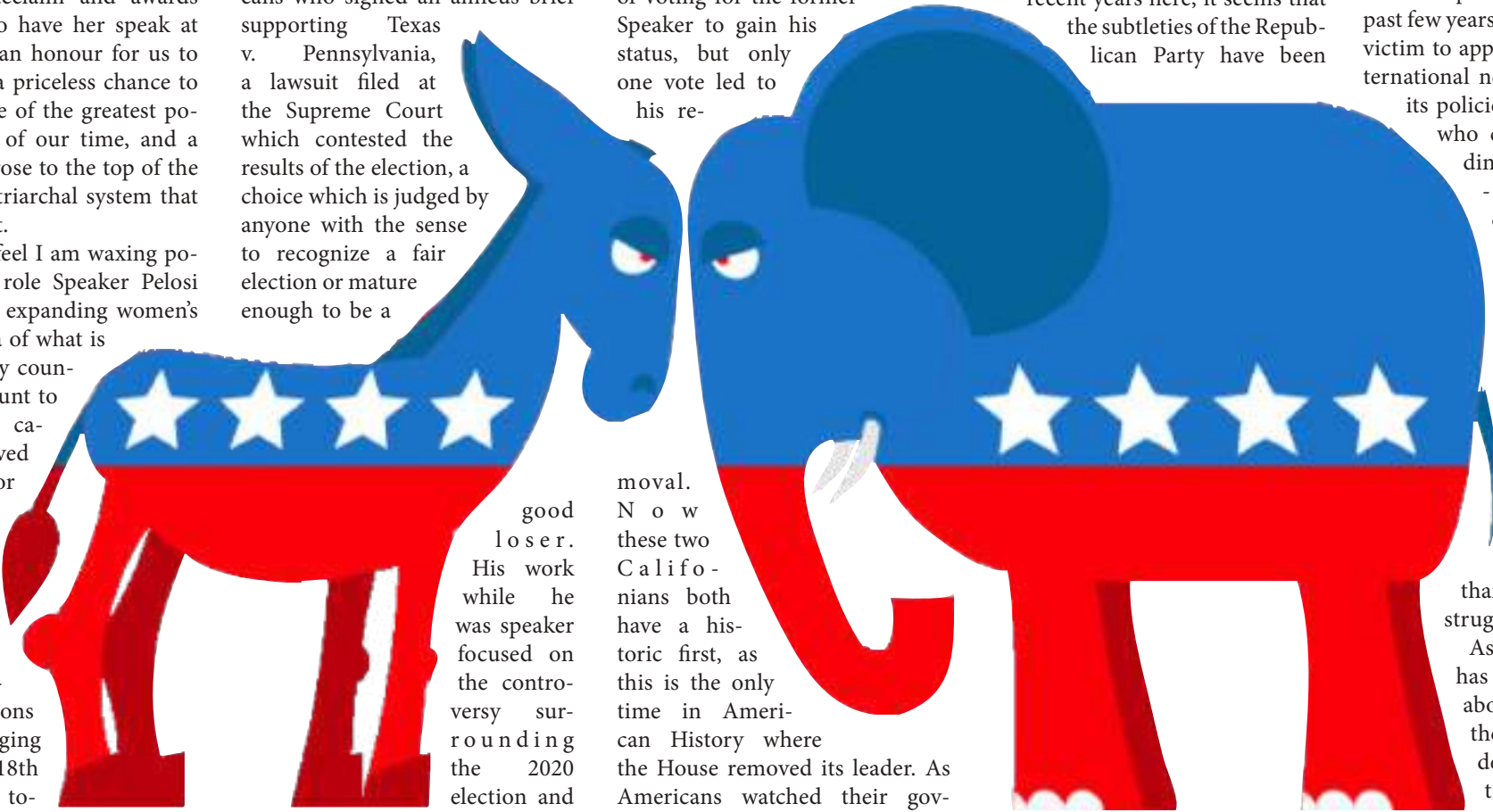
and equal rights. Most likely more muted on the political front than McCarthy’s debate, her lecture, I expect, will focus on hope for worldwide progress.

The American political arena has been perilously divided in the past few years. My country is easily victim to appearing foolish on international news outlets all while its policies tear apart families who can no longer share dinner at the same table - nor even in the same country. To have both a high-ranking Democrat and Republican come to Oxford is a small step towards recovering from this division. I hope that hearing Pelosi and McCarthy at the Union will show that, once again, America is more than its current political struggles.

As an American who has answered questions about abortion, guns, the election of President Trump time and time again, and faced general ridicule for the political system in which I vote, I hope these talks will offer the opportunity to recover what American politics really beholds.

The political world is a confusing game, but thanks to the talks at the Oxford Union, a closer look at some of the players might bring the political clarity we need, and the cross-spectrum connection we seek.

While the American political system is as flawed as any other, this does not always reflect those who serve and represent its citizens. This ought to be an opportunity to see the impact of these politicians’ leadership (particularly of longer-standing Speaker Pelosi) and to alter your understanding of American politics with a glimpse of its innards.



good loser. His work while he was speaker focused on the controversy surrounding the 2020 election and attacks of January 6th, as well as navigating the debt ceiling crisis of this past May.

On an international scale, McCarthy touched on a few foreign affairs issues, holding a CCP-condemned meeting with the President of Taiwan, and working to represent the interests of Congress about the war in Ukraine. His tenure was short-lived, ranking near the bottom of the list of time served by House Speakers, so one must rely on speculation alone to imagine what else he may have done in the office of Speaker. He was seen on the 28th of October speaking for the opposition alongside Frank Luntz during the special event, “This House Believes US Interventionism Has Done More Harm than Good”.

McCarthy’s departure from his former role as Speaker of the

hidden behind the sensationalist voices of the far right, and to hear a Republican debate in the United Kingdom may reveal a bit more about the party than the extremist representation it has overseas.

In the wake of his fallout with the Republican party, it was especially interesting to hear Congressman McCarthy debate at the Union, only weeks out from a pivotal moment in his career. To hear him argue in favour of historical American interventions while seeking to limit US funding of Ukraine and stating he did not want to send “blank checks” to the country in the face of war with Russia, was something to behold.

The chance to witness Pelosi give the Memorial Lecture will be a testament to her life’s work, and an honour well deserved for her commitment to progressive causes



# What happens on a peace-building exchange in the Western Balkans?

Nicholas Marshall

follows the Peace Line trail with young people from across Bosnia, Serbia, and North Macedonia

At a dinner in a small, smoke-filled restaurant in Belgrade, Serbia, during a youth programme set up by the German War Graves Commission, I was asked:

'So, what are the stereotypes about the Western Balkans where you're from?'

Growing up in London, I have been exposed to an array of cultures. But this question revealed my alarmingly minimal knowledge on this large region. If you had asked me to draw a line around the region that constitutes as the 'Western Balkans' last year, I probably would have been woefully mistaken. I simply couldn't answer.

This was precisely why I decided to embark on the project in the first place. Peace Line's Yellow Route would take young people from across Bosnia, Serbia, and North Macedonia and bring them together to discuss peace-building in regions that have experienced historical and recent conflict. Peace Line's aim is to encourage dialogue on cultures of remembrance and how they vary across Europe so that respect can be built within the continent and to emphasise the significance of preserving historical reminders in the promotion of European unity. This prompted reflection on the idea of the individual against collective memorialisation of the past, and reclamation of conflict via the arts, infrastructure, and legislation.

The region is undeniably under-represented when it comes to forming the whole picture of European history, even within the nations themselves. Much of the region's political geography has been dictated by memory politics, determining the ways in which future generations go on to remember their relatives, and how they perceive their

identity with respect to ethnicity and religion. Setting a start and end-point to the Balkan Wars, in particular, is nearly impossible, and volatile narratives focus on who the 'victims' and 'perpetrators' were, rather than the appreciation of civilian loss of life. Art has become a particular point of interest in expressing both disdain and remembrance of such a past in the Balkans - its abstractness has an ability to unite in collective memoriam, yet it undoubtedly may also be used to draw attention to strong beliefs. Thus, one of Peace Line's many facets was being able to explore the culture of remembrance through art, which I have been drawn to reflect on when considering building sustainable peace in the region.

## Bosnia and Herzegovina – Sarajevo and Srebrenica-Potočari

We began the programme in Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The most notable part of the city at first glance is not a particular landmark or sight, but rather the overwhelming presence of bullet holes. This is a relic of the Siege of Sarajevo, lasting 1425 days from April 1992 to February 1996, it was the longest siege of a capital city in the history of modern warfare, and the longest siege anywhere since WWII. Many of these facades have been partially restored so that the holes remain visible, but upholding standards of building quality. These scars on Sarajevo have fed directly into local art, in a way which reflects the ownership locals have of their past and reflects a modern culture of

remembrance. One of these artistic methods is the 'Sarajevo Roses', where shelling craters have been filled with red resin, each location marking an attack where at least three people had lost their lives. The recent development of the city has led to the loss of many of Sarajevo's Roses, taking the memory of the victims of the war with them in a country that often lacks formal memorials to commemorate their losses.

What strikes me about Sarajevo is that although it has no singular voice, the city speaks for itself. The War Childhood Museum told the stories of those who grew

Dancing, where a brother recalled preparation for a dance competition with his sister, Nina. The museum displayed the pom-poms her mother had made to accompany a dress given to her by the dance coach. Nina had no other means to buy one but the dress had allowed her to compete. The day after the competition, 12-year-old Nina was wounded, and died a few days later in hospital, making her one of the last children to fall victim to the Siege. It is these items that, despite being of little material value, are crucial in generating a culture of remembrance around conflict by humanising those who fall victim to it.

We continued to discuss the Bosnian War in Srebrenica-Potočari, in the region of Bosnia known as Republika Srpska. Srebrenica, as declared by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, was the site of the genocide of approximately 8,372 Bosniak men and boys during a week in July 1995.

At the site, we met a woman who had lost both her husband and sons in the events of Srebrenica, and headed the organisation 'the Mothers of Srebrenica', who took both the UN and the Dutch Government to court over their roles in the events. She owned a small shop outside of the graveyard for the victims, where she sold carefully sewn white and green flowers with eleven petals, commemorating the day on which the genocide took place. As one of the few Bosniaks to return to Srebrenica, she expressed worries that one day Srebrenica will be left behind, yet expressed fondness for her children, whom she believes can craft a future of peace and reconciliation in Europe.

In the days after my leaving Srebrenica, 30 more men and boys were buried at the graveyards following their identification, a testament to the time it has taken for families to learn the fate of their loved ones, and have a place of individual memorial for their mourning. To date, around a quarter of the victims of July 1995 remain unidentified or missing. The Srebrenica Flower has become a symbol of resilience for those who still await the identification of lost brothers, sons, and fathers, uniting those who lack a palpable site for individual commemoration.

## Serbia – Belgrade

Belgrade provided a stark contrast to Bosnia. Whereas Sarajevo has art intertwined into a rugged cityscape, Belgrade interlaces glossy skyscrapers and high-rises with bombed ruins of former ministries. Belgrade, like Sarajevo, bears the scars of a turbulent past, one that is felt in modern-day Serbia by murals and, in many cases, their vandalised counterparts. Depending on the day

you pass Njegoševa Ulica, you may or may not see a mural of Ratko Mladić, leader of the army of Republika Srpska, who was convicted by the International Criminal Court for orchestrating genocide in Srebrenica. It was cemented a month after his sentencing in The Hague and despite numerous attempts by the building's residents and Belgrade-based peace organisations, it remains.

