

Music and Cosplay:
In conversation
with MAKO Girl
and cos-player,
A-Ni Ochoa
Profiles > Page 15



**Daft Punk's
"Random
Access
Memories":
A tenth
anniversary
retrospective**
Culture > Page 18



**The Coronation:
Should we care?**
Comment > Page 10



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INDEPENDENT SINCE 1920

Oxford's Diversity Deficit

Bintia Dennog investigates fixed-term contracts and staff diversity

Recent strike action by university staff across the UK has once again highlighted concerns over the wages and working conditions in academia. Whilst this makes academia less viable as a career in general, it makes it especially difficult for those who come from less privileged backgrounds. This has led to what The Economist has coined Oxford's 'Other diversity crisis': a lack of diversity within the staff.

In comparison to other national universities, Oxford trails behind in various measures of diversity, including the level of women in professorship roles or the percentage of BME (black and minority ethnic) academics. Yet, when looking at the number of fixed-term contracts, 66% of Oxford's academic staff are on such work agreements. The UK university average is 33%. The diversity problem may thus partly be rooted in the prevailing insecure contracts: job insecurity, low wages, and frequent (re)applications make it difficult for staff to persevere in academia, especially those who come from less privileged backgrounds.

What types of contracts exist?

As the biggest employer in Oxfordshire, the central university alone accounts for almost 15,000 jobs. However, the colleges, which act independently, employ even more. This not only means that the number of fixed-term contracts may in fact be higher (as the 66% only includes data from the university itself) but also that there are various different positions, which come with different contracts. Oftentimes the contracts offered by colleges take these forms:

No salaried jobs (often graduate students):

These often pay between £230 and £350 from taking a normal-sized tutorial group for eight weeks, one academic told Cherwell. They come with no guarantee of future work.

Non-stipendiary lectureships:

Non-stipendiary lectureships guarantee a certain amount of hours of teaching for the college. They come with an hourly wage and a small retainer, yet similarly, no guarantee of future work.

Stipendiary lectureships:

These are usually one-year contracts with a yearly salary that require a certain amount of tutorial teaching, organising, and often interviewing for a college. Many of these positions are not full-time and lack job security.

A Christ Church job posting for a two-year stipendiary lectureship in history, for example, offers a salary between £21,572 and £24,261, which falls below the UK's 2022 median salary of £33,000. It requires "nine hours per week of high-quality tutorial teaching" and applicants should "have a doctorate, or one that will be substantially complete before the start date in History", along with a research record that corresponds to their career stage. The appointment in turn entails "no expectation of permanent employment at Christ Church".

Career development fellowships (and similar)

These positions are typically offered on a three-year basis and have a salary; academics are expected to do both teaching and research. This role is intended to be a stepping stone to more secure jobs for early-career academics.

Continued on Page 5

**Oxford, a University of
Activists? Myths and realities**
Features > Page 8



Strike action cancels oral language exams

Cecilia Catmur reports.

Oxford University Modern Languages oral exams have been cancelled for final year students. Students were informed of this cancellation on the afternoon of 5th April 2023 following the notice from the UCU which confirmed that the 'Marking and assessment boycott' (MAB) would begin on Thursday 20 April 2023.

The University assures students that "the Faculty's decision has not been taken lightly and that the cancellation of the FHS Oral will not affect the overall outcome of your degree".

In two emails to students in early April, the University explained that the mark for the oral exam is "unlikely to make a difference to degree classification". The oral exam normally only counts for half of a paper when a candidate's marks are calculated by the 'normal route'.

The oral exam is also not accounted for when higher class degrees are awarded by the 'alternative route', where the final classification is based on the number of papers with a mark in a given class.

One final year student told Cherwell that she feels that "in general speaking should be worth more of the degree and valued more than half a paper".

The University has acknowledged that they "[c]onsider it important that your [final year] oral work during the course be acknowledged on your final degree transcript". Thus, whilst no Distinctions will be granted, final year candidates will be given a Pass or Fail for the oral component.

The certificate of a Pass will be given upon confirmation that the candidate has attended and actively participated in eight oral classes (for each language if studying multiple) this academic year. This is a criterion the University expects the majority "will have no difficulty in meeting" by the middle of Trinity.

Continued on Page 3

**"I just like having
the stuff."**

In conversation with
the Crockery Crook
Profiles > p14



Atik vs Bridge?

Our editors go
head to head in the
Debate Chamber
Comment > p13



Do you want to get involved with *Cherwell* this term?
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Another term calls for another volume of *Cherwell*. For those of you invested enough in the paper to read my leader as opposed to skipping straight to the Horoscopes, I hope this is an exciting prospect: it means new scoops, new articles, and new cryptic crosswords (I know that's all some of you are here for).

It is often said that Trinity term is the best term. I agree. The sun is shining, the punts are out, and Izzie can have her mojitos. However, there are also exams, which for some will feel like a motivating challenge, and for others an unsurmountable struggle. Because of this, I really hope that *Cherwell* can be a bit of respite. Our aim is to produce columns that distract you from a baffling problem sheet and to publish thought pieces that make you, well, think about something outside of your degree. With the talent of our editorial team bringing the articles to life, and with some of our creative team's fantastic artwork sprinkled in for good measure, I hope that the five papers under my editorship this term are, first and foremost, good fun.

Obviously, the paper couldn't be what it is without the amazing people who write for it. We'd love it if you were one of them. I'm not expecting you to feel bored over the next two months, but in case you do, please consider giving writing a go – after all, it's just a bit of fun!

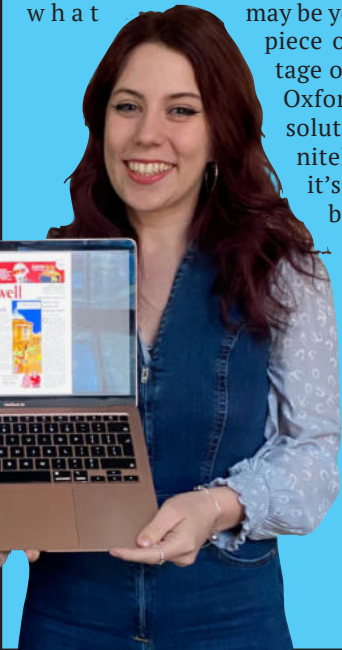
Meg Lintern
Editor-in-Chief



Welcome to Trinity Term! I am so excited to be coming back to Oxford once again for what is undoubtedly the best term of the year. The occasional glimpses of sunshine makes the crippling workload seem almost achievable – or at least the mojitos makes me care less. I'm thrilled to see what this term has in store for *Cherwell*. Over the vacation, Meg and I have poured a fair bit of our souls into curating this paper, and all I'm saying is, if I spent as many hours on my degree as I have spent on InDesign, I'd be a genius.

On a more serious note, I never thought I would have what it takes to be Editor, and I'd never even considered it before a few months ago. As we come towards the end of what may be your first or second year, my biggest piece of advice would be to take advantage of all the opportunities you have in Oxford. Oxford isn't perfect, but it's absolutely unique in that there will definitely be something for you here, and it's never too late to find it. I stumbled into the role of section editor at *Cherwell* exactly a year ago, almost by accident, but it's been one of the best things to have happened to me. I've met amazing people, worked on some crazy articles, but most importantly I've had the best time. Have a great Trinity, and carpe diem!

Izzie Alexandrou
Editor-in-Chief



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Continued from front page

Candidates can make up missed sessions at the start of Trinity. Hearing the news of the cancellation one final year student said she reacted with “initial disappointment because their year group had been building up to it after three years worth of classes and extra sessions. In prioritising speaking, other aspects were slightly neglected during this time, such as literature”.

The student pointed out that this exam is also the opportunity for final year languages students to “properly show progress after the year abroad”, suggesting that speaking “is the most rewarding part of the degree where improvement is most noticeable”, and is “most directly relevant to the year abroad”.

However, the student did acknowledge that not all the revision will be fruitless as “for most people speaking preparation is helpful for Paper 1 [writing]”. In addition, the student felt that “there’s not much else the University could have done due to the lateness of the strike announcement... There was no real good alternative”.

Some students responded to the original email with alternative suggestions to ensure the oral could take place. However the University confirmed in a follow-up email that none of these would be possible.

The modern language oral exams were scheduled to take place between Monday 17th and Friday 21st April (0th week). Some students suggested having the orals the week before (at the end of week -1) to avoid industrial action. The University pointed out the following obstacles which made this impossible. Firstly, the closure of University faculty offices for Easter from Thursday 6th April until Tuesday 11th April would leave only a couple of days upon return to organize the orals

before the proposed date. The University described the organization of the orals as “a hugely complex operation” which “would not be possible in two working days”.

