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...

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 IFC meeting in May 2023.

The University has stated that the decision to move exams online (in-person) has come “following a successful launch involving more than 6,000 exam sittings in 2022/23, the University has extended the provision, 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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Four Oxford graduates shortlisted for Waterstones Book of the Year Award

Jennifer Yang reports.

Our 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, she 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 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 through generations. Dr Stuart Lee of the Oxford University Faculty of English said four aims 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.
Multiple subjects to introduce typed exams

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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 hand-written 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 next 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 environmentally 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 “non-mature 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 Service (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, rather than 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 Oxford 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 applicants 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 Astrofoundation 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 they are still under-represented in the University. 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 the 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. While the Blues are 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 may 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 by 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

“A 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 Blues playing each other; or (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, let’s dive a little 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 fresher… 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 sport-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 is 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 Stanley’s’ which welcomes back all OURFC alumni back down in fifley. 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 they always end well despite the outcome.

A Blue social life

Despite having a jam-packed schedule, the Blues teams don’t shy away from a vibrant social culture aimed at including all team members and other university sports teams.

The Vincent’s Club (Vinni’s), is also regularly frequented. Pre-eminently a club for Oxford’s sports people, it 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 its founding 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 whole 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.

Furthermore, 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 future generations of skilled and like-minded individuals across all sports. It promotes the development of sportswomen at all levels of University sport, through 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 have to do is imagine being above the pre-game drinking bans are in place, and like-minded individuals across the University, helping to support. Current high-level sportswomen across the University, helping to inspire future generations of skilled and like-minded individuals across all sports. It promotes the development of sportswomen at all levels of University sport, through grants, scholarships and a vibrant social events calendar.

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However, the Secretary-General of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Dr Kao Kim Hourn, has 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.”

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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 a bitter row between the leader of the alliance’s largest party, refused to refer to Hamas’ recent attacks against civilians in Israel as “terrorism”. On Saturday, the French Communist Party (фр. Parti Communiste Français, PCF) has been misinterpreted. 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 fall, Mélénchon and the Socialist Party leader, Olivier Faure, accused one another of sowing discord. Following this, the Socialist candidate, Yannick Jadot, has called for his party, the Ecologistes (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 Mélénchon problem is now fairly widespread. "We cannot work with someone who decides events 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.” Mélénchon 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 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 Entête 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. Mélénchon 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 fewer than expected.

“Mélénchon…is no longer seen by his alliance partners as a unifying figure.”

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 is essentially inviting speakers who are 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 well-being of individuals over making it into news headlines. As such, 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 Shapiero, the Union term card never fails to invite a single speaker generating considerable tumult within the student population – sometimes even the general public. Controversial invitations, however, always seem to be lobbied down 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 consider 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 simultaneously providing a platform for speakers whose main appeal is singing 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 ergονομics and exposed to potential abuse. The argument that this is a necessary casualty in upholding free speech is unconvincing if we want to prioritise a transformative but safe education for all. One must also wonder whether free speech is always a priority when putting term cards together.

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 are not limited to the frankly sub-par nightclub 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 historic, I’d happily spend an evening sipping on some proper 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 them out, your initial impression of Oxford nightlife might be dominated by a group of clubs that appear quite similar. Atik stands out as the lar. Atik stands out as the largest club in the centre of Oxford, and around Oxford. Oxford has a history of rigorous debate, and it would be unreasonnable 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.

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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 idealised the good old days and lamented 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 punctuated 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 think tanks, 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 under unenoughourished, but that they eventually buckled under the COVID crisis. Brexit, which made us the “first country to impose economic sanctions on its own people,” was added to government debt. Then an estimated £30 billion was flushed away by Liz Truss’s mini budget.

O’Brien reveals that the Murdoch-owned media and the Daily Mail under Paul Dacre certainly deserve to be public knowledge. He demonstrates several links, some social, some political, that in the year before, 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 disgusting.

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

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 interested 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. It is worth recalling Bassem’s overt prediction that his resurgence as a popular culture critic would be the sign of progress and the acceptance of satire in the West, are not out to appease everyone: they are out to make 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 you on.

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 quiting the profession altogether, and that would have deprived many of his comradery. 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.

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.
“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.

Black 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)

Volunteer 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 refugees. We give them guidance and offer community so that people don’t feel alone. We help them 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 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: What is the name of your organisation?

Volunteer: 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?