A deeper exploration of this came later that day when meeting Serbian young people, many of whom were members of the Youth Initiative for Human Rights (YIHR), a Belgrade-based NGO that has had numerous members arrested in an attempt to cover the mural. A discussion with young people demonstrated how it is the walls and buildings of Belgrade that are being used as a battleground for conflicting political ideals, specifically in the furthering of Serbian nationalism. Marko Milosavljevic, head of YIHR, has stated that "the glorification of convicted war criminals has led to the fact that we have a monument to Ratko Mladić, embodied in a mural, which is protected by both the police and extremist organisations," highlighting the lack of intergenerational unity following the breakup of Yugoslavia.

## Cultures of remembrance – the way forward

Sarajevo's use of art as a memorial in the centre of the city, rather than demonising a particular group as a perpetrator, has gained wide international traction for its perception of the war of Bosnia, seeing the Siege of Sarajevo as an attack on the city's rich, multi-ethnic history. With this said, the culture of remembrance has not been perfect in Bosnia and Herzegovina, such as with the implementation of plaques in schools. The Bosniak teachers and students who fell victim to war commonly have plaques in their former schools that, whilst acting as remembering, have a dual function as accusers. Mourning of Serb losses in Sarajevo is essentially held in secrecy, rather than collectively, and many believe that Bosnia is more sectarian than it has ever been before.

Battles may no longer be fought on the ground, but walls and bridges are marked by them as nations reckon with dealing with a turbulent past. There is a need for an interdisciplinary approach to reconciling the past that encourages communal expression of mourning and remembrance. Ubiquitous street art, for instance, paints the cities' healing grief in the absence of formal reconciliation. Collective expression through the arts can then be used as a foundation for debate on how to better formalise collective memorial within these nations, regardless of ethnicity or nationality.

The peace-building programme in the Western Balkans was a vital learning opportunity. I found it worked as a way to memorialise permanently what has been lost to the horrors of the wars.



up there between 1992 and 1995. It described personal - not political or martial - histories from the time of the Siege.

The one that resonated with me most was titled 'A Dress for



# Drowning in you

by Lilian Trickey

I feel like I'm drowning as I struggle with  
your embrace

I lift my chin and try to breathe, as the deep  
blue of your eyes overwhelm me.

I fight for air between kisses, I battle at equal  
pace

And as the warmth of your fingers lap gently  
across the surface

Of that satin dress you love, fumble clumsily  
over pearlescent buttons

My fingers roam hungrily, and my lips rove  
for purchase

On your rough neck that tastes of salt, like  
the sea I miss so dearly,

My pearl, you're all that remains.

Hold me, darling, as I search for Atlantis-  
that hidden city many have failed to find

Clutch me like a clam, as I nibble at your  
calloused, sailor's fingers

As I dive and explore you, that sunken and  
stony maze of your mind

You churn my stomach with florescent  
flotsam in the stormy sea of whatever this is  
Whatever it is, whenever this is, I begin to  
drown again every time.

And as the fish swim by they blow me little  
bubble kisses, champagne fizz

They recognise me as I sink in countless  
moments, without rhythm or rhyme.

Once I lie still, I struggle to tell if you anchor  
me or weigh me down, most likely both.

That's in the nature of sea-crusted, auburn  
and rusting, heavy, interlocked, chains.

They are as necessary as their weight is  
crushing

Popping my lifeboat, my last means of escape  
And as I stop fighting, I say a prayer to the  
watery powers above, God's oath, in sinner's  
pain.

I promise to never leave you, oh captain, my  
captain

And I hope you find with me that sunken

treasure chest

I pray that it's full of golden laughter and  
silvery midnight ranting

And all the rest, the countless, precious  
moments with you, my tragic Moby-Dick,  
And all those jewel-toned sunsets that I love  
best.

And all that remains, my spiky pufferfish,  
As my hands scope for sandy grains of magic  
in Dead Man's Ocean grave

And my fingers dive through the seaweed of  
your hair,

That tenderly growing moss of your stubble  
in search of that cave.

That sea-cave where we first sat together, all  
those mourning years ago,

When, so impatient and young, we dove into  
this mess

Headstrong, headlong, as teenagers do best,  
With their lean, keen, streamlined and

focussed, neoprene frames.

## ART Is art a form of political propaganda?

Rachael Cummings-  
Naylor

Art has been employed throughout history as a political tool to propagate ideas of power and ideology and challenge them. However, art is a medium for political discourse rather than an all-encompassing feature. To understand political art we have to assess the different intentions behind various artworks: the context art was produced, who by and the purpose it served.

Art was a political tool used by individuals or institutions to assert their power and ideologies. For example, the baths of Caracalla (AD 212/11–216/17) acted as a symbol of power and reputation reflective of the emperors Septimus Severus and Caracalla, the state and the might of Rome. Its deliberate

architectural design and iconographic choices—such as the colossal monolithic columns, imperial insignia, military scenes and material allusions to the empire—contributed to a standardised visual language of art and architecture correspondent with the centralised aims of the empire and its leader.

Similarly, Elizabethan royal portraiture became a political tool to assert Tudor power by diminishing criticism surrounding the queen regarding marriage, succession and legitimacy claims. In 1594, royal portraiture assumed a 'Mask of Youth' developed under the supervision of Nicholas Hilliard. The idea was to promote an immortal image of Elizabeth I aiming to resolve her accountability by shifting focus towards her strength as monarch rather than the flaw in her rule. The *Hardwick* portrait (c. 1590–99)

is the perfect example. The magnificence of Elizabeth's dress and jewels highlighted the glory of the nation, pearls symbolised her innocence and virtue and the noticeable red and white flowers in the background invoked the Tudor Standard.

Let us consider how art asserts institutional power and ideology. During World War II, the proliferation of anti-Fascist ideology coincided with the systemisation of coherent information and propaganda by the American Office of War Information in the 1930s and 1940s. Leo Rosen wanted to illuminate the brutality and war crimes of the Axis powers – Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy and Imperial Japan – through his 1943 exhibition, "Nature of the Enemy." Rosen placed sculptures outside the Rockefeller Centre in New York reimagining America under Nazi rule, juxtaposing Fascist values as the antithesis of American values and norms.

This was an ironic display considering the systemic/systematic racism and prejudice which prevailed in the United States during this period. However, efforts made by the American government to diminish social and political antagonisms—race, gender, class, religion and ethnicity—by counterimaging Nazi diatribes against minority groups suited their democratic aspirations.

These efforts can be seen in posters like "United We Win" (1942) depicting a black soldier working alongside a white soldier to give the illusion of racial harmony with the image of the flag behind them acting as an assertion of patriotism. Here art walks a fine line between propaganda and censorship.

Not all art served a political purpose in its pictorial form but in its material form. The patronage and collection of art became a method to assert power among local and international social or political hierarchies. The Hermitage of Catherine the Great was a tool to showcase Russia as a civilised and pseudo-democratic society to the rest of Europe despite its autocratic rule. Catherine was inspired by her husband and predecessor, Peter the Great, to collect art but she maintained a disinterest in it until much later in life. They simply borrowed the idea from Louis XIV, who similarly fabricated his image as the enlightened 'Sun King' to present the French monarchy in a more favourable light.

Catherine's efforts were effective, as the foreign visitors who attended Hermitage assemblies left Russia with an improved image of it as a civilised and enlightened place, propagating positive Catherinian myth-making. We see similar parallels elsewhere in the Elizabethan royal court in which subjects wore images of the



monarch to promote her political image and signal their loyalty to her; or in Nazi Germany where it has been suggested art collections served as a reflection of political standing. Art was ascribed political importance based on its material worth instead of its subject.

Art and architecture have been used throughout history to convey political thought and assert power and ideology. Art absent of political ideology was still valuable in its physical form, used by individuals and group organisations as a system of asserting power through a hierarchical structure of cultural elitism. Art has always served as a form of political propaganda.

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# Feel Good Films — British 1950s Comedies

FILM

Hassan Akram

When I'm shattered after a long essay, or brooding over the state of the world, or merely wanting to enjoy a pleasant few hours, classic comedies are my go-to.

The golden age of film comedy in Britain was the 1950s. In this decade, or just outside it, came all the Ealing Comedies listed in the BFI's "Top 100 British Films". Here, however, I want to focus on the era's lesser-known, non-Ealing productions. Although the lesser-knowns lack the nuanced social analysis and elegance of the Ealings, they are certainly superior as "feel-good" laugh-getters. And most importantly, they remain criminally under-watched.

Most of them had a recurring but interchangeable cast and crew. Each regular had a characteristic persona, which allowed audiences to become familiar with them, as if in a TV show; although most of the films were unconnected. As genre goes, they range from social satire to domestic farce to dark comedy. What they all had in common was the ability to get you into hysterical

fits of laughter. The best of them assembled as many of the below actors as possible:

Ian Carmichael remained the staple comic hero. He played the title role in *Lucky Jim*, which fixed him as the hapless but likeable Fifties man; a relatable sort of idiot up against the worlds of the legal system (*Brothers in Law*), politics (*Left, Right and Centre*), trade unionism (*I'm All Right Jack*), and others.

Terry-Thomas was known as the delectably nasty "cad" or "bounder". With his gap-toothed smile and high-pitched voice, he exemplified the caricature posh Englishman. He was at his best playing the likes of tax-evader Billy Gordon in *Too Many Crooks*, or Lord Mayley in *The Naked Truth*. In some films, though, he abandoned that persona for a kind of comic method acting. He played, for example, a dodgy street-crook in *Brothers in Law*.

Dennis Price never returned to the Oscar-worthy heights he had reached in 1949 with *Kind Hearts and Coronets*. But his outings as, for instance, Carmichael's brilliantly corrupt uncle in *Private's Progress*, or the used-car swindler in *School for Scoundrels*, all show an undimmed air of cool and cunning.

There was another thing, too, that Price could always be relied on to do well: fall off boats. Off the top of my head, I can think of scenes in *Lady Godiva Rides Again* (which is otherwise a dud), *The Naked Truth*, *Double Bunk* and several others in which, as if unable to help himself, he just keeps on falling off boats.

Alastair Sim had a slightly more subdued style, and his greatest asset was his delivery. His signature role was that of Amelia Fritton in the *St Trinian's School* series (of which the second instalment, where he's joined by Terry-Thomas, is the best). He is equally excellent as an assassin in *The Green Man*; and as the law-abiding novelist who, in *Laughter in Paradise*, fruitlessly tries to become a criminal in order to inherit a fortune.

Then there were a range of character actors who were not leading men but played just-as-good small roles. In *Happy is the Bride*, Miles Malleon's turn as a deaf magistrate is largely responsible for the most uproarious courtroom scene since *Bardwell v. Pickwick*. Cecil Parker, with his blend of pomposity and awkwardness, was failsafe as a butler or a father-in-law. Also noteworthy were Sid James, Eric Barker, Pe-

ter Sellers, George Cole and Richard Attenborough.

Even aside from the cast, the "feel-good" charm of these films is down to the wit and energy of the screenplays. Censorship kept the innuendo at a low, meaning the filmmakers had to rely on dialogues, situations, visual gags and facial expressions over "obscenity". The period charm of the post-war decade — of a Britain experiencing the rapid growth of prosperity and optimism — also imbues the films with a sense of having been made in a golden world apart.

By the 1960s the familiar run was petering out. A few films captured glimmers of the old magic — *The Amorous Prawn*, for example. By the middle of the decade, however, a new wave of Technicolour Swinging Sixties comedies had put an end to the golden age.