Furthermore, the University told students that they “had to take this prompt action because [they] are not able to guarantee the attendance, at the exams, of all examiners... Cancellation was necessary to avoid any uncertainty and, most importantly, to ensure that candidates are all treated equally. [...] With the boycott commencing on the Thursday, it will be impossible to guarantee equitable treatment for all the c. 300 candidates across the week.”

In the follow up email they expand on this reasoning. During the Easter break, many academic and administrative colleagues may take some annual leave, and therefore not be reading emails. Some of the candidates, examiners, native speaker assessors and Exams Schools staff may have left Oxford for the break, possibly going abroad. They may not be able to return in time to hold the exams early.

In addition, they decline the possibility of postponing the exams in their first message, sympathising with the students that it “would interfere with your revision and the start of the written papers (we are mindful that some Joint Schools papers start as early as the end of the first week of full term, Friday 28 April)”.

A student that Cherwell spoke to described the general year group reaction as “mixed”. It seemed that generally among others, “bilingual people were disappointed”. However, “some students were relieved, for example Russian students, as they didn’t have a year abroad and didn’t feel prepared”. Furthermore,

“people doing ab initio languages who had problems with visas because of Brexit, so could only spend limited time in the country, were also on the whole relieved about it”.

The University advises those who will not be able to attend the eight classes to speak with their tutors. They mention that a ‘Mitigating Circumstances notice’ may be suggested for some students further to this conversation.

For Russian and Czech students the cancellation of the oral component also means the Listening Comprehension is also cancelled, as it is part of the oral exam.

This action has raised some concern amongst students over the possibility of further exams being cancelled. However a student told Cherwell that “the faculty

haven’t given us any details about whether it will affect further exams”. Given that exams begin on 22nd May, the student expressed hope that the oral will be the only assessment affected.

An Oxford University spokesperson said that the University is “recognising our colleagues’ right to take industrial action” whilst “working to minimise disruption for students - and in particular... taking all reasonable steps to ensure no student is disadvantaged in examinations and assessments”.

“With specific regards to the cancellation of Modern Language oral exams, Exam Board Chairs will ensure that no students are disadvantaged in any way as a consequence of this action,” the spokesperson said.



Magdalen College’s decision to hold Eid dinner on St George’s Day sparks controversy

Fatima El-Faki reports.

Magdalen College’s announcement of an Eid dinner on April 23 has sparked controversy, with multiple news outlets, including *The Telegraph*, claiming that the college “cancelled” an annual St George’s Day dinner.

Records obtained by The Telegraph indicate that Magdalen held a dinner in celebration of the patron saint of England “in each of the four years prior to the pandemic, from 2016 to 2019”. However, a Magdalen College spokesperson told *Cherwell* that in the past hundred years the college had “only had five such dinners to mark the occasion”, the most recent of which it claims was in 2018.

In conversation with *Cherwell*, the Magdalen spokesman insists that they “have not cancelled a St George’s Day dinner”, as the college “had no plans” to hold one this year. The college also reiterates that they have no longstanding tradition of holding a St George’s Day dinner. The college adds that it celebrates all major Christian festivals and saints’ days in its chapel. On Sunday, the college will fly the flag of St. George from St. Swithun’s Tower “as we always do” and will also host the University Sermon for St Mark’s Day.

According to *The Telegraph* the issue of the St George’s Day dinner provoked an “unholy row” within various senior members of the college body. *The Catholic Herald* later described the Eid formal dinner as an event which “scrapped and replaced” Magdalen College’s previous Christian tradition, despite official

statements issued to the contrary.

The college, however, insists instead that it was happy to “support” a request made by college members to host the dinner. A Magdalen College spokesperson underscores the communal element of the dinner, describing it as “the first day that the whole community can come together for the start of Trinity”.

Eid-al-Fitr celebrates the end of the holy month of Ramadan that takes place on the 9th month of the Islamic calendar where Muslims observe 30 days of fasting abstaining from food and drink from dawn until dusk. This celebration takes place over three days where Muslims take part in an obligatory prayer and donate money to charity whilst spending time with family and friends. Out of respect for the different dietary needs over the period, the college catering team has also provided iftar meals at a subsidised cost for every evening of the month and aimed to prepare halal meat options too.

One Magdalen student recently spoke to *Cherwell* about the up-coming celebration, sharing that he “deeply values the different cultures that are celebrated at Magdalen and strongly believe that it is one of the best things about the college. Learning about different religions and traditions is front and centre to increased understanding and harmony”.

Magdalen reiterated that they celebrate all major Christian festivals and also celebrate Diwali, Lunar New Year and Chanukah. According to the college spokesperson, the chapel also remains open to the public who are free to join in the Sunday services and Choral Evensong six days a week.

Wobbly bridge forces trainline closure

Phin Hubbard reports.

Network Rail closed the Oxford-Didcot section of the Cherwell Valley Line on the 4th of April after the bridge just east of Abingdon wobbled.

The closure has funnelled would-be Great Western Railways customers travelling between Oxford and London onto the sole alternative and more expensive track operated by Chiltern Railways, which runs out of London Marylebone Station rather than London Paddington without a railcard. An off-peak day single now costs the commuter £31.70 to travel between Oxford and London. This will continue until June at the earliest.

The stability of the Nuneham Viaduct (or ‘Black Bridge’) support structure was inspected in 2022 by a team of divers and Network Rail acted this March on its growing concern with movement in the southern abutment (a brick structure on either bank of a river supporting the metal bridge that spans across) by pumping “polymer grout” into the shifting masonry. This “low intrusive ground stabilisation scheme” was unsuccessful and following heavy rainfall the previous weekend, the whole southern abutment structure began to rapidly deteriorate and cause “a lot of movement in the structure”.

The structure is sliding into the river, with Network Rail communications director Nicky Hughes apologizing in the Telegraph last week: “That’s because the bridge... is starting to move and it’s moving now to the extent that we don’t consider it safe to run trains over.”

The abutment was built in the 1840s and supported the original viaduct structure before the steel bridge was superimposed in 1909 as part of the viaduct’s conversion to a railway track. The abutment, therefore, was never built to support trains, with its foundations far shallower than Network Rail’s proposed replacement depth of twenty-five metres.

On 13th April Network Rail Western tweeted an emoji of a hi-vis jacket followed by “prior to the recent rapid deterioration of the viaduct, its condition posed no safety risk”. Users hit back at this presentation of events, accusing the infrastructure provider and operating companies like GWR, CrossCountry and Chiltern of a “wait until it breaks” approach to railway maintenance with one replying “[the] Railway’s like a Borneo jungle in a lot of places”, and another, “so the cheap fix didn’t work and now the s— has hit the fan”.

The RMT, whose General Secretary Mich Lynch became a household name during the trade union’s strike action last summer, estimated that by September 2022 train operating companies made in excess of £300 million in profits during the pandemic. With the Secretary of State’s approval, these profits can be turned into dividends (and therefore without obligation to reinvest into the railway). Network Rail recorded a £324 million pre-tax profit in 2022 down from £1.6 billion the year.

Updates on the wobbly bridge’s repair are best followed at Network Rail Western’s Twitter @networkrailwest.

Image credit: Steve Daniels

All Souls’ Professor of Criminology’s principles recommended for Canadian police reform

Alexandra Hedström-Blake reports.

An Oxford professor’s policing principles have recently been recommended as a model for reform by Canada’s Mass Casualty Commission’s final report following a public inquiry into the Nova Scotia mass shooting and the response of police on the ground.

The report, which calls for an end to the organisation of law enforcement around a core set of Victorian principles established in 1829 by Sir Robert Peel, as well as the introduction of a new and revised understanding of its roles and responsibilities, centres itself around the work of Ian Loader, a Fellow at All Souls and Professor of Criminology at the University of Oxford. When asked why he believed Peelian principles have previously been so closely held on to, despite having evolved into what Loader himself described as “ineffective clichés”, he told Cherwell that “the police like the Peelian principles because they make them feel good about the job they do and their place in society, without exercising any effective regulatory control over police strategy or behaviour.

“As such, the original principles operate mainly as a self-legitimation or branding device, not as a critical yardstick for public legitimacy. For this reason, they are not a good platform on which to locate discussion of the police mission or regain public trust.”

Having served as a contributing voice on expert panels during the inquiry, the

recommendation of six of his alternative principles is one of 130 published in the final report on the shooting. Emphasising the importance of resource integration, Loader highlighted the importance of pursuing public safety initiatives “with the approval of and in collaboration with the public and other agencies”.

The initiatives should, according to Loader’s principles, be carried out in a way expressly designed to build “social cohesion and solidarity” while the police themselves remain at all times “democratically responsive to the people

they serve” as well as the law.

Taking place between the 18th and 19th April 2020, the Nova Scotia attack ultimately claimed the lives of 22 people, including a pregnant woman, when a 51-year-old driving a replica RCMP patrol car opened fire.