Volunteer: 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?

Volunteer: I’m definitely feeling understood. I feel like when going to a ‘normal’ Pride event, it’s almost like, I feel I 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 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!'”

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

…”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

Image Credit: Deborah Ogunnoiki and Black Pride UK 2023.
Fully funded PhD Studentships for 2024 entry

Studentships cover full tuition fees plus an annual stipend
Lady Chatterley sort. It was rather loud, the noises coming from the room, of the student bedroom. We begin to hear the tute... Let's just say that the stuff making the material. You know that thing, Lover-style. It didn't help that my tutor was forging in real life. This tute notes...

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 hoaxes 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 professionals to pose as Pembroke affiliates and repeat claims of its existence, and the erection of several fake buildings on a backlot to create a sense of reality. The college's strong ties to E&M courses franchise. It is understood that the college's strong ties to E&M courses were forged in order to support its financial 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 arranged 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.

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The hoax was originally intended as a way to gain a quick & easy financial windfall, but it was soon realised that the scheme could be expanded into a full-blown academic fraud. The college was gradually expanded to include a range of courses, from business to law, all designed to attract students who were looking for a quick & easy path to a degree. The college became a source of income for the creators, who were able to sell courses to unsuspecting students.

As the college grew in popularity, the creators began to expand its reach. The college began to market itself as a way for students to gain a quick & easy degree, without the need for hard work or dedication. The college became a source of income for the creators, who were able to sell courses to unsuspecting students.

The college was eventually exposed by a group of concerned students, who began to raise questions about the college's existence. The creators of the college were forced to admit their involvement, and the college was eventually shut down. However, the damage had been done, and the college's reputation was tarnished for years to come.
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The games are players that have passed through its football nation and for the legendary League football isn’t available I’ll top Premier League or Champions long as it involves o jogo bonita (I’ll watch pretty much anything so where it has become a source of great into football. It has got the point have guessed that I am very much my article in the last print, they may
to fluff 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.

I began rowing just over a year ago. Joining my college boat club, I swore to myself that I would only ever row "socially" - weekend 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 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 flowers into their exams. Rushing from a tutorial or the library to a candlelit formal draped in your academic gown with those strange tassels, it is 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 wore some sort of Latin path 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’ befitting 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 goer, you can never quite stick to the whole experience at a more much attractive price by dressing your best, mixing a cheap cocktail, and standing in various queues all night until the end of the rowing season.

Oxford is fond of dress codes. I remember squinting at the college freshmen guide in first year, puzzling over ‘sub fusc’, wondering if people really wore colour-coded feathers into their exams. Rushing from a tutorial or the library to a candlelit formal draped in your academic gown with those strange tassels, it is 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 wore some sort of Latin path 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’ befitting the essays.

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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 District 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.

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
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 Beethoven dinner fax. 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 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 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 removal. Now these two Californians both have a historic first, as this is the only time in American History where the House removed its leader. As Americans watched their government implode, we were all left thinking, “Who will be next?”

The House ran without a leader for several weeks, with Patrick McHenry taking the wheel as Speaker pro tempore until congress members could decide how to sort out the mess they had made. Several prospective candidates later, McCarthy has since been replaced with Louisiana Congressman Mike Johnson, whose beliefs can best be summed up as representing the Christian Right. While former Speaker McCarthy has now been nationally disgraced and has often been criticised for holding some extreme views, he was a more familiar face to the American people than his successor, a relative unknown in the political world, who will certainly keep us on our toes as we wonder what lies ahead for the 118th congress.

To hear from former Speakers 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 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 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.

“The Affordable Care Act of the Obama administration was practically made possible thanks to Pelosi’s consistent push for healthcare reform”
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 underrepresented 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 civil 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 memorium, 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 facets 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 shell 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 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 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 the quantity 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. The woman owned a small shop outside of the graveyards 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 to mourn. One of the most notable landmarks is the ‘Sarajevo Roses’ installed following the Siege of Sarajevo, bears the scars of a turbulent past, one that is felt in modern-day Sarajevo by murals and, in many cases, the 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 the massacre in Srebrenica. It was cemented a month after his sentencing in The Hague and despite numerous attempts by the building’s owner 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 Milošavljevic, 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 the eventual declaration of protection for the monument.” 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 in the 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 Bosnian teachers and students who fell victim to war commonly have plaques on their former schools that, whilst holding 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 provide an avenue for Bosnia, whereas Sarajevo has art intertwined into a rugged cityscape, Belgrade interlaces glossy skyscrapers and histories 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. 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.
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 railing
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.