So please don't be prejudiced! Don't be put off by the black-and-white. Watch any or all of the above comedies, and you'll have "never had it so good".

Image credit: CC BY 2.0, by manhhai, via. Openverse



# Feminist Samurai in Netflix's new "Anime"? — A Review of Ōoku

Yoshimi Kato

What would society look like if three-quarters of the male population disappeared?

*Ōoku: The Inner Chambers* depicts such a scenario in an alternative history in which an epidemic wipes out the young men that populate 17th century Japan. Amidst the Oppenheimer media centrality over the summer and attention on *Sex Education*'s finale season in the autumn, the release of *Ōoku* in June 2023 has been a modest one. The animated Netflix series is based on a Japanese manga of the same name and is originally produced in Japanese, but dubbed and subtitled in eleven and thirty-seven languages, respectively. It is (in the writer's opinion, questionably) categorized by Netflix UK as an "emotional" and "romantic" animated drama.

The epidemic forces the practice of patrilineage to be abandoned, with women becoming heads of businesses and inheriting family property. The disease does not discriminate towards aristocratic and warlord families, forcing even the nation-governing Tokugawa family to secretly appoint a female shogun under her father's name, Iemitsu, with a screen and male spokesperson to disguise her gender during public appearances. From the age of ten, Iemitsu cross-dresses as male and adopts the lifestyle of a samurai. Under the guidance of her councilors, she builds a male concubine cohort to ensure the production of a male heir to succeed her. Thus begins the

"Ōoku", or the "inner chambers" of Iemitsu's court, and the series' exploration of gender and power dynamics in the Japan of history and today.

The series follows the development of romance between Iemitsu and the soft-spoken Arikoto, who is selected for his delicate beauty by senior councilor Kasuga. The gender-queerness of Iemitsu and Arikoto's unexpected budding relationship in the reversed world of gender norms is embraced by the couple; as one of the other male concubines comments, "it's hard to tell which one is a man and the other a woman". It is their embrace in episode five — Arikoto in a harmonious *josou* (female-presenting cross-dressing) of rouge, women's kimono, and hair extensions embracing the top-knotted Iemitsu — that compels their official confessions of their love.

*Ōoku* is rife with sexual violence and coercion, both committed by the shogunate's powerful figures and among the male concubines. The frequency begs questions of necessity and veers the series close to sensationalism. The violence committed upon the young men in the *Ōoku*, however, grimly

spotlights the inevitability of such realities upon women concubines in the shogunate and their roles in the court, reminding us of our perhaps subconscious — yet still complacent — acceptance of sexual violence, particularly against women, in reported history and historical media.

The depiction of sexual misconduct against men and boys is also particularly poignant in consideration of the March 2023 BBC exposé of sexual assault crimes committed by Japan's late idol production mogul Johnny Kitazawa against the young male idols in his employment. Although allegations have been scarcely reported upon in Japanese media for decades, the company's public acknowledgement of the allegations in September 2023 prompted televised coverage across national news. It is important to remember that Japan only recognized men as victims of non-consensual sexual intercourse in their 2017 revision to the Penal Code (formerly it only applied to women victims); only this summer, the legal age of consent was raised from 13 years to 16.

The altering gender roles in *Ōoku's* Japan

also has economic and political implications that echo in the country today. In the series finale the narrator expounds how despite the participation of women in work,

"The roles of men and women were not exactly reversed. The job of men just became fathering children, while women took upon child-rearing labor and business matters."

With the burden of both household and business being thrust upon the female population in *Ōoku's* world, one cannot help but think of the increasing demands upon women in twenty-first century Japan as more women enter full-time employment amid a workplace culture unsupportive of working mothers, yet face social and government pressure to have children as the birth rate declines. The all-male cabinet of Iemitsu's Shogunate at the beginning of *Ōoku* also nods to the male domination of politics in the current Japanese parliament; according to the Gender Equality Bureau Office, 20.7% of the representatives in the House of Councillors are female. This is double the percentage of women in the House of Representatives: 10.1%.

On the international stage, Japan sent a male representative for the G7 Ministerial Meeting on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in 2023 (a conference that otherwise consisted of women). Locally, Kanagawa prefecture's "Women Act" committee, which functions to support "participation of women in central roles in society" yet came under scrutiny in 2015 for appoint-

ing an all-male cabinet. The Women Act website cites the reasoning behind the deliberate all-male appointment to the need for *ishiki-kaikaku* ("consciousness reform") among the industry heads in Kanagawa, of which 90% are men; this reform was thought to be most effective when "top men negotiated with top men". Since November 2022, prompted by "consideration of changes in ideas around gender and diversity", the twenty-one member Women Act committee now includes four women.

In contrast, as we see in the first foundation episode of *Ōoku* set generations after Iemitsu's first female shogunate, the entire cabinet is composed of women and is led by an openly female shogun. In its unsettling alternative take on history *Ōoku* thus highlights the absurdity of male domination of top positions in politics and corporations and posits the potential for actual female participation in leadership roles. Timed at a moment in Japanese society, media, and legislation in which progress is being made towards gender equality as well as destigmatization of LGBTQ+ issues and towards allegations of sexual misconduct, *Ōoku* is an animated series that is sure to continue discussion beyond the "emotional" and "romantic".

Image credits: from the "Visiting Kawachi" Episode of the *Tales of Ise* (17th C.), Public Domain via. Rawpixel





# Noah Kahan: Music Sensation or One-Album Wonder?

MUSIC

Lottie Tellyn

I know very little about music. A vast amount of my Spotify wrapped includes Taylor Swift (about whom I know a lot), and what doesn't is an eclectic mix of songs I've stolen from my friends' music tastes and now appropriate as my own. So when it comes to reviewing music, I am hugely under-qualified to do so. All of which is to say: take the following with a pinch of salt.

I do, however, have a small obsession with Noah Kahan. You will find me on Hot Girl Walks listening to him, blasting his music in the car at full volume with the windows down, and sending his songs to my friends at every opportunity. Last April, we booked tickets to see an artist called Dermot Kennedy - whose songs I still can't name even one of - just because Noah Kahan was his opener. The whole fiasco to get to the concert during train strikes involved borrowing a friend's car with a worryingly dodgy clutch, driving two hours there (and a horrendous four hours back), all for a set that lasted under 45 minutes.

So what is it about Kahan's music that made those 45 minutes worth it?

Kahan writes music that centres around his experience growing up in rural America, his struggles with

alcoholism and mental health, and the ties he has to his hometown and the people in it as they grow up and leave. His writing hits a poignant note that captures the restlessness of being ready to leave home, but not being ready to say goodbye yet - the perfect album for his audience of students and young people moving away from home for the first time.

This explains why you may have heard the title track of the album going around TikTok, as well as its other single, Northern Attitude. Choosing which songs to tell you about is nearly impossible: it's an album with virtually no skips. But let me suggest that you get into it the way I did, dipping your toes in the water with the titular single, moving on to the opening track of Northern Attitude, followed by Homesick and Everywhere, Everything, before you slow down a bit and brave the (more) emotional tracks of Growing Sideways and Orange Juice, two absolutely killer songs about Kahan's experience with therapy and his friends' experiences with a traumatic accident. I know it sounds like it might be a bit too heavy-hitting, but trust me, it's worth it. Kahan writes in a way that is moving and hits the right balance between songs that touch on real life, whilst also making them perfectly cathar-

tic to sing (shout) along to. His vivid and memorable lyrics will be stuck on repeat in your head for weeks.

Stick Season gets its name from that time of year when the trees have lost all their leaves but it hasn't yet snowed for the first time; a kind of liminal space between Halloween and Christmas. Not only does this make it the perfect album to listen to as Michaelmas becomes colder and greyer, but it's also perfect for branching out your music taste this term. Driven by Kahan's voice and guitar, the album builds to some incredible bridges, backed by a steady, subtle kick drum (and yes, I did google what that is) that propels the music forward. There's also some banjo in there, but it's in a cool, folk-pop way that adds dimension that lets you immerse yourself, rather than the more Keith Urban brand.

The deluxe version of the album (Stick Season: We'll All Be Here Forever), released at the beginning of June, also includes The View Between Villages (Extended Version), a haunting, incredible song that takes you with Kahan as he returns to his hometown. If any song is a must-listen, this one is. It's a haunting song that you won't be able to help getting swept up in. It starts out with Kahan's vocals alone, slowly joined by the same drum as before, as he drives into the town. The

guitar joins in to pick up the pace, the feeling a bit like you're driving downhill, full speed, alongside Kahan. He passes all the monuments to his childhood, and you're right there with him. A friend of mine listened to it for the first time and got literal goosebumps. It is full volume in the car, windows down kind of music. Hozier meets Phoebe Bridgers meets the nostalgia of The Lumineers. I love it.

Since his huge success in the UK in April 2023, (2023 I'm assuming?), Kahan has announced another tour around the UK in November, which sold out in less than five minutes. This resulted in extra dates being added and a second set of shows in February of 2024 (which has also sold out already - sorry to anyone who I've convinced to start listening). In the last few weeks alone, Kahan has been covered by Olivia Rodrigo, written songs with Zach Bryan, Lizzy McAlpine, and Post Malone, and has been covered on social media by a whole host of prominent artists.

There you have it, then: the Stick Season songs seem set to stay on my playlists for the foreseeable future, and if the We'll All Be Here Forever extra tracks are anything to go by, Kahan isn't looking at stopping writing hit songs any time soon.

## WHAT'S ON!

### STAGE

*This is How We Walk On The Moon*

@Michael Pilch Studio  
14th-18th November

This Is How We Walk On The Moon is a collectively devised piece of immersive theatre by some of Oxford's best writers. The play is a series of intercut, interrelated monologues tied together by themes of romance, connection, flights of fancy and Arthur Russell.

### MUSIC

*Mahler's Symphony No. 2 - "Resurrection", with OUPhil & OUChorus*

@Sheldonian Theatre  
22nd November

Oxford University Philharmonia, joined by the Oxford University Chorus, return to the Sheldonian Theatre for a joint performance of Mahler's Symphony No. 2 - 'Resurrection'.

### FILM

*Breaking the Waves*  
@Ultimate Picture Palace  
12th-13th November

Profane and pure, Lars von Trier became an international sensation with this galvanising realist fable about a young woman (Emily Watson) whose husband suffers a life-changing accident at work.

*Fingernails*  
@Ultimate Picture Palace  
10th-16th November

Jessie Buckley and Riz Ahmed star in Christos Nikou's thought-provoking sci-fi about a couple who suspect their relationship isn't so perfect, despite being predicted by technology.

## BOOKS MARCO SOLO - Manuscripts & Archives at Oxford

Rufus Jones

Although unnoticed by many students and tutors alike, a revolutionary new service by the name of MARCO was unveiled last week, taking the archivist world by storm. I was lucky enough to attend the launch event, one humble student amidst a flock of archivists and librarians from all over the university.

There's nothing the Bodleian staff hold so dear as an acronym, hence MARCO. But so everyone reading can fully appreciate the new amenity, it seems appropriate to explain what it stands for - Manuscripts and Archives at Oxford University. It's a website combining eleven of the Bodleian's existing manuscript catalogue sources (such as the disparate 'Bodleian Archives and Manuscripts', 'Western Medieval Manuscripts' and 'South Asian Manuscripts') into one, easy-to-navigate system. Students familiar with SOLO will recognise its hallmark as the colour blue; following this trend, MARCO's signature colour is purple. You'll know you're in the right place if the page looks like a lavender farm. Mind you, it isn't only university archives being collated, but college ones too. Inter-college collaboration is much easier as a result, since the wide range of historic manuscripts held within various college archives are

much easier to access.