Considered the worst mass shooting in Canadian history, commissioners found that an inadequate response by the RCMP had caused families and communities affected by events to have “questioned their former trust in the police” as issues of evidence handling and a failure to

quickly issue public alerts became clear.

Despite the extent of the tragedy, Loader remains optimistic that public trust in the police force is something that can be rebuilt, but that the key ultimately lies in “admitting mistakes and being open to an honest, difficult and inclusive conversation with affected individuals’ communities”.

These dialogues would, according to Loader, need to concentrate particularly on “what went wrong, and how things could be done better in the future,” while balanced by a commitment “not to act as if the police own all the answers to what makes communities safe”.

Raising the issue of training, Loader has remained in favour of replacing the Canadian RCMP’s 26-week training program with a three-year program structured similarly to that of a university degree and described short-term police education as “becoming kind of untenable”. When asked about the extent to which he considered the changes recommended in Canada to be equally appropriate to policing efforts in the United Kingdom, Loader stated that “while it is important to be sensitive to differences in context [...] there is sufficient family resemblance between the UK and Canada to think so”, citing “the troubled history of RCMP relations with first nations communities” as an example.

Loader told Cherwell: “The principles were in fact first developed in the context of a Commission I was on in the UK a decade ago [and are] intended as a way of thinking about what good policing.”



Oxford University told not to “reward slavery twice” by returning the Benin Bronzes

Anika Gupta reports.

The University of Oxford has been warned by campaigners that repatriating the Benin Bronzes to Nigeria is not only “morally indefensible”, but would “reward slavery twice”.

The university is currently awaiting the Charity Commission to sign off its proposals to return the artefacts to Nigeria; however, the process is being delayed.

Oxford’s legal team, which has been pushing for slavery reparations, has urged the university to use this delay to discard its plans. Lawyers argue that giving back the Bronzes to the descendants of the African slave-trading society, which created the sculptures using wealth connected to the trade, would be equivalent to “rewarding” slavery by returning its gains.

The Benin Bronzes were made for the royals in the Kingdom of Benin (now modern day Edo State, Nigeria) over several centuries. However these artefacts, along with several others, were looted by British troops during an attack on the city of Benin in 1897.

Nonetheless, controversy stems as the Kingdom of Benin was heavily involved with the slave trade, using its profits to produce the treasures.

Deadria Farmer-Paellmann, founder of the Restitution Study Group (RSG) which campaigns for reparative justice for descendants of the slave trade in the US, has urged Oxford University’s leadership to “immediately suspend your plans to



repatriate these objects to Nigeria”. She adds: “It is morally indefensible to make such a determination against the express wishes of those of us in the UK, the US and the Commonwealth, whose ancestors literally gave their lives so that the Bronzes could be created in the first place.”

Additionally, Oxford’s Regius professor of moral theology agrees, communicating: “Fashioned from material used as currency in slave-trading, the Benin Bronzes adorned a society that practised human sacrifice.”

Both Oxford and Cambridge universities felt that it was their “moral obligation” to return hundreds of artefacts which filled their museums. They both pledged in July last year that they would see this through.

Cambridge’s proposal was approved in December, yet Oxford is still waiting for a conclusion to be reached. It is understood that there is some debate over the proposal as the regulator wants to ensure that the decision made will have no adverse effects on the university. Currently, the commission is waiting for Oxford to re-submit its defences for repatriation.

In Oxford, the conflict over repatriation continues.

Most people learn in nursery a key rule; give back what doesn’t belong to you. It was poor of me to think a dispute spanning continents could be resolved in such a manner. In what initially seemed like a simple case of British institutions like Oxford returning objects deemed to be spoils of colonisation to their rightful owner has now become a little bit more complicated.

Given that the former Benin Kingdom now exists within the state of Nigeria, it is easy to understand why the Nigerian government has always petitioned the UK to return the valuable artefacts. If the fact that the bronzes did not belong to the UK was not enough to sway the UK to return them, the fact that the UK continuing to keep them would be a deliberate attempt to keep Nigerian people from accessing their cultural and historical objects has been enough to push the UK into taking action. For as long as the bronzes continue to sit in museums and collections in the UK, Nigerian culture is being held captive in England. Forcing Nigerians who want to see the bronzes to travel to a different country to find their own culture.

Unfortunately, while the sentiment of this argument is one I agree with, complications arise when questions about who would own or hold these artefacts are asked. The descendants of the Kingdom of Benin being the recipients seems a fair enough claim on paper but the Restitution Study Group (RSG) has made this complicated.

The RSG’s argument that the actions of the historical Benin Kingdom nullify

the imperative for repatriation is one I currently disagree with. The RSG claims that returning the items profits slavery twice. I’ll concede that my knowledge of the human rights record of the Benin Kingdom in the 1800s is non-existent, however it seems that the RSG’s argument appears to simplify history, a history which is likely extremely complicated, especially since the Benin Kingdom had existed since the 1200s. The Benin bronzes were taken by the British in 1897. In the 120 years since then historical tensions between ethnic groups and kingdoms have changed, and holding current ethnic group members away from their own history based on the actions of their ancestors seems unfair and seems to emulate the actions of the colonising British forces who employed their own sense of justice on Benin back in 1897 when their items were stolen in a form of repatriating the losses for the conflict.

While I’m sure my opinion could change on the Benin Kingdom, I still fundamentally do not think this should halt the return of the bronzes to at least its modern home country if not its originating kingdom. If the RSG thinks that the Kingdom of Benin should not receive the items, why not put them in a neutral national museum so all Nigerian people can see them? If we want to ensure that justice is served in the matter of the bronzes, why not just ask the descendants of the people enslaved by the Kingdom of Benin?

Analysis
Zoe Abereoje



Oxford moves towards digital admissions testing

Andy Wei reports.

Oxford’s unique admissions tests may be moving online as the University switches providers.

Long-time partner Cambridge Assessment Admissions Testing (CAAT) has announced its decision to withdraw from administering Oxford’s admissions tests. From 2023 onwards, eight of the ten Oxford admissions tests will be delivered by Tata Consulting Services (TCS). These are the CAT (Classics), ELAT (English), MLAT (Modern Languages), OLAT (Oriental Languages), PAT (Physics), HAT (History), and Philosophy tests, which are all unique to Oxford.

The other two tests, the Thinking Skills Assessment (TSA) and BioMedical Admissions Test (BMAT), are used by multiple universities. CAAT will administer the TSA and BMAT for one more year, using a paper-based format, before withdrawing entirely from running any admissions tests used by Oxford.

In explaining its decision, CAAT said: “The bespoke tests are operationally unsustainable over the medium term, given



their significant complexity and the need to deliver them affordably to students and higher education institutions”.

Oxford’s new partner TCS believes that the solution lies in a digital transformation. TCS is India’s second largest company by market capitalisation and widely regarded as a leader in information technology services.

Dr Samina Khan, Director of Undergraduate Admissions and Outreach, said of the partnership: “This new agreement with TCS offers exciting opportunities for the future of our admissions testing, including the

possibility of wholly digital delivery and marking.

“I am confident that our new arrangement with TCS will help in time to modernise how the tests are delivered and over the coming months we will be consulting with a range of stakeholders, including students and schools and colleges, to ensure their views are considered throughout the development phase”.

Oxford’s webpage for admissions tests indicates that further details on new test arrangements, including the registration process, “will be available shortly”.

Oxford professors unfairly dismissed for their age, tribunal finds

Olivia Boyle reports.

The University of Oxford’s retirement policy has taken yet another blow following a tribunal in March that ruled that four professors were unfairly dismissed on the grounds of their age.

As it stands, the policy of “Employer Justified Retirement Age” (EJRA) dictates that university staff must retire at 68. In October, four professors launched claims against the university that this policy was unfair and provided evidence of age discrimination. The tribunal has ruled in their favour as the policy “means that an individual is dismissed on attainment of a particular age” which is “about the most extreme discriminatory impact possible in the realms of employment”.

At the head of the campaign against this redundancy policy, Physics Professor Paul Ewart, who won the tribunal against forced dismissal three years ago, has commented on the level of unfairness. He told Cherwell that he was very pleased with the result of the tribunal and that “the judgment is further vindication of the claim that the EJRA is unlawful and follows a series of legal judgments both in the university’s own internal Appeal Court by external and very senior judges, and in the Employment Tribunal (ET) and Employment Appeal Tribunal (EAT) in my own case that deemed the policy unjustified and therefore unlawful.”

The EJRA policy was brought about on the grounds that it is an “evidence-based” policy that allows the university work force to be regularly replenished with a younger, more diverse body of



academics. Evidence presented by Ewart suggests that the policy makes only marginal difference. Ewart explained to Cherwell that the rate of vacancy creation was only “in the range of 2 – 4%. I provided robust statistical evidence in support of this argument. It therefore matters not how long the policy runs; after five, ten or even one hundred years, the difference it makes is still only 2 – 4%.”