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 Septimius 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 ofNicholas 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 systematisation 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 for promoting 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 Catherinean 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.

Image Credits: (L) CC BY-SA 2.0 Carole Raddato, via. Flickr;(R) Public Domain, via. US National Archives
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 leaving the male populace 17th century Japan. Amidst the Oppenheimer media centrality over the summer and attention on Sex Education’s final 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 patrilinage 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 regent under her father’s name, Iemitsu, with a screen and male spokesperson to disguise her gender during public appearances. From this scenario, the male gender disappears and Ōoku 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 lemitu’s court, and the series’ exploration of gender and power dynamics in the Japan of history and today.

The series explores the relationship between lemitu and the soft-spoken Arikoto, who is selected for his delicate beauty born of sexual ambiguity. The gender-queerness of lemitu and Arikoto’s unexpected budding relationship in the reversed world of gender norms is embraced by the male, who, in one of the Ōoku’s intersections, 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 jousou (female presenting cross-dressing) of rouge, women’s kimono, and hair extensions embracing the top-knotted lemitu — that compels their official confessions of their love. Ōoku is rife with sexual violence and coercion, with the shogunate’s powerful figures and among the male concubines. The series explores the intersections of necessity and veers the series close to sensationalism. The violence committed upon the young men in the Ōoku, however, grimmly spotlights the inevitability of such realities upon women concubines in the shogunate and their roles in the court, reminding us of our perhaps unconscious yet still complacent acceptance of sexual violence, particularly against women, in reported history and historical media.

The depiction 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 officially recognizes two forms of non-consensual sexual intercourse in their 2017 revision to the Penal Code (formerly it only recognized these crimes in cases of violence, of which there 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 lemitu’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: 10.16.

On the international stage, Japan sent a male representative for the G7 Ministerial Meeting on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in 2023 (a consequence 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 appointing an all-male cabinet. The Women Act website cites the reasoning behind the deliberate all-male appointment to the need for ishiki-kaikan (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 lemitu’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 progression is being made towards gender equality as well as desigmatization 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 Kawacho” Episode of the Tales of Lie (17th C.), Public Domain via. Rawpixel
**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 as its architect world-famous Oxford student, Rufus Jones.

I was lucky enough to attend the launch event, one humbling student amongst 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 is 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, 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 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 inconsistent 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 university, 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 making archives accessible, making 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 different periods 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 of 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 troublous effort of designing, creating and implementing this service. Marvellous! I love it.

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**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

Profané 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.

**Culture | 17**
“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’ – is nothing but a bunch of quotations strung together – has itself become a well-worn anecdote. By those daring to stage the play today: acknowledging Hamlet’s canonical status has become cliché, 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 infect ‘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. 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 Cure, 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 simply: ‘his phone, Josh Sneddon claims to have apart. Meg Bruton delivery of Claudius’ most successful moments are description’s most successful moments are

It is also regrettable that Sneddon’s new media angle comes across as formulaic, especially in scenes in prose. His speech in real time, but this

What can a new production do now that just feels like a pale imitation. As for the acting, the standout performer is Joe Bangala as Old Hamlet’s Ghost and the First Player, who brings an intensity of presence and clarity of purpose to this. Occasionally, a stage manager comes onstage with a video camera, but the actors use it only as a means of pausing in places that lose the meaning of the play; that, for example, ‘I do not know why’ Yet I live to say “This things 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 consistently 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.

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

Shaun Sidhu

The young member of the Kardashian 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 a contribution to fashion since 2012, when she collaborated with her sister Kendall on a clothing line for American brand PacSun.

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 in- augural drop, Jenner collaborates with the child of Berlin-based Nan Li and Emilia Płóhí with a reputation for embracing the provocative. Though a relatively young brand, having been founded in 2013, Namili 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’, where, Li and Płóhí sought to reclaim the cliché of the gold digger stereotype in a subversive act of celebrating women who have gained their independence and status through the power of their intellect. The collection is simple, elegant and timeless. As the colours behind their names, they have 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 makes it suitable for women who have learned to embrace their femininity 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 slo- gans, outrageously-low waistlines, religious imagery, Birkin tops and PU leather, Namili has a clear desire to stand out.

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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.