Archivists are the unacknowledged legislators of the university: despite being one of its backbones, we pay them little mind. Think about how soul-crushing work would be, regardless of whether you do a STEM or Humanities degree,

briefly with my college's archivist before the event, in order to get an idea of the problems this service was trying to remedy. He informed me that looking for manuscripts is essentially the bane of an archivist's existence. Manuscript manuals are tricky to navigate, full of incon-

venience, whether they're students, tutors, archivists or researchers.

MARCO will be a boon to anyone who wants to access manuscripts, whether they attend Oxford or not. As one of the speakers aptly put, it is a way of democratising access to manuscripts as no previous training or proficiency is required. That being said, while making archives easier to navigate, some complexity is necessary to maintain the different priorities each archive has. It's something I hadn't thought about before, but makes sense: as different archives focus on distinct places and diverse periods of history, any documents in common must be considered from unique angles. Rather than trying to be some universal lone archive, MARCO is instead a collation of all the different archives any document is in, ensuring the organisation of every field.

Though archives might not be one of your major concerns right now, whenever your course requires you to brave them for the first time, you'll be glad people went to the trouble of making it as easy and intuitive to navigate as possible. We're very lucky indeed to have a group of such dedicated and friendly experts on hand. To the unsung archivists!

Image credit: CC BY-SA 3.0, by Walters Art Museum



if there was no rhyme or reason to how the documents you needed were arranged. But the archivists are at hand! It is they who provide order amidst the chaos and are always coming up with better ways to keep knowledge organised.

I had the privilege of chatting

venient omissions and constantly in need of updates. These hurdles aren't the exclusive concern of archivists, though. Students also suffer from manuscript archives being clunky and circuitous - just ask anyone doing a dissertation! A better system benefits everyone at the uni-



# “Slightly out of joint”: a review of Hamlet

Joseph Rodgers

That Isaac Asimov’s retelling of a bemused reader’s response to *Hamlet* – ‘I don’t see why people admire that play so. It is nothing but a bunch of quotations strung together’ – has itself become a well-worn anecdote is only a testament to the challenges faced by those daring to stage the play today: acknowledging *Hamlet*’s canonical status has become clichéd, it is already canon. What can a new production do now when confronted with all that has already been done? There’s only so many different ways you can inflect ‘To be or not to be’. The play itself is haunted by Old Hamlet’s ghost, and today the play’s past versions haunt all those who dare to take it on.

Carys Howell seems to recognise this in her *Hamlet*, which played at the Keble O’Reilly. In Act 2 Scene 2, she has Claudius, bored and hungover, flick through a programme while Polonius pontificates in front of him. The programme used turns out to be for *The Motive and the Cue*, Jack Thorne’s new play about John Gielgud’s 1964 production of, you guessed it, *Hamlet*. Recognising a difficulty, though, is not the same as overcoming it.

This production’s new, present-day, concept was advertised quite explicitly. The marketing team of Nicole Gibbons and Evie Holloway promised a ‘press angle’, as Howell described it in a *Cherwell* interview. Professedly inspired by recent media coverage of the Royal Family, this produc-

tion promised to explore the impact of newly emerging forms of media, both social and otherwise on public life. Occasionally, we see Howell’s production live up to this. Between some scenes we hear talk radio-style discussions of Elsinore’s ongoings. In a tone more combative than anything we could hope for from the British media, these additions bring the political infighting of the Danish court into the present day. The new media angle also feels meaningful in *Hamlet*’s mockery of Polonius. Scrolling on his phone, Josh Sneddon claims to read ‘words, words, words’ and, later, ‘slanders’ from ‘satirical rogues’.

Apart from this, though, the references to new media are quite rare, and feel tacked on. Entering the theatre, we see two actors lying on stage engrossed in their phones, but nothing comes of this. Occasionally, a stage manager comes onstage with a video camera, but the actors never give it any attention, nor does it seem to lead anywhere. There is another problem, though, that first becomes noticeable with the entrance of the video camera. The direction too often follows Robert Icke’s direction in his 2017 version with Andrew Scott. Sneddon’s *Hamlet* hides behind a sofa in Act 1 Scene 3 just as Scott’s does, and this is not the only

instance of copying. Like in Icke’s, the search for Polonius’s body is stylised with torchlight. This continues to the play’s end, when each of the dead characters in the play’s final scene stand up during *Hamlet*’s monologue and pass him to exit upstage, while Old *Hamlet*’s Ghost returns once more. The second biggest laugh of the night comes when Claudius mistakes Rosencrantz for Guildenstern and vice versa, only for Gertrude to correct him. This is a joke straight from Icke’s production. Influence is one thing (Howell cites the set design from Icke’s version in her *Cherwell* interview), but this much results in a production that just feels like a pale imitation.

As for the acting, the standout performer is Joe Bangbala as Old *Hamlet*’s Ghost and the First Player, who brings an intensity of presence and clarity of speech that sets him apart. Meg Bruton as Horatio brings an endearing quality that justifies *Hamlet*’s fondness of her, and Nic Rackow’s delivery of Claudius’ public pronouncements is assured. Josh Sneddon plays *Hamlet* well in parts. He has a habit of pausing in places that loses the meaning of the lines, so that, for example, ‘I do not know why/ Yet I live

to say “This thing’s to do” turns ‘I do not know why yet I live’ and ‘This thing’s to do’ into separate impulses, with ‘to say’ stranded in between. Perhaps he wants to imply that *Hamlet* is coming up with his speech in real time, but this comes across as formulaic, especially when combined with his persistently ironic tone. He would do well to follow *Hamlet*’s own advice to the players: ‘Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue.’

It is also regrettable that Sneddon fluffs some of his lines. We lose even some lines that Asimov might claim as part of the string of famous quotations, ‘What’s Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba,/ That he should weep for her’ being one of the most noticeable. It is not an easy task to learn all the lines for the title character of Shakespeare’s longest play, especially when combined with the demands of a degree, but that is what Sneddon signed up for, and he falls short of it too often. That said, his performance grows stronger in later scenes, and he has a good rapport with the more minor characters, especially in scenes in prose.

As a whole, though, the production’s most successful moments are additions that don’t come from the text. When Claudius video calls his emissary, Voltimand, he tells him, deadpan, ‘I think you’re on mute’. All the major laughs come from these sorts of extras. Humour already in the script, like The Gravedigger’s claim that in England ‘the men are as mad as’ *Hamlet*, tends to fall flat. Similarly, the design

team seems to be at odds with the text used. Old *Hamlet*’s Ghost is dressed well in a dark military suit, and yet he is still described as ‘in complete steel’. The fencing foils in the final scene both have obvious rubber tips on the end, despite Laertes admitting to using an ‘unbated’ sword. Howell is clearly not opposed to minor alterations to the text (she changes the word ‘hugger-mugger’ to ‘speedily’, presumably to make the dialogue easier to understand), so in this vein we ought to have consistent alteration carried throughout.

When *Hamlet* can finally tell us ‘Now I am alone’, his moment to speak uninterrupted with the audience is barged in on by a soundtrack that seems intended to convey intrigue. Yet, near the end of that same soliloquy, when some intrigue actually presents itself in his plans for the play within the play, the track cuts and Sneddon mutters ‘the plays the thing/ Wherein I’ll catch the conscience of the king’ as he rushes off stage with a blackout coming halfway through the line. This, to me, is symptomatic of the main problems with this production. In parts, the production is interestingly original, but, for the rest, we are left with a production that hasn’t spent enough time thinking about the play as a whole and its specific details. It is all just slightly ‘out of joint’.

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## FASHION Is Kylie Jenner’s ‘khy’ aiming too high at the sky?

Shaan Sidhu

The youngest member of the Kardashian-Jenner clan recently came out with a new clothing line under the name of ‘khy’ towards the end of October. However, for Kylie Jenner, this is far from a venture into unfamiliar territory, especially given the prior success of her makeup and skincare brands Kylie Cosmetics and Kylie Skin. Following the lead of her older sisters Khloé and Kim, who own and design for Good American and SKIMS respectively, khy will then be Jenner’s first mature contribution to fashion since 2012, when she collaborated with her sister Kendall on a clothing line for American brand PacSun.

According to the website, khy hopes to pioneer the modern wardrobe with pieces and collections ‘that seamlessly blends luxury with everyday style’ and promises to achieve this through versatility of style. This statement is also transparent about the creative process, declaring that the collections for khy will be curated in collaboration with ‘iconic brands

and global designers’. For the inaugural drop, Jenner collaborates with Namilia, the brainchild of Berlin-based Nan Li and Emilia Pfohl with a reputation for embracing the provocative. Though a relatively young brand, having been founded in 2015, Namilia has featured in NYFW for five collections, and have gone viral online for their most recent SS24 show titled ‘In Loving Memory of My Sugar Daddy’. Here, Li and Pfohl sought to reclaim the cliché of the gold digger stereotype in a subversive act of celebrating women who take advantage of their hyperfemininity to achieve their ends and make the most of a society that perpetually objectifies them. The designs are equally as controversial as the ethos behind them; characterised by trashy slogans, outrageously-low waistlines, religious imagery, Birkin tops and PU leather, Namilia has a clear desire to stand out.

Such is the style of khy’s first collaborator. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that Kylie Jenner’s first collection consists mainly of ‘faux leather + base layers’ as

described by the brand on their Instagram page. The overall look of the drop might not have derived sole influence from Namilia, however – Jenner’s recent campaign for Acne Studios FW23 anticipates the businesswoman’s interest in grungier, edgier looks, even if this description fails to encapsulate her personal style in its entirety. That being said, when considering the subversive nature of these two established fashion houses, khy’s collection is extremely watered down.

Its capsule collection consists of three dresses made from PU leather in a bodycon silhouette, standard base layers that you could buy from SKIMS if you were obsessed with adding to Kardashian profits, amidst some oversized Matrix-esque jackets and trousers. Perhaps Jenner’s aim was to play it safe with her launch, and it does seem to be working, with certain sizes having sold out only a week after they were put on sale. The prices are not as awful as expected for a celebrity brand, either. I would personally refuse to spend £20, let alone £51 on a nylon baby tee, but it honestly could be worse. Furthermore, Jen-

ner is a billionaire working with an established brand, so the choice of fabrics used in her non vegan leather pieces is rather disappointing. Though I appreciate that the collection is small, nylon and spandex are not biodegradable, and she can definitely afford to source better materials ethically. That being said, I presume Jenner’s concern with designs would have been to achieve a sleek, form-fitting look, which would be attained easier with the composition of materials used in these pieces.

After the rise of celebrity makeup brands a few years ago, more and more are turning to fashion

to expand their empires. I look forward to seeing what Kylie’s successive launches will hold, but the launch of khy is lacklustre at best. Indeed, she knows what styles are in, and the design team have a clear impression of how to capitalise on this. However, she could have collaborated with a high street designer or brand to get a similar look. Considering Namilia’s reputation and the plethora of connections that Kylie Jenner has to a diverse set of designers and stylists, she could have definitely offered more.

Image Credits: CC BY 3.0, by Conde Nast, via. Vogue Taiwan





# The Tier List

## Supermarkets in Oxford:

### Big Tesco

The staple. Even if they don't rely on Big Tesco for their weekly shop, every Oxford student has made use of the two whole stories of Clubcard goodness at some stage. Minus points for how busy it gets at 5pm on a weekday.