Moreover, the policy has been known to have had damaging repercussions for academics who had been in academic work when asked to leave the university. Following the success at his Employment Tribunal, Ewart was reinstated to Oxford by

which point his research group “had dissipated and it was difficult to restart the programme”.

Ewart told Cherwell: “I resigned in 2021 and moved to a position as Director of The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion in Cambridge, associated with, but not formally part of Cambridge University and so not subject to its EJRA rules. I have had no formal contact with Oxford University since I resigned my post in 2021.”

The EJRA policy has contributed to the termination of several important research groups. Ewart suggests that the policy “dissuades other world-leading figures from taking up posts in Oxford”.

Ewart also expressed that “the University, in common with Cambridge [which has the same EJRA policy], is displaying its arrogant sense of exceptionalism by pursuing a policy that every other university in the UK, apart from St. Andrew’s, has abandoned long ago”.

Image Credit: Michelle Marques

News Shorts

Oxford University continues ban on ‘trashing’

Oxford University has reminded students to celebrate responsibly during the exam season, with “anti-social behaviour” such as “trashing” punishable by a £150 fine from the Proctors. Trashing reportedly costs the University £45,000 per year in clean up efforts and Proctors’ overtime. As many exams will take place online this year, students are still asked to be considerate and respectful of those studying for or taking exams.

The peak exam season will run from 4th Week to 9th Week, with around 40,000 exams taking place across the University instead.



Oxbridge lose to Harvard and Yale in storied track meet

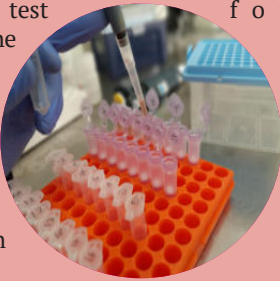
The two Ivy League universities combined their strength to thoroughly dominate the event. Points are awarded for the team that wins each individual track, field or relay event. Harvard-Yale scored 12 points to Oxbridge’s 6 on the men’s side. On the women’s side Harvard and Yale won 13 out of seventeen of the meet’s events.

The HYOC track and field meet is one of the oldest track and field competitions in the world, originating in 1893- before the advent of the modern Olympic games. The 2023 competition was the first to be held in four years due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



Oxford company makes major moves in biotech

Oxford Nanopore Technologies plc is joining bioMérieux SA to improve global health outcomes. The companies aim to bring nanopore sequencing to the infectious diseases diagnostics market. Nanopore sequencing is a novel technology enabling DNA and RNA analysis. This assists the rapid identification of pathogens and reduces time for disease diagnosis. The companies are initially interested in developing a test for determining the antimicrobial resistance of tuberculosis, a disease that affected an estimated 10.6 million people in 2021.



Continued from front page.
Career development fellowships (and similar)
These positions are typically offered on a three-year basis and have a salary; academics are expected to do both teaching and research. This role is intended to be a stepping stone to more secure jobs for early-career academics.

Effects of fixed-term contracts
Fixed-term contracts lead to what is sometimes called the “casualisation” of work or the rise of a “gig economy” in academia. Hereby, employment shifts away from permanent, secure contracts to a more casual type of labour, which operates on fixed terms. This leads to frequent turnover in jobs, where those on fixed-term contracts need to regularly search for and adjust to new jobs, and it requires other staff to take on higher workloads to train them. Consequently, many academics may opt to leave academia; and many won’t even join in the first place.

Orlando Lazar, a Career Development Fellow at St Edmund Hall, told Cherwell that “[l]ots and lots of teaching at Oxford is performed by people on these sorts of contracts, where there’s no security that they’ll have a job at the start of the next academic year, and low enough pay that you can’t realistically save for periods of underemployment or unemployment.”

Usually, workers employed on fixed-term contracts by the same employer for four years automatically become permanently employed. However, since many Oxford academics get jobs at a different college after their contract expires, and each college counts as a different employer, this prevents them from becoming permanent.

“[P]eople aren’t just spending some time on insecure contracts as a step on the way to a secure job: they’re staying on those contracts for years and years, or dropping out of academia entirely. They’re propping up the entire system.”

The quality of teaching is also affected: “I know from experience that it’s much easier to do that work well when you don’t have to split your attention between the present, the impending end of your contract, and the level of your bank account.” Lazar’s current fellowship will be the first where he teaches the same students from matriculation to graduation.

A UCU survey conducted across the UK found that too many mandated teaching hours can have further negative effects on research. To start, 71% of casualised teachers said they did not have enough paid time to give their students the feedback they deserved. As well, 81% of respondents said that their own research was negatively affected by short-term contracts and 96% of respondents agreed that genuinely innovative research would be advanced by more secure contracts.

The study also found that 71% of respondents believed that their mental health had been damaged by being employed on fixed-term contracts; 43% claimed it even affected their physical health.

Alongside this, Oxford is also an expensive city to live in – high housing prices and a lack of housing support from the uni-



versity add to the strain academics face. A study by the job website Adzuna found that Oxford was the third most expensive city to live in, with regard to how much of the salary it takes up; 32% of income was spent on rent.

How this affects diversity

A large majority of Conservative students The ability to deal with financial and job security is often unequally distributed, making it harder for less privileged groups to enter and remain in academia. Many may not have the ability to accept low-paying

jobs or accept the risks that come with this. Oxford University currently employs 4415 staff who are not from the United Kingdom, nearly a third of their whole academic workforce.

Having to renew visas without the guarantee of a stable job or salary is an additional problem these non-UK nationals may face.

Statistically, the level of academic BME staff in Oxford is also lower than across the UK: whilst it is 9% at Oxford, it has averaged at 20% nationwide. 12% of professors in the UK are also ethnic minorities – at Oxford, 6% of statutory professors and 8% of associate professors are BME. The university is targeting 9% and 11%, respectively, by 2029.

According to Oxford Staffing Data, “BME applicants were furthermore less likely to be appointed than white applicants, with 16% of UK applicants of University-led aca-

dem posts being BME and only 9% being appointed over the past three years. This was similarly observed among research posts: 25% of applicants were BME, yet only 16% were appointed. Non-UK applicants also experienced disproportionately low rates of success.” Overall, only 11 out of the 1952 permanent academic staff at Oxford are black.

The proportion of women in professorship roles was similarly below the UK average: women constituted 28.5% of professorships nationwide, yet only made up 19% of statutory professorships (the most senior academic grade) in Oxford in 2020/21. Within medical sciences, social sciences, maths, physical and life sciences, and humanities, women made up 8.2%, 29.3%, 15.1%, and 31.4% of professorships, respectively. Oxford intends for 27% of professorship roles to be filled by women by 2029.

Notably, more women and BME staff are on fixed-term contracts at Oxford: 74% of women were on fixed-term contracts compared to 61% of men. 83% of BME staff were on fixed-term contracts, which only applied to 61% of white staff.

Tim Soutphommasane, Oxford’s newly appointed Chief Diversity Officer also told Cherwell that “[t]here are areas of representa-

tion where Oxford is starting from a lower base than other UK universities. At the same time, there are areas where Oxford’s diversity is perhaps higher than what

some might expect: for example, 23 percent of Oxford’s research staff identify as BME.”

What is Oxford doing?

Dr Soutphommasane also told Cherwell: “In my first three months here, we’ve funded our staff networks for BME staff, LGBT+ staff and staff with disabilities. We’ve announced an EDI studentship to enable undergraduates and graduates interested in EDI research or project to have a placement with our Equality and Diversity Unit. We’re creating new forums to share knowledge and experiences on EDI.”