**Wild Honey**
Technically not a supermarket, Wild Honey is a charming organic food store in Jericho. Great place to source your veggie, or for picking up a bottle of bev on your way to a houseparty.

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.

**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

A
h 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 earlier 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 means 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 stress — 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 cozy 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 excellency 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
Matt Taylor

W
e’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 fresher’s 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 something to be ashamed of, and that it is the sign of 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 goes on. It is overwhelming.

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 has 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 child’s home on the Isle of Man to a ‘supported lodgings’ (a place to source your veg)

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 guaranteed you are not the only one dealing with homesickness. Sometimes, talking through your feelings or sharing anecdotes from home can help reduce the overwhelming feelings. 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.

“The column

**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?
Email lifestylecherwell@gmail.com or message one of our editors.
The Not So Secret History: moments of clarity

Flora Symington

I'm 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 one-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 eggs on one window sill 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 outrage 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 iced 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.

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 girlification 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 femininity. In promoting them, are we entertaining age-old stereotypes, or embracing new feminist freedoms? 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 delve into the attraction of these ideas for women posting tiny plates of fruit, the all-too-common toxic male tendency to see women posting tiny plates of fruit, and women posting tiny plates of fruit. These terms are silly; a hot girl walk is just a walk, and a girl dinner is just a bunch of snacks. It's not that 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 thrives 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 trendifying 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 valuable 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, 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 a movement, but also what makes 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.
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 gifts, whether that be a new scarf, a jumper, or even an adorable costume for a furry friend.

I am feeling really burnt out! What should I do?

Phoebe Davies

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, take a deep breath. 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 ready to take a break. So first of all: don’t worry. It happens to everyone. 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 for yourself, to have some downtime and recharge. Is your college doing any fun welfare activities this week? Go to them! If you’re struggling to find downtime, chat to your tutors and see if they can help you out at all. Maybe they can suggest a paired-down reading list or let you hand in an essay plan instead of the full essay. 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! 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, do not neglect your social life, because who needs friends when you have assignments to stress over? However, if you think this whole academic thing is really 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, neatly cultivated herb garden. Upon further inspection of this aromatic Cowley beacon, I found in amongst the indistinguishable 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 splash this lovely 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 hazelnut clove of garlic, and cook until your kitchen smells amazing and the sage is slightly crispy.

Keep hold of some of the starry 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 sauce. Serve and top with salt and 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 long list of hand-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 300g of peeled and chopped sweet potato in salted water until very soft. Drain the potatos and, mash well in the pot they were cooked in, before laying them out on a chopping board to cool at this stage, as some of the moisture will evaporate, meaning 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.

I bought pesto, pissed

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

I 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 as a mystery as I’d like to pretend. I was in the middle of a day of wine tasting (without a spittone), 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 med student who has spent the past few years’ worth of holidays working as a chef. When not producing an essay, he’s usually 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.

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 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 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.

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.

Made in Montpellier 2012

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 can only wonder at what I was thinking, spending so much on so little"
The Darker Side of Tennis’ 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, adverised 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. When tennis players win 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 players 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 sum nearly double that netted by Djokovic, who had been one of the most injury-plagued and unheralded for very few 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 unfair for those used to success and daunting when they consider how they can afford rising costs. Noah Rubin, a former junior Wimbledon champion, whom McKenzie 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 when 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 pay these costs, with players such as Dustin 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 for which the integrity of the sport has led to life bans from the tennis authorities. This begs the simple question: what can be done to address this? 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 address 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 safer environment. Despite these being increased, 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 – 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 first round 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. 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.

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

Henry Kay

World Cups are truly global events. Enjoying a tightly fought semi- final proved to be a tense affair, the current world champions defeated 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 rug is 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, the French, the teams, the organisations have been quick to respond to any early issues. The stadiums have been healthily packed out for all the games by neutral fans, the financial returns alike, creating a mood around the tournament of a great adoration and more enthusiasm for the sport which is exactly what a world cup should be. It is a game’s biggest marketing tool, a festival of that specific organisation 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 coun- tries. The criticism levied has been down to the clampdown on sharing highlights and clips off the official channels as 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 view- ership is being actively restricted? Planet Rugby lamented that “This video is not available in your loca- tion” and “This media has been dis- abled 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) is the most powerful national governing body in world cricket. The opening game of this tournament was between the hosts and South Africa, at the Ellis Park 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
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

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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