### Magdalen Sainsbury's

Small-ish but sure. Useful for those living in Cowley, or for picking up a bottle of bev on your way to a houseparty.

### Wild Honey

Technically not a supermarket, Wild Honey is a charming organic food store in Jericho. Great place to source your veggies, if you can turn a blind eye to the prices.

### Little Sainsbury's

This Sainsbury's is generally less well-frequented than the Big Tesco next to it, and rightly so, for it has only a fraction of the options. It can be a last resort on a Sunday after 5pm when the Tesco is shut.



# Countdown to Christmas

Georgia Campbell

Ah yes, November. The clocks have gone forward, Halloween has been and gone and, according to TikTok, Mariah Carey has officially begun her annual 'defrost'. She has thawed early this year, I am told, due to the catastrophic effects of climate change.

But whilst the dulcet tones of 'All I Want For Christmas' now saturating my FYP are escapable by a single swipe, there is an unavoidable sense that the Christmas season is already upon us: festive lights are up on the High Street, and John Lewis has released the teaser for their Christmas ad. The short length of Oxford terms makes this realisation something of an assault to the senses: 'but we only just got here!' you cry into your gingerbread latte from Pret. Yes - we did. But the Mariah Carey train stops for no-one in its quest for total Christmas domination.

It's true, it's hard to feel all that Christmassy when the build-up to the Christmas season promises not much more than a continuation of the same pressures and stresses

- but now with tinsel. Whilst friends at other unis have had their half terms - sorry, "reading weeks" - and can return to work with a newfound festive spring in their step, I'm left with the sense that all these preparations are a bit premature. Enjoying the lead-up to Christmas sadly doesn't gel too well with unrelenting deadlines and reading lists, and there is a distinct sense of nostalgia for those long-gone primary school days of spelling tests being replaced with Home Alone screenings. This feeling is compounded for anyone involved with music, who will know all too well the specific sort of dread that looms at the thought of regurgitating the same tired tunes for 30 consecutive days each year; just hearing a snippet of 'The Fairytale of New York' playing out of a car window is enough to send any seasoned festive performer into a mild state of shock.

But it's not all sour eggnog and soggy mince pies: Oxmas, just a few weeks away, offers a small beacon of hope, as does the Varsity Ski Trip for all those looking to welcome in the festive season with

a broken collarbone. And with the promise of the Black Friday sales coming, maybe a light sprinkling of Christmas is just what we need to get us through the bleak mid-term blues. There is definitely also something exciting about strolling the Rad Cam bundled in knitwear, something very "dark academia" about it all. And even for those, like me, for whom Christmas does not hold personal religious significance, it's still possible to look forward to the cosy nights in and catch-ups with family and friends from home: a time for some good old Yuletide human connection. Isn't the lead up to Christmas meant to be the best bit anyway?

It's clear that the early arrival of the Christmas season holds excitement for many, so to all those stress-free students: have at it - the fun starts now! But I - like many other Oxford students - have just a few more essay-shaped hills to climb before I can really get into the festive spirit.

So, Mariah (the recently thawed) now that you mention it, there is just one thing I need: any chance you fancy trying your hand at some Old English poetry analysis?

# A Guide to Homesickness

## THE COLUMN

Matt Taylor

We're now in the middle of the Michaelmas term. The first term always feels like the longest because there are no bank holidays or breaks in between. It is at this time that, with all the distractions of freshers' week gone, feelings of homesickness often emerge.

One of the most crushing things about homesickness is the stigma attached to it. We feel it is a 'non-emotion', or a childish set of feelings. This is not true. It is a real thing. For many, coming to university is a big change from the way they were used to living, and so it can create a crisis of identity. The tug-of-war between the life we had and the life we now have generates overwhelming feelings. Homesickness is the ache from an old wound. It takes time to get used to.

Living in the care system, where moving home and sometimes even country, homesickness had become a fact of my life. These are a few tips I've picked up along the way on how to deal with it.

### 1. Don't crawl the walls.

When a bout of homesickness creeps up on you, the temptation to isolate yourself can be crippling. Changing the scenery can transform your feelings. Encourage yourself to have regular but small positive social interactions. At sixteen, I moved from a children's home on the Isle of Man to a 'supported lodgings' (a

"When a bout of homesickness creeps up on you, the temptation to isolate yourself can be crippling."

privately rented bedroom) in the UK. I was

ripped away from my entire life and dropped into the middle of rural England. I found that going out to regular open-mic nights helped relieve the social isolation and meet new people.

Get outside. Force yourself to meet new people. Go to events. Embrace your new life.

### 2. Doom scrolling is not a comfort blanket.

It's easy to spiral into a doom-scrolling loop to deal with the overwhelming feelings. In fact, it's just an avoidance tactic or coping mechanism which achieves the exact opposite. If you find yourself endlessly scrolling through apps, put your phone down, and check in with yourself and see what it is you're feeling.

Real life is not online. Put your phone down. Give yourself space. Follow point 1.

### 3. Listen to music that makes you feel happy.

The great thing about music is that it creates the soundtrack to our lives. It's a potent tool in shaping our emotions and memories. At any point I feel vulnerable, I stick on a favourite album and go for a walk. I find this a compelling

way to work through what I'm feeling and help me think more clearly. Research has also shown that listening to music you like releases dopamine (the feel-good chemical) into the brain.

Create a playlist. Plug your earphones in. Tune into the good emotions. Drop the homesickness out.

### 4. Don't suffer in silence.

One of the most striking things I've found when moving to a new place is that everyone understands what it is like. And everyone seems to have advice on how to deal with it. At Oxford, I guarantee you are not the only one dealing with homesickness. Sometimes, talking through your feelings or sharing anecdotes from home can help reduce the homesickness. This will also help in forging new relationships in the new life you now have.

You're not the only one. Share your experience. Surprise yourself.

Homesickness affects everyone at some point in different ways. Through sharing, we can normalise these feelings and avoid the isolation that comes with them.

"Create a playlist. Plug your earphones in. Tune into the good emotions. Drop the homesickness out."

# Cherpse

## CHERPSE 1

### First impressions?

It was really interesting to talk to him and get to know his opinions and thoughts on various topics. However, it was clear from the very beginning that it would be great to just be friends.

### Did it meet your expectations?

I must admit, I did not have any expectations prior to the meeting, but I really liked it. I hope we'll manage to stay friends.

### What was the highlight?

The main highlight was probably a cup of delicious tea and a cozy atmosphere in the café during the rain.

### What was the most embarrassing moment?

I don't think there were any.

### Describe the date in 3 words:

Interesting, comfortable, chatty.

### Is there a second date on the cards?

A meeting is likely to happen, but not a date.



## CHERPSE 2

### First impressions?

Tall. Wonderfully dressed; she had a cute crochet fox badge. Way prettier than I am.

### Did it meet your expectations?

I was told beforehand that it will be a short date and it was a short date so I guess so.

### What was the highlight?

There was a bit of an Eastern-European "small world" moment.

### What was the most embarrassing moment?

I held up the umbrella as she was putting on her freshly acquired scholar's gown and the wind made the umbrella hit her on the head. So yeah, that was smooth.

### Is there a second date on the cards?

The vibe was entirely friendly but I would be open to hangout again!

## Looking for love?

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THE COLUMN The Not So Secret History: moments of clarity

Flora Symington

Is 'happy fifth week' a contradiction in terms? Either way, I hope yours isn't going too badly. We've reached the stage in term where no one realistically has the mental capacity to read a whole page of information, so instead I'm going to give you a series of episodes that have taken place in the house over the past few weeks. Besides, until the inevitable end-of-fourth-week crash I wasn't generally in the house and conscious for more than a few minutes each day, so this way you'll get my authentic experience. Lucky you!

We've had quite a few visitors over the past couple of weeks, both of the two and the four-legged variety. A few weekends ago I hesitantly left The Cook in charge of my two dogs while my parents took me out for lunch. 'Will they be ok?' the parents asked me anxiously as we left, 'The dogs can be quite full-on!' I'm sure they'll manage,' I reassured them. Halfway through lunch I checked my phone, to be met by no less than thirteen images from The Cook. They had apparently decided to give the dogs an impromptu photoshoot, posing them everywhere from the arm of the sofa to sitting under the oven

while they cooked. Needless to say my parents' fears were assuaged.

The Cook also went back for a few much-needed home comforts the following weekend and, fed up with overpaying for supermarket herbs we would inevitably throw away after they died on our window sill, returned with a mini herb garden they'd smuggled onto the train. We are now the proud owners of rosemary, basil, thyme and parsley plants, and 'Herb Tending' has been duly added to the weekly list of chores. We got into some difficulty at first deciding which should become indoor residents and which outdoor, and quickly discovered the advice online is far from clear. Not wanting to put all our basils on one windowsill so to speak, we decided a little scientific investigation was necessary, and split the plants up with the aim of testing how they fared in different conditions. Five humanities students who haven't so much as lit a bunsen burner since GCSE double science struggled to recall the difference between a control and an independent variable, but after trial and error and some help from a biologist college spouse we managed to get at least one plant of each type in the right place. If anyone's wondering, basil does need direct sunlight, but thyme

likes a shady indoor spot. Who said this column wasn't educational?

Last week was a big week for The Thespian and The Classicist, who spent most of this term in rehearsals for their big show before being out every evening of fourth week making sure it ran smoothly. It has curiously become something of a whole household project: I was officially involved on the show on the marketing side, but even The Poet and The Cook managed to wheedle a mention in the programme. Admittedly, if you count all the rehearsals and production meetings that they overheard taking place in our kitchen, they have probably put more hours into the show than some of the crew, but their most concrete (and unexpected) contribution was made last week. I came home late one evening to find The Classicist had left a bottle of whiskey in the kitchen - seeing a full bottle of alcohol was immediately a suspicious sign, and upon closer inspection I saw the following note: 'DRINK ME. Need it for a prop but I don't like whiskey.' It soon transpired that none of us actually liked neat whiskey very much, so I suggested we make whiskey sours—which happens to be one of my favourite cocktails—as a nice housemate activity one evening. Imagine my out-

rage when I arrived home, admittedly again quite late, the following evening to an empty whiskey bottle, a pile of lemon rinds and a very sticky cocktail shaker. I'm ashamed to say my shriek of indignation actually roused The Poet from their bed and sent them running to the kitchen for fear of an intruder. Once I'd been calmed down enough to listen to reason, it transpired The Poet had taken up my suggestion and made whiskey sours all round, making short work of the bottle in my absence. I suppose it serves me right for spending too many evenings out of the house. At least I can now watch the show safe in the knowledge that their valiant efforts have made it possible for an actor to appear to get very drunk off nothing stronger than peach ice tea, and the non-thespians can say they've made their Oxford theatre debut.

After the madness of the first half of term it's safe to say I'll be retreating into the house to hibernate for a while, although since we have a housemate pact not to turn the heating on until at least Hilary I might get forced out again by the cold. But until that time, I plan to stay firmly put, and hopefully I'll have a more cohesive story for you all next time.

Read the full article at [cherwell.org](http://cherwell.org).

This is my meal, I call it 'liberation': the cultural impact of 'girl' trends

Nina Savedra

If your TikTok algorithm presents you with questions like "how are you spending your rat girl summer?" and "what do you have for girl dinner?," you'll be familiar with the girl-ification of social media trends. They range from "girl workouts" to "girl math," from "lazy girl jobs" to "hot girl walks." There is plenty to be said about the benefits and the dangers of these trends and their impact on modern feminism. In promoting them, are we entertaining age-old stereotypes, or embracing new feminine freedom? Do these trends set the movement back, or achieve more than decades of activism? By delving into the attraction of these questions, while also unravelling the complex issues of autonomy and independence, we can begin to tackle everything that accompanies the process of maturing in an uncertain and turbulent cultural era.