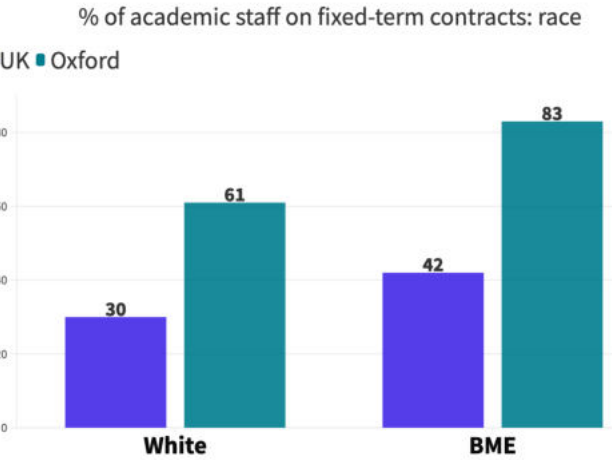
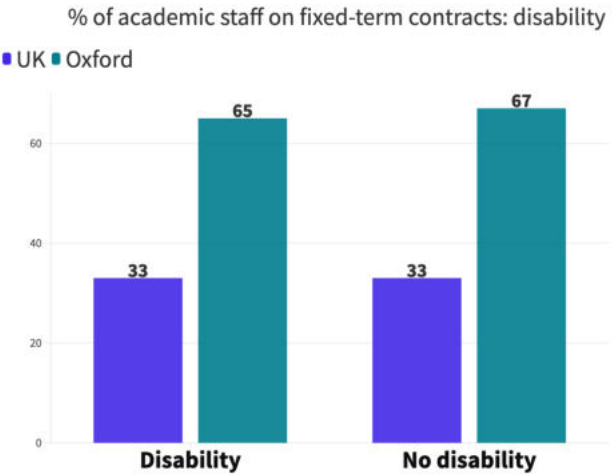
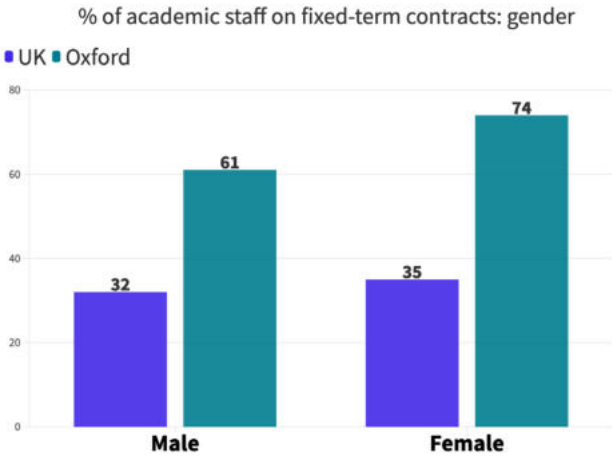
Future work will include the implementation of the University’s Race Equality Strategy, which was finalised last year.” Amongst other measures, this intends to close the Ethnicity Pay Gap, establish rep-

resentative and inclusive decision-making and governance structures, tackle bullying and harassment, and increase the proportions of senior BME staff. The university has also published guidelines on inclusive recruitment, which encourages departments to take positive action by supporting under-represented applicants through targeted training, mentoring, and encouragement. However, final decisions are made on the basis of merit.

“This does involve culture change, and making progress does demand sustained efforts. It also requires an understanding that work on this is integral to our success as a global institution.”

Professor Irene Trace, Oxford’s View Chancellor, previously announced an independent inquiry into the pay and working conditions for all University staff, which will also look into fixed-term contracts. The time frame for this is unclear.

Image Credit: W.S. Luk, Pexels via Pixabay, falco via Pixabay



WHO CAME UP WITH THIS WORD??? too way here

MARGINALIA

an insight

into the psychology of the Oxford Student

STOP DEFACEING THESE BOOKS!
Don't care. Plus you're doing it too

Writing by Courtenay Crow - Art by Yuan-Yuan Foo

You're sat in the Rad Cam. It's week five of Michaelmas. You're hunched over, squinting through the dim yellow light to make out the arguments of a particularly dense reading on the Catholic Reformation. For the sake of pathetic fallacy, let's say that a pitiable spattering of rain is pattering against the windows as a librarian-cum -bouncer kicks out the 37th tourist trying to enter their well-guarded sanctuary in the past hour. Sifting through the page's thickets of doctrinal details, you notice a comment, pencilled into the margins:

'I really want a hard fuck...'

It is accompanied by a small sketch.

You might stifle a chuckle, add your own contributions, shake your head with dismay at the defacement of library property, or simply continue to stare blankly at the page as you have been doing for the past hour. But, whatever your reaction, it makes you pause. When I found myself in this exact situation, the pause sparked a question. How can marginalia provide an insight into the psychology of the Oxford Student?

As long as written texts have existed, so has marginalia (I have no proof of this, but it seems logical). Historians are particularly fond of using the bizarre marginalia of medieval European manuscripts to understand the peculiar mindscapes of the monks that copied them. Some bear striking resemblances to the marginalia created by 21st-century Oxford students. I think we can all sympathise with the burnt-out monks who felt the need to scribble on their handiwork that “writing is excessive drudgery” and, presumably nearing the end of their task, “the work is written master, give me a drink”. Other examples of medieval marginalia pose a somewhat greater interpretative challenge. Take, for example, this thought-provoking illustration of a nun harvesting penises from a thriving penis tree.

Other highlights include monkeys playing the violin, knights battling snails, a rabbit beating up a man, a woman riding a phallic-shaped green monster, and a king doing his business on a couple making out. Let psychologists and historians make of that what they will.

So what did my deep dive into the nether regions of the Facebook page 'Oxford University Marginalia' (yes – it's a thing and there are 11,700 members) reveal?

Unsurprisingly, just like with the medieval monks, a fair amount of our marginalia relates to sex and genitals. Few, however, are as direct as the plea for a 'hard fuck'. Many go for a simpler, yet still elegant, ap-

proach. One student adorned a passage on military history with one word, 'BALLS', emphasising their statement with a sketch.

Indeed, genitalia abound in Oxford's marginalia scene, my personal favourite being the masterpiece that is Vic the Viking (see below). Some marginalia adopt an almost interactive approach, with another student leaving a lipstick imprint at the bottom of a page of literary criticism. This incited a spate of considered responses, including 'mmm.... You are a sexy lady' and 'lol'.

But it's not all sex. The margins of Oxford's books are the battleground for opposing troops of dedicated political partisans. Take, for instance, the marginaliser who expressed their utter contempt for socialism, by annotating a copy of the Marxist historian, Eric Hobsbawm's, book. They composed a fairly lengthy argument stating, amongst other things, that 'this book is written by a deluded Marxist in denial of socialism's death in 1989/91' and that 'his beef with capitalism is pathetic'. This political polemic did not go under the radar, with another comment responding that 'it's 2019 and socialism is more alive than ever'. As you might expect, however, the political debates etched into Oxford's books often play out in a slightly less eloquent way. In a copy of E.P. Thompson's *The Making of the Working Class* one student expressed their opinion that it was 'Shitty Marxist Bollocks!', to which a differently-inclined student replied 'Fuck you Tory pigdog'. A third implored the combatants to 'calm down, dears. It's only history'.

Another unflattering insight into the psyche of the Oxford Student provided by marginalia is the strain of deeply rooted pedanticism. Take the student from the 1700-or-1800s who inscribed on the final page of *Paradise Lost* that “the poem [would have] ended better if the two last lines with my slight alteration ... preceded the two before them”, or their modern-day counterparts who argue over grammar and etch the words “wrong”, and “pile of shite” into the margins. It seems that many Oxford students cannot seem to resist asserting their intellectual superiority for subsequent readers to witness.

This has sprouted an amusing counter-genre of marginalia. Some of my favourite examples include whichever quick-witted reader replied to a comment that a book was making a “stupid assertion”, by applying that epithet to the commenter themselves: “ur a stupid assertion”, and the evidently fed-up individual who instructed a particularly pedantic commentator writing in red pen to “piss off you red bastard”. In fact, ir-

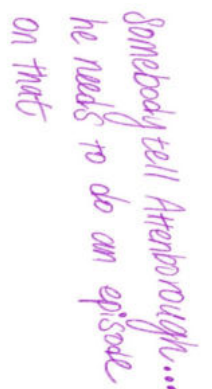
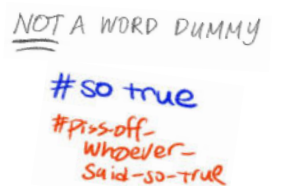
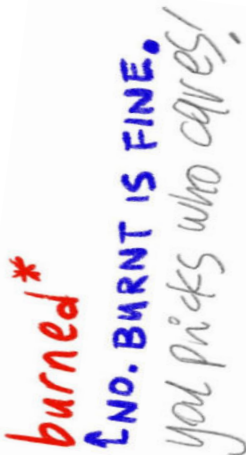
ritation, confusion, exhaustion, and despair dominate Oxford's marginalia scene. Many examples lament the monotony of the reading material, exclaiming things to the tune of "why the fuck is this all so boring". Others have a more personal focus. One of my own finds involved a sleep-deprived student claiming that a suspicious-looking stain on the page was "clearly wept from my blood-shot eyes as I pull my 4th all-nighter in a row".

Having explored the darker sides of Oxford's marginalia, it's important to remember that not all the marginalia is so bleak. You can also find the effusive soul who found a footnote citing a work by a certain K. Minogue in a book on twentieth-century British liberalism and offered her congratulations, "well done Kylie!". Or another who noticed a crucial omission in the dedication of the book they were reading, amending it to read, "for Jerry: teacher, mentor, comrade, friend, mouse". Others generously share thought-provoking insights, such as one commenter on Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* who threw this question out into the universe: "do you ever just sit down and look at yourself and realise, I've been eating chicken titties all my life". So we can rest easy in the knowledge that not all Oxford Students are sex-obsessed, arrogant, sleep-deprived, political fanatics.

But what's really going on when we write marginalia? Many educationalists believe that marking up the books we're reading helps us think critically, absorb the material and generally stay awake. I can understand where they're coming from, but I think, based on absolutely no knowledge of psychology, that there's more to it than that.

In some cases, it feels like the scholarly equivalent of peeing to mark your territory. There's something weirdly satisfying about the thought that you're making some kind of connection to the random series of strangers who pick up the book next. I think it's also a testament to the capacity of our brains to engineer amusement when they are bored, and perhaps to a certain well-intentioned aim to make the next reader have a little chuckle. Of course, it's never the best idea to damage public property (in fact, it could land you with a hefty fine), and subsequent readers might find marginalia extremely distracting. But as far as the already extant marginalia goes, you might find that stumbling upon it'll brighten up your day and reassure you that you're not the only one finding that particular reading a Sisyphean slog.

Full-sized imagery @cherwell online.



Oxford, a University of Activists? Myths and realities



Oliver Smith explores Oxford's student activist scene and questions to what extent Oxford's national reputation is deserved, featuring a *Cherwell* exclusive survey.

Activism is rife in Oxford, especially student activism. Everywhere you look, you can see signs of it.

Picture this: it's the weekend and Cornmarket Street is bustling. You pass by Wasabi and a Christian preacher attempts to convert you. You walk a little further down the street and you are handed a leaflet by a member of Extinction Rebellion. You turn onto High Street and catch a glimpse of the Rhodes Statue before making a beeline for the Rad Cam, no time to waste, you are in full essay crisis, after all.

Whether it's the perennial protests

outside the Radcliffe Camera or the more subtle sight of wilting flowers next to the library's gated entrance, everyone in Oxford knows it; the square is a mecca for those who want to shine a light on injustice. Tied around the railing, Oxford residents have seen information on the victims of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and Tehran's crackdown on civil unrest. Just last month, around 500 people gathered for a candlelight vigil in memory of Brianna Ghey and to show their support for the Transgender community.

Events organised are peaceful, supportive, and community orientated. Activism,

specifically student activism, is rarely controversial in Oxford.

Despite this, you could say, student activists have got a bit of a "reputation". When they open their mouths or challenge the status quo, it is not long before an article is published in a major national paper with the epithet "woke" featured somewhere. Indeed, it made national headlines in 2021 when Magdalen College's MCR voted to remove a portrait of Queen Elizabeth II. It's safe to say, conversations that arise among Oxford students aren't necessarily confined to the City of Dreaming

Spires.

But does this reputation hold up? How tied really are Oxford students to the activist culture?

STUDENT ACTIVISM SURVEY RESULTS

According to a recent poll conducted by *Cherwell*, half of the respondents declared that they had attended a protest before. This compares to research conducted by You Gov, which found only two in five of the general UK population agreed with the prompt. The potential is certainly there with a resounding nine in ten respondents stating they were open to attending a demonstration in the future.

“
The square is a mecca for those who shine a light on injustice.

“
Only seven in ten respondents think political demonstrations are effective.

Many respondents explained that they had not attended a protest before due to time constraints. Others were less conciliatory, labelling the activity “self-righteous and a waste of time”. The sentiment that there was “very little faith in the aims of those protesting” was backed by the data with only seven in ten respondents thinking that political demonstrations are effective.

Although the rise of the Instagram infographic model has made activism something that no longer involves making a cardboard sign and trekking it to the town centre, Oxford students seem to have ignored this medium with only six in ten students stating that they have ever shared any activism-related posts on social media. In fact, only half of students polled thought that social media activism was effective. Thus, Oxford students appear to have greater faith in more traditional, tangible demonstrations than their digital counterparts.

When the issue turned to the use of the Radcliffe Square as a demonstration location, the vast majority of respondents (three in four) were supportive; “It is a prominent location in Oxford and symbolic of the student body”. Other students expressed concern: “It can be disruptive to students working in the libraries there and might cause annoyance even though many of them would support the causes themselves”. The minority of those who disapproved of the location tended to leave more inflammatory responses, labelling it “annoying as f***” and a “stupid place to do demonstrations”; another stated that the square “should not be devalued by such things”.

The overall view, however, was in favour of student activism in Oxford, with seven in ten respondents disagreeing with the prompt that there is “too much” activism. Students were generally sympathetic, stating that “It’s a student city and people have opinions”. Others were defiant that there could ever be “too much” activism in the first place – labelling detractors as “generally grim people”.

In any case, some respondents did criticise the activism culture, stating it was “surface level and performative”. And while some lamented the congested streets, others went in the other direction, calling Oxford’s activism scene “tiny” and using the response section as a call to arms: “Given the current government there should be protests every day, alongside rent strikes and occupations”.

Half of those polled stated that they are not a member of any student activist organisation, one quarter said they are involved in political activism and the remainder of respondents focus on a range of social rights issues. The Oxford University Labour Club was the most named activist organisation. Nonetheless, activist culture should not be conflated with left-wing ideology, with anti-Abortion activism also featuring among the responses.

Despite the fairly high levels of activity amongst the student body, the vast majority of respondents (75%) do not consider themselves to be an “activist”. Does this dispel the myth of Oxford as a University of student activists or do actions speak louder than labels?

DEEP DIVE INTO THE PSYCHE OF A

STUDENT ACTIVIST WITH BEAU BOKA-BATESA

Beyond the inflated rhetoric that surrounds student activism in Oxford, I wanted to speak to the individuals who juggle these two competing vocations. What is it like, on a human level, to try and find balance in such a high-pressure environment and what is it like to manage other people’s expectations, let alone their own?

I spoke to Beau Boka-Batesa (they/them), a second-year climate justice campaigner at Lincoln who, along with their two friends, co-founded Choked Up at the age of 17. This campaign raises awareness of the impact of air pollution and how it disproportionately affects people of colour and those of working-class backgrounds in London.

The interview began by asking Beau what activism means to them; we all have a different conception of what it means, especially in the digital age. “For me, activism is holistic,” they said, “there’s no set way to be a right activist [...] For me, it’s about what you do with your anger”. This anger was something that came up in the survey; while respondents tended to be understanding of the other perspective, epithets such as “fascist” were present. While some saw activism as essential to their very existence, others felt it was just “shouting into the wind”.

Dispelling the perceived notion of Oxford as an activist hub, Beau admitted that they felt “slightly underwhelmed” by the lack of political activity taking place: “I thought that people would be more angry about things [...] but there hasn’t been as much as momentum”. The potential is there, they added, “I feel a lot of students here, they definitely have the intention [to demonstrate]. But I guess the means of being able to express that is a bit of a barrier”. While this rhetoric is certainly reflected in the data Cherwell collected, I was surprised that even those who operate within the activism sphere still encountered a lack of enthusiasm and engagement.

Discussing the pressures that come with the label of student activist, Beau conceded: “I think we’re expected to do all these great things [...] all the time, and that can be really time-consuming and pressuring. I’ve always struggled to find the balance between doing my degree and doing activism”. While they recognized that academics were the priority at university, Beau added, “It’s really difficult when you love both things equally because you don’t want one thing to be at the cost of another”.

While tutors don’t actively discourage their activist commitments, Beau said, “it’s not necessarily something that they encouraged”. Beau was candid in admitting that sometimes they were not able to hand in their best work due to time constraints that came from their activist commitments and that tutors would comment that they were not reaching their potential. What came across in our interview was that all this activism comes at a cost, both in terms of academics and general stress levels. But Beau also pointed out that any assertion that academics should be a zero-sum game is wholly unrealistic and at odds with the reality of being a student: “I can’t just tap out and work on a degree for eight weeks

straight” and if it’s not campaigning, people are always going to have personal issues. At the end of the day, students are not machines.

Beau reflected on how their circumstances have changed since starting their degree. Choked Up was born out of a charity that helps young people found campaigns: “We got around six months of mentoring and schooling [...] how to run a campaign”. But since then, “we’ve basically been managing it all”. There seems to have been a real shift from running the campaign as a teenager to now as a university student, not only logistically, but also in terms of relationships with other organisers. It’s clear that the organisation has had to grow and adapt, and so has Beau.

Next, I asked Beau what impact the label “Oxford student” has had on their activism. “In terms of opportunities, I guess being a student at Oxford [...] really does sell the money”. Likewise, more generally “journalists are [...] very fixated on young people”; and put them on this pedestal. The promise of the next generation comes with the pressure to say yes to every opportunity. Here, Beau hinted at a catch-22 situation: while the Oxford label opens up many opportunities, these very opportunities then have to compete with the reality of a high-pressure academic environment that verges on demonising extra-curriculars that take up too much time for comfort.