These terms are silly; a hot girl walk is just a walk, and a girl dinner is just a bunch of snacks. But what's wrong with being silly? I like to think of "girl dinner" as the Gen-Z baby of the millennial Girl Boss, the one who would come back from

her Boss B\*tch 9-5 job, workout at her Strong Girl gym, and chef up the perfect Fit Girl meal. The "Girl Boss" trope thrived on perfection. "Girl dinner" sets itself apart by rejecting the social imperative that women must be serious, professional, and proficient in order to be taken seriously. By trend-ifying and normalising the picky-bits meal, women reject the need to be perfect, instead serving themselves in a way they desire.

For many, the "girl math" trend comes across as a little more problematic. On the surface, it perpetuates the stereotype of women being mathematically inferior and irrational with shopping habits and frivolous purchases. However, beneath the surface, the trend demonstrates the autonomy and level of

control that women now have with finances. It not only gives women confidence in spending the money that they themselves earn (and now have the right to manage independently), but also tackles the misogynistic idea that the things women find value in are superfluous or unnecessary. Let's be honest, the £500 Dyson Airwrap, split into cost per use, probably is a better financial move than your dad splashing out on a £500 tool set, especially when we factor in the social expectation for women to adhere to strict beauty standards.

To me, these two examples of the trend seem pretty harmless. Unlike other trends, like the "clean girl" aesthetic which cosmetic brands are currently capitalising on, girl dinner isn't selling us anything, or

forcing us to conform to any impossible standard - rather the opposite. This trend boils down to girls and women doing as they wish for their meals and peeling away from the shame associated with such private habits. That's what makes this trend perfectly suited to TikTok, where people react far better to confessional, authentic, and relatable moments than the perfectly curated posts found on Instagram.

Misunderstandings of the trend have cost it popularity, with certain women posting tiny plates of fruit, or a single pickle as "girl dinner," reminding us all of 2013 Tumblr a little more than we'd like. This dark fragment of the trend is disappointing, as it seems to undo rather than add to the disengagement from women's diet culture achieved by the initial posts. Other spin-offs of these trends have begun circulating, like "boy math," and "dad math," in which women humorously expose the all-too-common toxic male tendencies, while bonding over shared experiences.

When done right, with enough calories on the plate, girl dinner is more than a trend. It's a liberating way to shed off labour and unashamedly put yourself first.



HOROSCOPES



The town is ill and so it is time to be a responsible adult and buy a hazmat and flamethrower.



Facebook messenger will deliver you bad news whilst Whatsapp will deliver you good news. Telegram is to be deleted.



If your s/o is the bee's knees just pop the question and be cool and countercultural. Lock it down or Beyoncé will dance about you.



You are deep as heck. Review whether you think your friends are serious people and tell them your findings with candour.



Ring an old friend who lived your lore too. With new ones you just end up talking about your old business anyway.



Print out the many faces of Mammon (Nick Ferrari, Matt Lucas, Priti) and think negative thoughts towards them. It will be felt.





“Delight” approaches accurate description of your suave, brilliant character but still falls way short of the mark.



Tried lifting up manhole covers and climbing down into the sewers? Well, go on then! Wahoo! Bye!



Post twice posing with wads of monopoly money: wad telephone, wad fan, wad war horse, etc.



Open notes and delete “stories to tell at the pub”; Friday night is going to write its replacement.



Would you like 0, 2 or 10 children? The number you want is half of the number you will end up with.



Text in all caps all week and see who texts you more. These people are very worthwhile.

# Hooked!

Phoebe Davies

I never thought to pick up crochet. Other than a few lessons from my grandmother as a child, the thought didn't cross my mind. It seemed too complicated, time-consuming, and, indeed, a little dull. So it wasn't until the dark depths of the first lockdown that I picked up a crochet hook. I was, like most of the country, feeling quite bored, and, having watched almost everything Netflix had to offer, I finally turned to crochet. Armed with only YouTube videos and a single hook, I found myself trying to navigate the world of complex patterns, stitches, and what appeared to be a million different types of wool. Starting with a humble hat, I quickly discovered crochet's addictive quality. My first few pieces didn't always go to plan, but pretty soon I found myself completely hooked.

There is no feeling quite like the sense of achievement you get from finishing a crochet project. One of the main reasons I love it is the dedication it requires. Most

projects take hours upon hours of work and planning, and, yes, this is a big commitment, but the effort that it requires means that the final product feels all the more satisfying. A jumper that took me almost a month to make may not look as polished as the latest from Zara, but do I love it infinitely more? Of course. I find that the most gratifying pieces are those made for other people. The time and dedication that goes into crocheting makes for the most special of gifts, whether that be a new scarf, a jumper, or even an adorable costume for a furry friend (my poor cat has found himself parading endless little hats and costumes

over the years). My favourite gift idea is to crochet a little bouquet of flowers. These last forever and take no time at all, making them the perfect last-minute-but thoughtful-gift. It isn't as if the time spent on these projects takes you away from other commitments; quite the contrary, you can crochet on the train, watching TV (or recorded lectures) and even with friends. In fact, my idea of a perfect night-in consists of

wine, a little gossip, and crocheting on the sofa. Oxford even has its very own Textile Society, where you can crochet with friends and de-stress from the week's

work.

Particularly at uni, where my mind is so often full of essay stress, the creativity involved in crochet has really helped me take care of my mental health. Sitting down to crochet with a cup of tea and a podcast gives me the creative output I need to relax. The physical movements of my hands while crocheting are, in themselves, therapeutic. They are methodical and deliberate, allowing me to channel all my anxious energy into something productive and positive. Of course, knitting is another similar option; however, especially as a beginner, I found crochet to afford far more freedom for creative expression. Unlike knitting, it is incredibly simple to unravel your work if you make a mistake, allowing you to crochet freehand without a pattern. You can literally be as creative as you like, designing projects as you go: from funky tote bags adorned with cats to a blanket made up of a hundred different granny squares. With crochet, you can really do anything.

## DOUBLE TAKE:

*I'm feeling really burnt out! What should I do?*

We ask our resident agony aunts for their advice on your problems.

### Rest up, hibernate.

Okay. Pause, and take a deep breath. What fun activities this week? Go to them!

Week five is that awkward point where you still have a lot of work to do before you get to go home, but you're really, really ready to take a break. So first of all: don't worry. It happens to everyone. If neither of the above is working out then just try to be gentle with yourself. We're sure you're doing really well, and remind yourself of this when you're feeling tired and burnt out. This is not a normal workload. You're doing amazing just handing stuff in!

Second, think about how you might take some time out this week and take a step back. Can you reduce any of your other commitments before the end of term? Think about where you can carve some time out in your week for yourself, to have some downtime and recharge. Is your col-

lege doing any fun welfare But also, it's important to remember that everyone feels a bit burnt out at points in term. The work is hard and there is A LOT of it! You're not any worse of a student because you're struggling to balance it. There's a lot of people out there who are here to support you through this, and they're just waiting for you to reach out.



### Thug it out and ride the spiral downward.

Welcome to the world of Oxford burnout! It's only 5th week, and you're already feeling like this?

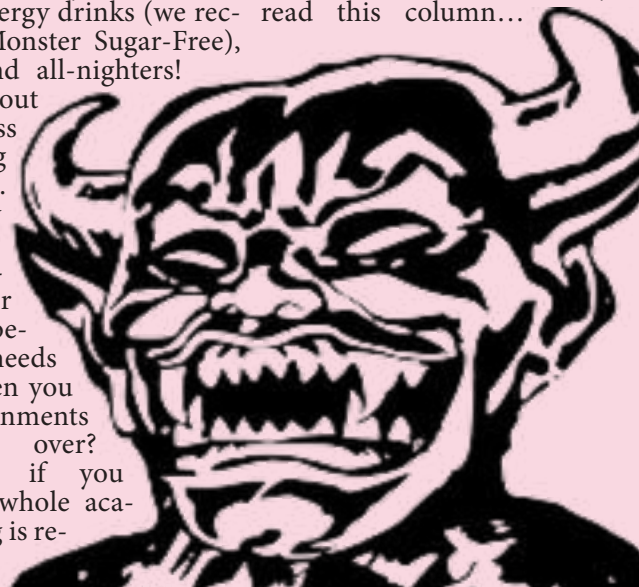
Well, why not throw in the towel and call it quits? Who needs that degree anyway? There are plenty of fun and carefree jobs out there that don't require you to spend three years of your life slaving away at Oxford, right?

But if you insist on soldiering on, you can always turn to the world of energy drinks (we recommend Monster Sugar-Free), caffeine, and all-nighters!

Forget about that useless little thing called sleep. It's highly overrated. Also, neglect your social life, because who needs friends when you have assignments to stress over?

However, if you think this whole academic thing is re-

ally not that deep: take a break! If you're feeling this way, it's a sign you need to recharge. Prioritise the fun stuff: Park End, parties, and procrastination. Remember, Oxford is not a sprint, it's a marathon of misery. You've got to learn to pace yourself. And if all else fails, just remember, Jeremy Clarkson got a C and 2 Us in his A Levels and is probably relaxing on a beach somewhere in the Caribbean as you read this column...





# Vegan sage gnocchi

**Bruno Armitage** debates if vegan sage gnocchi might just be better than the original, and gives his own recipe for this Italian classic

Outside the church at the end of my street I recently spotted a small, carefully cultivated herb garden. Upon further inspection of this aromatic Cowley beacon, I found in and amongst the indestructible rosemary and rather sad looking mint, the tell-tale light green leaves of sage. I must confess, I couldn't resist the temptation to return the next day and nab a few of them. Forgive me father, for I have sinned.

Call it divine inspiration, but as I picked out the best leaves my holy Cowley sage shrub had to offer, all the while taking furtive looks over my shoulder to check I was in the clear, I knew exactly what I wanted to make. Problem was, as a practising vegan, I realised I couldn't savour this woody herb in what must be its purest, most delicious form, that is, fried with gnocchi in brown butter with lemon and enjoyed as is. I need not have been so dismayed, because as I've found out, not only is a vegan spin-off of this classic entirely possible, but (whisper it quietly) it's better than the original. Here's how to make it.

The actual cooking of this dish is

pleasingly simple. Cook the gnocchi in well salted water until they float, then fish them out with a slotted spoon and fry them in a non-stick pan in plenty of good extra virgin olive oil – a competent and delicious stand in here for butter, that won't burn if you get it too hot, and doesn't involve cows. Don't be shy with the oil, it is the base of the sauce. The idea here is to brown and crisp the gnocchi a little bit. Give them a head start before adding the sage, with an optional whole bashed clove of garlic, and cook until your kitchen smells amazing and the sage is slightly crispy.

Keep hold of some of the starchy gnocchi cooking water, as this can be added to the pan, then reduced and agitated to form a glossy emulsified sauce that coats the gnocchi and carries the taste of the sage brilliantly. The coming together of the sauce can also be helped along by a tablespoon or two of nutritional yeast, which acts as thickener of sorts, and lends what the packaging describes as a cheesy and nutty flavour. I couldn't agree more. Once reduced and an emulsion formed, add the juice of around half a lemon, season to taste, and give it another toss. The lemon at this stage offers some very welcome freshness in an otherwise aggressively savoury meal. Serve and top with freshly black pepper and a drizzle of fresh olive oil if you'd like, and enjoy a shockingly delicious, simple and satisfying meal.