In a critique of the way the University operates, Beau said “We all signed up for it [...] But it’s just this constant, pressure cooker environment [...] I feel like I’m constantly just having to fulfil expectations”. Beau admitted that they have sometimes felt disillusioned with their degree due to the constant need to churn out essays. It’s a common sentiment among Oxford students: the short terms, the vac work, burn-out.... Adding on top of all this academic work the responsibilities of being an activist, it’s enough to wear anyone down. When the idea of a reading week came up, Beau straight away threw their support behind it “Oh, absolutely [...] A lot of people say rest is radical. If anything, it’s the bare minimum.”

Despite the pressures that come with being a student activist, Beau remained optimistic: “There’s always a place for people in the movement”; in a very hyper-digital age, we have so many means of campaigning. “I really do believe in young people”. Beau did acknowledge, however, that “it’s understandable that a lot of young people feel disillusioned [...] because they are constantly looked down on.”

From our conversation, it became clear that one of the major facets of student activism is the youth element – that these activists are simultaneously venerated as the future generation, but also treated with contempt by some older people for their “inexperience”. Nonetheless, Beau concluded that “the moment the door is shut down on you, you have just got to find a way to open it again.” I would say that those are words which are enough to inspire and console another generation of student activists, but is that just me falling into the trap of pedestal-placing?

This sentiment was echoed by Bella Done

(she/they), Co-Chair of LGBTQ+ Oxford SU, a student-led campaign working to improve the lines of LGBTQ+ people at the University of Oxford. Bella began by explaining that it was the strong activist presence in Oxford that encouraged them to get involved with student activism; their journey began “by running for LGBTQ+ Rep within the JCR at Hertford, and gradually starting to attend lots of protests that were advertised around”.

Yet again, Bella identified the attempt to balance her activism with her studies as the most difficult part of being a student activist. Nonetheless, this challenge does not deter her: “It can be difficult to balance [running a campaign] with studies, especially as a lot of it involves chasing people and more admin than I’d like, but I’m so grateful for the experience. The community of student activists is wonderful, and really inspiring to work with”. Although Bella admitted that the fatigue that comes with student activism is “very challenging, especially when you’re fighting for a minority group on top of being a part of it”, she summarised that “seeing real, tangible change is the best feeling”.

Jack Hurrell (he/him), a first-year at St Peter’s gave *Cherwell* a valuable insight into the gruelling reality of a Labour Club campaigner. “A day out truly is a day out, meeting in some cases at 7 a.m. and not returning until 6 p.m.” he explained. This has a “massive impact” on his work schedule and “many essays due in on Monday mornings have suffered as a result”. Jack drew attention to the fact that this sort of routine is simply not possible for students with finals ahead of them, and thus the “most active year group campaigning are the freshers”.

Jack recounts a particularly hostile encounter with a heckler in Hilary that informed the group that they were “terrorists converting the country to a new world order”. While he emphasised that he routinely talks to “lovely people”, encounters like this “did remind us of some of the dangers associated with campaigning”. In all, despite the difficulties associated with student activism, Jack remains resolute - like so many other student activists I have spoken to. Jack said campaigning was a great experience and “couldn’t recommend it strongly enough”.

FINAL REMARKS

From my conversation with Beau, one word came up time and again: balance. “Be prepared to compromise and say no to more things”, Beau summarised, “Your degree is finite, but your activism will live on”.

Student activists are keen to consider the real-world ramifications of injustice; in spite of the “Oxford bubble”, they, more than most, look beyond the weekly essay crisis. While the university does not explicitly support or dissuade their activities, the pressure is pervasive. And perhaps they are put on a pedestal by some for seeming to do it all, but they, like everyone else, simply can’t. The message we are left with is one firmly geared towards the future, vocally optimistic with a tinge of pragmatism.

Illustration by Yuan Yuan Foo

“A lot of young people feel disillusioned because they are constantly looked down on.”

The Coronation: Should We Care?

It Matters

Freddie

History. The end of our late Queen's 70 year reign marks the longest Britain has ever gone without a coronation. 2023 may not inaugurate such a long reign, but it undoubtedly marks 70 years of unprecedented historical change.

Politics. Sure, its members might stray, but the Monarchy is essentially apolitical. The coronation allows Britons to soar above political partisanship. What harm can that do politics?

Culture. Our late Queen's 1953 coronation speech celebrated "free speech and respect for the rights of minorities". All imperfectly adhered to, but ideals most Britons revere to this day. Equally, no longer will our Monarch praise the "majesty" of "Empire". Now, he expresses "personal sorrow" at the slave trade and backs studies into the Monarchy's slavery links.

Change and continuity. That is why we should care.



Get me a carriage first

Zoe

No, we shouldn't care at all. Monarchy proves that this country values bloodline, ancestry, and class as central to its existence, the opposite of what a civic democracy should aim to be. I don't get why I should celebrate that the King gets to prance about in a carriage from Westminster Abbey to Buckingham Palace when I don't have one taking me from college to my lectures. That being said, nothing is going to change any time soon, so I guess I'll keep my complaints about the coronation to myself and enjoy my bank holiday.



Fork in the road?

Adam

The upcoming coronation feels like quite a fork in the road moment for the UK. It will be a strong measure of the role that Charles will be expected to play as he formally takes charge. I personally won't be "celebrating" - not that the rigours of an Oxford term will allow me much time to anyway. I respect Charles' views on the environment and see the positives of the role the monarchy plays in our diplomatic ties and tourism industry. However, it feels more than slightly in bad taste to spend public money on a party for a pampered head of state in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis where many are struggling to get by.



What people think Oxford students talk about:



Image Credit: Tom Godfrey

What Oxford students actually talk about:



T.R.G.

The Myth of Representation

Jui Zaveri

Representation has become a bit of a buzzword these days. Rightly so - the growing realisation that something must be done to remedy the huge lack of diversity in positions of "power" is a move towards a fairer society. Visibility matters in today's world and so when Humzah Yousaf was announced as the First Minister of Scotland after Nicola Sturgeon, British Asians across the country, and indeed the globe, rejoiced to see the highest political office attained by a man who looks like them. Rishi Sunak's appointment to the office of Prime Minister had a similar reaction. Indian social media was awash with memes celebrating Sunak's cultural heritage and his social mobility in a post-colonial context. Though Sunak is as unlikely to return the Koh-i-Noor diamond as any of his predecessors, it is undeniable that an Indian at the head of a country that historically believed Indians to be incapable of self-governance seems to be the perfect instance of poetic justice - the colonisers have been colonised. However, race is only one aspect of diversity - disability, class, sexuality, gender, etc are all equally important. This intersectionality complicates things - representation, in reality, is hardly straightforward or one-dimensional.

What do Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and First Minister Humzah Yousaf have in common beyond their British Asian identity? The fact that they were both educated at prestigious private schools: Yousaf at Hutcheson's Grammar School in Glasgow and Sunak at the elite Winchester College. Immediately, this makes their lived experience radically different from the average immigrant story. Both men have some of the same privileges afforded to their white male counterparts: wealth and the plethora of doors it opens. This is not to say that race is not an impor-

tant factor here, and should not be celebrated. Instead, the point is that their success cannot be used as proof that the UK is a place of perfect equal opportunity. Though at first glance these national leaders are the poster boys of a new, diverse age of British politics, it would be a complete blunder to see them as the endgame of true inclusivity. We must be conscious that PoC (people of colour) in politics tend to be from a very narrow subsection of PoC in general.

Both Sunak and Yousaf represent a socio-economic elite - an elite that has always been overrepresented in the political sphere. Research published by the Sutton Trust in 2019 found that 29% of MPs at the time had attended a private school. Statistics from the same year show that only 7% of the UK population have been privately educated. These shocking discrepancies advantage Sunak and Yousaf in a way that cannot be minimised by

their British Asian identities - one aspect of diversity should not be used to brush over another key one. This is not a question of "hardship Olympics" - when sociopolitical disadvantages are pitted against each other. Rather, it highlights a need for a more nuanced attitude towards representation or the lack thereof. We crave visible relatability but many British Indians have questioned how relatable Sunak really is. His wife, Akshata Murthy, is the daughter of the billionaire Narayana Murthy. She managed to avoid 20m in UK tax before last year and has a net worth greater than that of the late Queen Elizabeth II. To any normal person, these numbers are nearly beyond comprehension. As a child of Indian immigrants myself, I am sceptical that Sunak in any shape or form is looking after my interests any better than any of the white Eton boys who preceded him. Our apparently shared cultural heritage hardly matters in the grand scheme of things.