This recipe works well with pre-



made gnocchi from the supermarket, but making gnocchi is easy and the texture is noticeably superior. Gnocchi from scratch also falls nicely into the surprisingly short list of hands-on meals that take around an hour, and are perfect to make with your friends. Having had a pumpkin spice donut from Crosstown earlier in the day, I was struck with autumnal fervour, so my gnocchi are made with sweet potato that placated my desire for something orange on my plate.

For around 4 portions, boil roughly 500g of peeled and chopped sweet potato in salted water until very soft. Drain the potatoes, and mash well in the pot they were cooked in, before laying them out on a chopping board or surface and mashing further with a fork until smooth. It's a good idea to leave the potato spread out on the board to cool at this stage, as some of the moisture will evaporate, mean-

ing your gnocchi will need less flour. Once cooler, begin working in flour to the potato, bit by bit, until a soft kneadable dough is formed – it will probably need more flour than you think. Before rolling it into shape, leave it to sit for at least 15 minutes, which will hydrate the flour and make the dough far easier to work with. After the dough has rested, split into smaller lumps, dust a surface with flour, and roll into sausages as wide as you'd like your gnocchi to be. Cut lengthwise with a sharp knife into pillow shapes and place on a separate plate so the gnocchi doesn't stick to each other.

While this process is a little time consuming, the end result is worth the effort. Put on some music, crack open a beer, and thank yourself for escaping the tedium of pesto pastas and oven pizzas that might otherwise populate your kitchen.

## PESTO RECIPE



Georgie Allan provides a recipe for homemade pesto

- INGREDIENTS:**
- Garlic two cloves
  - Pinch of salt
  - Handful of basil
  - Heaped tablespoon of Parmesan
  - Olive oil
  - Two heaped teaspoons of pine nuts
- INSTRUCTIONS:**
1. Grind together the garlic and salt to a pesto-like consistency. The salt helps to break down the garlic to a paste.
  2. Toast the pine nuts in a pan until they are fragrant and have some colour to them
  3. Add to the pestle and mortar along with the basil (the fresher the better)
  4. Add in parmesan to taste and olive oil to get the desired consistency

Although this recipe uses pine nuts you could use walnuts or add sun-dried tomatoes if desired

# I bought pesto, pissed

**Georgie Allan** reflects on poor retail choices, student cooking, and whether expensive ingredients are worth splashing the cash

It may be a food editor, but I am far from an accomplished cook. My staples are a Tesco meal deal, canned tomato soup, and crackers with some variation of spread. What I was thinking when I decided to purchase ridiculously overpriced truffle pesto in Italy is ... not as much of a mystery as I'd like to pretend. I was in the middle of a day of wine tasting (without a spittoon), and I was lured in with free samples of everything from biscuits to chocolates to eventually, the pesto. It stayed in my suitcase for two weeks as I travelled, before I brought it to college where it sat in my cupboard for a month as I decided how best to use it.

Fortunately, I live with Jack, a second-year Univ medic who has spent the past few years' worth of holidays working as a chef. When not producing an essay, he's usu-

ally cooking something exotic I haven't heard of. Unlike me, he actually enjoys being in the kitchen and was more than happy to take responsibility for my tiny €16 jar of pesto. His idea was to make his own pesto and compare the two for quality and price, which I can only believe will prove embarrassing for me



and my (drunken) retail choices. His immediate recommendations included buying the ingredients to match the quality of the

pesto, meaning not the cheapest I could find, but focussing on more than the price per unit. I decided the best way to go about this was to ask him to do the shopping, with a promise of reimbursement, and after a quick trip to Tesco, he was cooking - or rather grinding - to the tune of Eminem's Without Me.

Jack had several ideas for dishes that would incorporate pesto, from pizza to steak sandwiches, but settled on the student classic, pesto pasta. The beginning of this process was to grind together garlic and salt to a desired consistency in a pestle and mortar (or a blender for those without the muscle/energy), before toasting pine nuts on a low heat to draw out their flavour. Next, all these ingredients, and the basil, were added to the pestle and mortar, and ground to a "pesto-like paste" (I did ask, but no further clarification was forthcoming). Then Parmesan was grated in and combined using the pestle and mortar, until a lighter colour appeared, and olive oil was added to form a

desirable consistency.

Upon its completion, I was given a taste. The freshness and quality of homemade was much better than shop bought, for the small price of £2 (ish). All that was left was to compare it to the €16 (£13.96) pesto I'd brought back from Italy. My pesto tasted strongly of its key ingredient, truffle, though it had a hard time sticking to the pasta and was largely lost, and any hint of basil or nut was disguised in a relatively thin sauce. Its umami flavour is admittedly difficult to balance (or so I'm told) and frankly was more interesting to eat, than comforting or pleasant. Jack's pesto on the other hand was much creamier - indicative of a greater Parmesan content - and made for a rich dish that I'd happily eat any day of the week. It was thicker and coated the pasta well, though it was noticeably plain in comparison to the depths of the truffle.

On the whole, given the sheer chasm of a price difference, Jack's pesto is a clear winner. Cheap, easy to make, and still delicious to eat, I can only wonder at what I was thinking, spending so much on so little. My truffle pesto did have one redeeming quality: it was unique to anything else in our flat. As an occasional treat, to enhance

a classic dish and shake up the usual routine, it was well suited. But if I were given the choice between the two day-to-day, regardless of price, I would choose the comforting, creamy option every time.

“...I can only wonder at what I was thinking, spending so much on so little”

If the quantities given in the recipe seem vague, it is because Jack produced this pesto measuring each element from memory, with an ease and familiarity derived from years of love for his craft. I could only watch with admiration, and gratitude that I have the opportunity to benefit from his skill. For anyone with a similar love for food, I would strongly recommend exploring ingredients and techniques in the kitchen, or alternatively as I have done, befriending a chef.



# The Darker Side of Tennis Player's Earnings

**Krishna Gowda**

From the outside tennis appears to possess a lustre of high standards with regards to players' earnings. In the 1970s Billie Jean King, one of the most successful players of all time, advocated tirelessly for equal pay for men and women and won the illustrious Battle of the Sexes match against Bobby Riggs, lauded as a triumph for women's tennis and a boost to her campaign. This triggered the US Open to become the first grand slam to champion equal pay for men and women and eventually in 2007, Wimbledon finally followed suit. At the grand slam level, a first-round loss earns a player roughly £55,000, a sizeable chunk guaranteed for players that automatically qualify for the main draw, and which only increases as the draw progresses.

As well as lucrative earnings at the pro tournaments, sponsorship earnings contribute hugely to players' yearly earnings, often eclipsing their match winnings and setting them up comfortably for years to follow. Sponsorship for elite players has meant that eight of the top ten highest-earning female athletes in 2022 were tennis stars, according to Forbes, and their wealth mostly derived from sponsorship deals. Similarly, Federer earned \$85.7 million in 2022, a season where he was often plagued with injury and which marked his retirement – with just \$700,000 out of that sum coming from prize money. Whilst not every top player possesses Federer's marketability that has generated eye-watering sums, tennis' elite are similarly assisted in this way, with the majority of the top hundred supported by endorsement deals that proffer generous monetary succour.

However, this vision of a well-supported system in which tennis professionals can only prosper is a façade, failing to reflect the current

lifestyles and challenges of the majority of tennis players endeavouring to break into the top hundred, often regarded as a significant milestone towards 'making it'. Compared to other sports, tennis has a much steeper drop in pay down the rankings. Below the top one hundred mark (and even towards the lower end inside of it), players are resigned to entering lower-level tournaments due to not being ranked highly enough. These draws offer significantly less prize money and ranking points, and the players are not likely ranked high enough to attract a sponsorship that would offset some of their costs. When a player has factored in basic expenses such as travelling, accommodation, food and entry fees, an early round exit can often render them at a loss, especially with additional but vital expenses such as a coach or team to assist them. These

**“...a disconnected system has failed the players”**

sorts of expenses aren't incurred by team-based sports, such as football or basketball, where teams will cover the costs for their players, and these players at a professional level will often be on much higher wages. Another issue in the same vein is the risk of injury; where most injured footballers are privileged enough to have free treatment (another expense paid by the club) and will still be paid, tennis players who suffer an injury will need to pay for medical expertise at a time when they aren't going to be gaining match earnings since winnings are performance-based. All of this is evidenced by statistics that suggest that 80% of the top thousand ranked players don't earn enough money

annually to cover their expenses, a tough pill to swallow for the players which often forces early retirement to preclude further financial difficulties.

One of the main reasons that these difficulties have occurred is through a disjointed structural body that oversees professional tennis. The men's tour (ATP) and women's tour (WTA) are separate bodies and exist alongside the four grand slams, which operate independently, as well as the International Tennis Federation (ITF), which presides over global events like the Olympics and Davis Cup. The inexistence of a single organisation means that a lack of unity and a disconnected system has failed the players, offering no single solution to addressing these salient financial issues. The lack of structure has not only failed current professionals but also ex-junior players; the transition from junior tennis to the professional circuit is extremely challenging and unpredictable for a variety of reasons. It is not uncommon for the top junior players to fail to live up to expectations and be stuck outside the top hundred for many years, a situation both unfamiliar for those used to success and daunting when they consider how they can afford rising costs. Noah Rubin, a former junior Wimbledon champion, whom McEnroe referred to as 'the most talented player' his academy had come across, retired aged twenty-six, the prime years of a tennis career, owing to a struggling career where he peaked at 125 in the world, despite being ranked as the sixth best junior globally. In 2022, he announced his retirement and switch to pickleball, a burgeoning racket sport that is gaining traction with a wider audience, enabling Rubin to utilise his tennis skills in a more cost-effective manner. Players are often driven to more strenuous measures to fight these costs, with players such as Dus-



tin Brown, a former top hundred player, stating that he lived out of his Volkswagen campervan to tournaments and would string opponents' rackets for money, sometimes making more money from this enterprise than he would at the tournament. Other players will share rooms with players they are facing the next day to reduce costs and tennis channels on YouTube documenting players' current careers are increasingly being established as another source of income. At the darker end of this scale, players are resorting to match-fixing in order to gain money from bets to maintain their career, an illicit activity that threatens the integrity of the sport and has led to life bans from the tennis authorities.

This begs the simple question: what can be done to address this? Recently, Djokovic and Pospisil, both professionals themselves, have established the Professional Tennis Players Association (PTPA) – an organisation for both men and women in the top 500. It acts as the closest thing to a players' union, protecting the interests of the competitors, in a sport where tournaments share 18% of the revenue with players, compared to other sports where the figure lies much closer to 50%. The body has garnered seminal support from both current and former players and is the first step towards taking serious action to ad-

dress these issues. Tournaments and tennis federations must offer greater financial aid, and not let players be solely drowned with expenses, but enable them to compete and progress their career. Furthermore, protectionist measures need to be instilled to provide a safety net for players that are injured, to avoid further financial losses. The bottom line is that unique talents risk slipping through the net due to a string of misfortunes – bad draws, injuries, poor runs of form – and are at greater risk of hanging up their racket. The pay disparity in tennis must be addressed: the dichotomy of the sport is exemplified best by the fact that the average annual earnings (without costs) for a player ranked onwards from 251 is £29000, just over half of the earnings of a player that loses in the first round of Wimbledon alone. The sport risks driving away its own players; promising juniors may be unwilling to take the gamble of a pro career and this will tarnish the sport till adequate solutions are finally reached. Tennis is a cut-throat sport, but the failure to present the necessary changes means that livelihoods are at stake for players who have trained their whole lives, lest purposeful action is taken to solve these pressing challenges.

*Image Credit: J.Crechet3/ CC BY SA 4.0 via Wikimedia Commons*

# World Cups - On-Field Festivals, Off-Field Frustrations

**Henry Kay**

World Cups are the highlight of many a sporting fan's calendar, sporting festivals that are exceptional global adverts for their respective games. In recent times we have been blessed with two fantastic tournaments in the sporting world, the ICC Cricket World Cup in India, and the Rugby World Cup in France, which are rumoured to have viewing figures of 2.6 Billion and 850 Million people respectively. Just last weekend, I found myself in an Irish Bar in the centre of Madrid, full of South African, English, Irish and Spanish fans enjoying a tightly fought semi-final broadcast from the Stade de France. World Cups are truly global events.

On the field these tournaments are packed full of exceptional performances, thrilling encounters and shocking upsets; the types of moments that become etched into the

folklores of the two games. In India, we have already seen Afghanistan's triumph over the holders England, Glen Maxwell's 40-Ball Hundred, the Netherlands upsetting South Africa again and the imperious dominance of Virat Kohli in India's batting lineup. In France, the quarter-finals produced some of the most thrilling contests imaginable, as Argentina dispatched Wales, the All Blacks toppled top-ranked Ireland, and the Springboks sent the hosts out of the tournament by a single point. Portugal achieved their first RWC victory over Fiji in the group stage, and the final proved to be a tense affair crowning South Africans as the most decorated nation in RWC history. However, whilst fans have been treated to these exceptional moments and matches

that inspire and build the games, off the field these tournaments have had a tendency to leave something to be desired.

The rugby has largely been a storming success. Aside from issues with ticketed entry to games at the opening weekend in Paris and Marseille, which caused complaints from fans unable to reach their seats, the organisers have been quick to respond to any early issues. The stadiums have been healthily packed out for all the games by neutrals and partisan fans alike, creating a mood around the tournament of a great adoration and celebration of the game, which is exactly what a world cup should be. It is a game's biggest marketing tool, a festival of that specific sport, and that has been the sentiment emerging from France this autumn. World Rugby have provided a fantastic fan experience,

and will be confident of the growth the game will experience in the aftermath of the tournament, especially in countries such as Portugal.

The criticism levied has been down to the clampdown on sharing highlights and clips off the official channels, a result of strict licensing and broadcasting agreements. Referee Wayne Barnes had a post taken down on X showing a humorous moment from a match he officiated, and viewers in France can't access highlights on YouTube. How can the game reach new and keen to learn fans when its viewership is being actively restricted? Planet Rugby lamented that "This video is not available in your location" and "This media has been disabled in response to a report by the copyright owner" are two quotes that will live in the memory of fans who tuned in for this World Cup."


In India, off-field the tournament has attracted a substantial amount of criticism around ground quality, empty stadiums, ticketing issues and more. Despite being an ICC tournament, the world cup is managed day-to-day by the host nation, and the BCCI (Board of Control for Cricket in India), the most powerful national governing body in world cricket. The opening game of this tournament was between the finalists of 2019's exceptional tournament, England and New Zealand, in the Modi stadium in Ahmedabad, and it immediately gave us a sign of what has become a major talking point amongst fans. Where are the crowds?

*Read the rest online at Cherwell.org*





Kevino Feliciano and Timmy



Ooooooh, what's the story with that stack of paper you've got Kevin? May I take a look?

**You want to teach SPANISH?!**


Interested in becoming amazingly fluent in the Spanish language? Want to learn from a talkative and engaging native? Well, look no further. **Kevino Feliciano** is your man/bird! Born and raised in Madrid, Kevino lives and breathes all things Spanish and he's willing to put his balls on the line for your language progression. **Mañana, Ghah!** **NO** refund.

By the way, what's up with the love mustache and -is?

But Kevin you can't even speak a lick of Spanish... what's more, you don't really speak English! Although with that price, some cheap-skate is bound to fall for it....

Note: I had to resort to an older comic here due to the fact that I burned all my pens (rage).

by Sean Hartnett

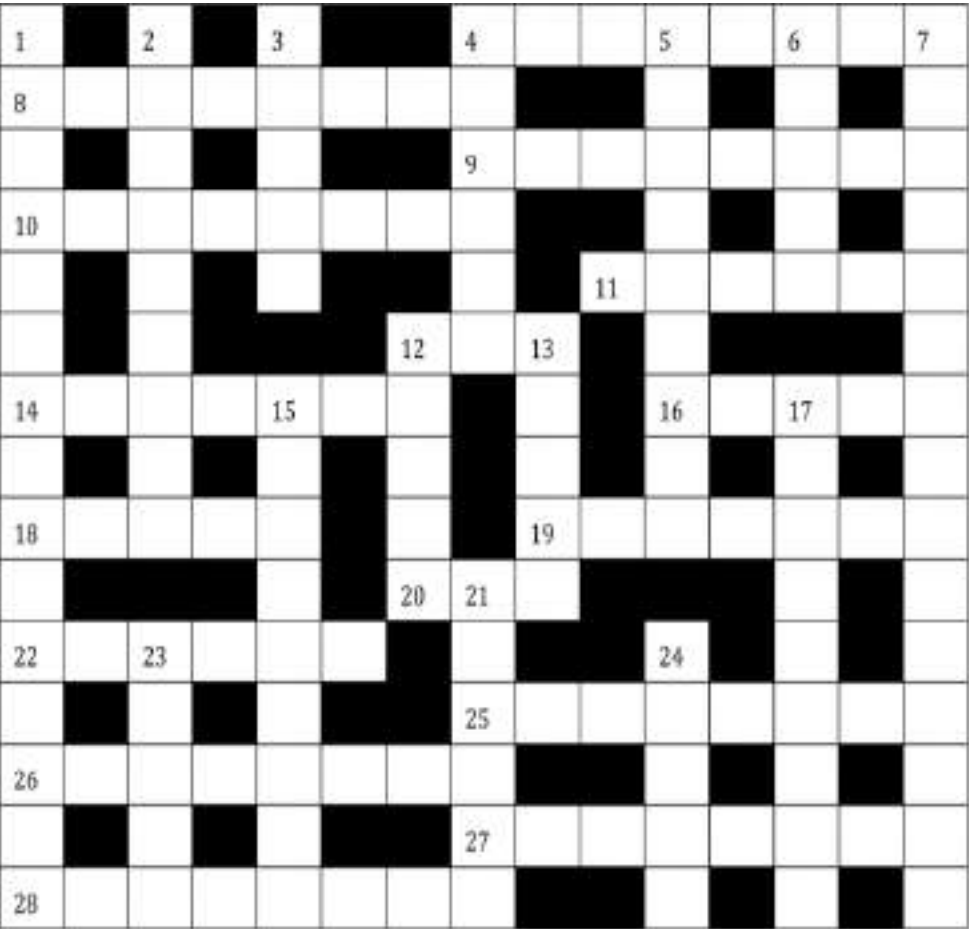


A week later...

Mi... mi nombre... es... John...?

+ nod's encouraging

Cryptic Crossword by Devini de Mel



- ACROSS
- 4. Left in command of action scene permits (8)
  - 8. Reenter in case of escalation (8)
  - 9. Qualified to catch Dora being cute (8)
  - 10. Owing to awfully thin deer (2,3,3)
  - 11. Sexy English bread club (6)
  - 12. Marc almost went out on a limb (3)
  - 14. Resolve how Female became male (4,3)
  - 16. Faithful Church involved with tax corruption (5)
  - 18. Suppose that gluteus is uneven (5)
  - 19. Arcane remedy belonging to old boy (7)
  - 20. The sound of hesitation reveals the slip up (3)
  - 22. Stealthy jacket and shirt (6)
  - 25. Maria's family of five quietly takes on counterpart (3,5)
  - 26. East bloc constructed barricade (8)
  - 27. Mirrors for muses (8)
  - 28. Coordinate the French bird union's extreme damage (8)

- DOWN
- 1. Graduating from young ladies' institution (9,6)
  - 2. Better than a prune on the roof (1,3,5)
  - 3. Less sheep in France (5)
  - 4. Ruler has ruler's heart and disheartened queen (6)
  - 5. Internal terror lessened when all was perfect (9)
  - 6. Told to dice that unit (5)
  - 7. He stitches paper version of specialist (6,9)
  - 12. Make up for one wrong note (5)
  - 13. The way to be heard in the lord's house (5)
  - 15. Vigilant voters ban pervert (9)
  - 17. One rabbit hop portends many (9)
  - 21. Admire the reverend and prior (6)
  - 23. Go and see the sextet on chairs (5)
  - 24. Premiers sew the year's latest emerging fashion (5)

Samurai puzzle by Lewis Callister

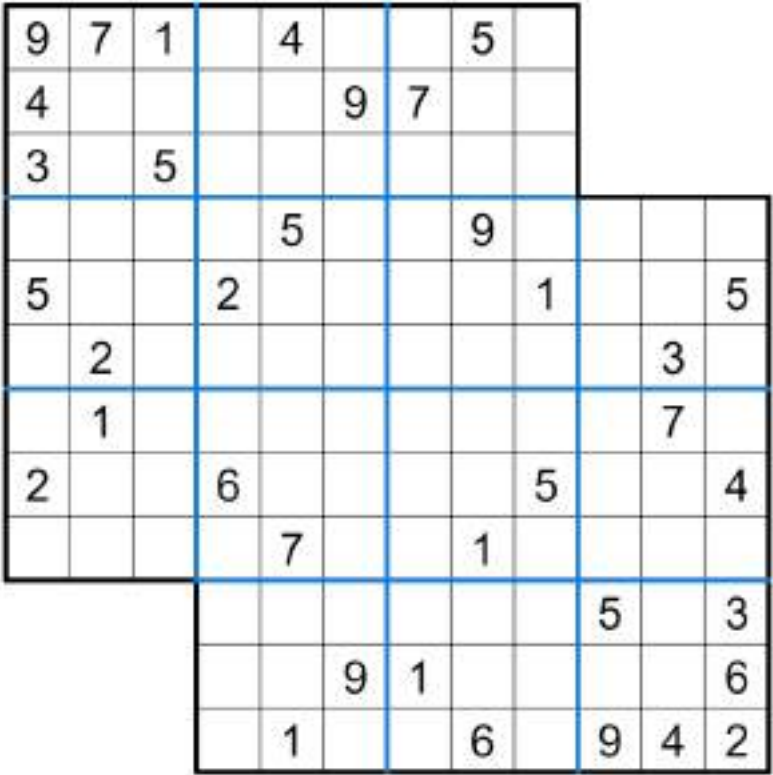
How to Samurai:

It's Sudoku with a twist.

Also known as *Gattai* (Japanese for 'combine'), Samurai mixes up two individual sudokus.

Numbers 1-9 may not repeat in any 9 number-long column or row.

Can you solve this exciting blend of two concurrent 3x3 sudoku puzzles?



Last week's answers

3RD WEEK | MT 23

- ACROSS: 1) Roman; 3) Spring; 7) liquorice; 8) eyes; 9) halt; 10) comma; 11) coda; 12) type; 15) catalog; 16) saw; 17) ready; 18) etc; 19) jet-lagged; 20) solace; 21) joule
- DOWN: 1) repercussions; 2) axis; 3) scrambled egg; 4) rich; 5) get the picture; 6) out of the blue; 7) lead; 12) TGV; 13) easy; 14) ace; 22) Hera; 23) veto

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