Perhaps this is a little harsh. There are undeniable positives of seeing change with your own eyes. It is hugely inspiring for

minority communities to see people who look like them, though their financial backgrounds may not be the same. It is a start in the right direction - Yousaf is the first Scottish-Asian and Muslim to be elected as First Minister and Rishi Sunak is the first British Indian and Hindu. To see 10 Downing Street decorated with traditional Diwali regalia goes a long way in normalising other cultures and helping promote practices that historically have been looked down on and mocked. Many children from diasporas have a deep-seated insecurity about their heritage and are made to feel 'other' - oftentimes it is not as simplistic as the colour of your skin but extends to the accent you speak in or the way you dress or how your food smells. Similarly, Yousaf's tweet - 157K views and counting - explaining why he fasts for Ramadan helps cultivate a more accepting attitude towards something that is alien to the majority of the Scottish population. Additionally, there is little doubt that Yousaf, Sunak and countless other PoC in politics, and the wider professional world, have had to work harder to achieve the same milestones as their white colleagues. They have had to overcome systemic racism and are testament to the fact that it can and will be done. As visible figures of diversity, their presence and success help engender a sense of self-confidence in young people, which in turn will help push against the deeply entrenched prejudices that must be destroyed before true equality can be achieved.

Essentially, there is a need for logical balance - we need to be cognizant that these figures are good for a certain type of representation but they are not all-encompassing. Politics is notoriously closed-off to those from less financially privileged backgrounds and even more so to PoC from working-class families. This must be addressed at its root level - Rishi Sunak and Humza Yousaf cannot be used as proof that British politics has achieved its optimal diversity quota. The myth of representation is a complicated one but steps in the right direction mean that we are closer than ever to making true equality a reality.

“Race is only one aspect of diversity”

The Debate Chamber

Atik vs Bridge? Ailish and Oliver go head to head, to decide Oxford's best night out

Wednesday night Park End is mythic. Picture it: you're clamoring eagerly up the entrance stairs into that dark haze where any musical taste is satiated and all dance 'moves' permitted. Maybe the heat is making you dizzy, but you don't care - you know your destination. The cheese floor, cheap shots and a lack of inhibitions awaits.

As a Mancunian who struggles to leave the (concerning) warmth of 42s every term, I can safely say Atik is the only decent alternative. Bridge bashers may denigrate the queue, but don't we all secretly enjoy the religious experience that is the pilgrimage to Atik? Rather than being sheep-herded into Bridge against our wills, we need no directional assistance. Atik is also considerably bigger than Bridge - Oxford's biggest club in fact. Sure, the opposition will say that the smoking area is a quirky addition, if fake grass and plastic seats is your thing.

Now, the main event: the Cheese floor. This iconic fluorescent jumble of lights and mirrors will go down in history for many of us as a bulwark of the Oxford Experience - more so than any time spent at Rad Cam. Nothing screams 'Oxford' more than cramming yourself onto a 15 ft dancefloor with a (literal) ton of illuminous rowing blazers. But, despite any temporary blindness, the Cheese floor is where all the troubles of the Oxford degree

melt away into a frenzied mesh of Abba and 2000's teen angst.

If cheese isn't your thing, perhaps one of the other three options is. The second floor boasts more DJ talent than Bridge has in its entire building. Did I mention Tiki? A hidden corner for those blessed with an affinity for sport (or just good at getting past bouncers). Bridge, on the other hand, leaves no room for anything other than the average 2012 song, and no one needs to hear 'Timber' that many times.

Not to rehash any nightmares of Bridge's extortion, but how can I not mention Atik's classic 4 for £10 Jägers? Park End is the student dream. To top it off, Bridge could never dream of a visit from The Beast himself - clearly the real authority on the best club. And please, if your main argument against Atik is its cleanliness, maybe you need to get out more...



Whilst C*mbidge starts their weeks on a Thursday, we see them out in style at Bridge.

Two, sometimes even three, floors of incredibly mediocre music means there's always something for everyone. That's perhaps the only issue with the 8th wonder of the world, Bridge. I think a can of sardines is too nice of a metaphor to describe the feeling of being crushed on your way down the stairs to the (amazing) smoking area.

Though you might lose feeling in one or two of your limbs on your way down to the glorious smoking area, at least you won't smell like smoke the next morning. That's because you probably caught something in Atik the night before and now your nose is blocked. Then again, no-one has ever complained about there being too many

people in Berghain. And that's Bridge's only real competition.

Atik's only competition, on the other hand, is John Radcliffe Hospital's biohazard disposal unit. People talk about the sweat in Plush but not enough fuss is made about the toilets in Atik - having gone to a boys' school, I thought I had seen bad toilets, but even after nine pints I'm careful to avoid the puddles of nondescript fluids on the floor in that hellhole. Whilst I wouldn't describe Bridge as sanitary, it scores leagues above Atik (on the scale of whether you're likely to catch a life-changing disease).

Queues? What Queues? Oh you mean the two-hour long one outside Atik? I've never had to wait more than 20 minutes to get into Bridge - I can't say the same for getting into Park End on a Wednesday. If you can remember the night, you weren't drunk enough, right? Nonetheless, you won't be subject to the self-entitled bouncers at Atik. Bridge is also the only Oxford club I've managed to blag my way in for free. Poor security is a positive, obviously.

£2 cocktails and a side of guilt

Georgie Cutmore

In February 2023, Argentina's inflation rate went past the 100% mark, hitting 102.5%.

Back in July 2022, in our uni orientation week for a semester abroad in Buenos Aires, the hot topic amongst the international students was money. More precisely: how cheap everything was. You could buy a fancy cocktail for the equivalent of £2, a standard restaurant meal for £5-7, or a steak dinner at Don Julio - named the Best Restaurant in Latin America in 2020 - for £20-30.

For a bunch of uni students from Europe, it was like Christmas came early. We had more spending power than we knew what to do with and a decent amount of free time to live like your typical gap yah kids. But after the initial surprise came a gradual understanding of the situation we found ourselves in, and the implications behind it.

Argentina has two rates for foreign currency exchange: the official rate, and the "blue rate". Following historical on and off restrictions on the amount of foreign currency locals can purchase, an underground black market for US dollars emerged, dubbed the "dólar blue". While, on the blue rate, locals receive a worse rate than the official one to exchange their pesos, foreigners are rewarded by the system. At the time of writing, £1 = \$265 ARS on the official rate, and \$496 ARS on the blue.

Any card transaction, or money conversion

from official channels would give you the lesser rate; to get the blue rate you'd have to seek out "arbolitos" (street dollar sellers), visit "cuevas" (caves, illegal exchange houses), or jump through the bureaucratic hoops of Western Union.

We became seasoned speculators - the blue rate could change by a margin of 20 pesos on a daily basis, and it wasn't uncommon to receive a text on exchange student group chats reading "The rate's good today - go get your money". When I arrived in Buenos Aires in July, the blue rate was £1 = 320-340 ARS; at the time of writing, £1 = 496 ARS.

From our privileged, unscathed position as international students - inconvenienced by non-functioning Western Union branches rather than an inability to eat or live - we witnessed how soaring inflation and a failing economy affected life on a daily basis. We didn't feel the real effects, given that local prices stayed relatively the same to the pound conversion, or even decreased. But it was a really strange dynamic to be part of. Indeed, getting excited about £2 cocktails and feeling the tangible benefits from foreign spending power came with layers of guilt as we watched many of our Argentine friends and acquaintances live the full consequences of the country's financial struggles.

Inflation in Argentina is directly linked to the increased use of the dollar and other foreign currencies. The emerging rich, nowadays, are those who are paid in US dollars, pounds, or euros. As the Peso loses value, those who spend based on stores of foreign

currencies come out of financial transactions better off, and the wealth inequality gap grows.

In February 2023, Argentina's inflation rate went past the 100% mark, hitting 102.5%. The rate has risen steadily through the past few months and, if we bear in mind that in July 2022 inflation was at 70.1%, it's clear that the effects of inflation in the country have long been felt. In December, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) had to step in to approve \$6bn USD (£4.9bn) of bailout money. In fact, the government has recently had to issue a new, \$2000 peso banknote to keep up with the falling value of the ARS peso.

I spoke to my friend Giuliana Camaño, a student of International Relations at the University of San Andrés, about her experience of - and perspective on - the situation.

She told me: "The main problem is that prices rise and wages don't. Prices of basic necessities for your average person: gas, public transport, food, clothes, health insurance, etc." In my experience, prices at the supermarket were different every time you went in, and restaurants tended to have whiteboard-style menus, to be able to change the prices every few days. At the university, there have been four price hikes - of around 20% each time - in fees for local students since the middle of last year.

Giuli came to study in Buenos Aires at the age of 18, but her hometown is the province

of Mendoza, which lies to the west of the capital near the Chilean border. Inflation is felt differently in the rest of the country, given that Buenos Aires has starker social and economic inequalities than elsewhere. In Mendoza, for example, "the majority of the population forms the middle class, so the gap isn't as distinguished - obviously there's poverty but it's not felt as directly as it is in the streets of Buenos Aires". Even so, Mendoza's supermarket shelves are markedly bare and many businesses have been affected by the worsening economy.

For students who come from the other regions to study and work in Buenos Aires, there's a real struggle to live. In the capital, "things are a lot more expensive than they are in many parts of the country", leaving many to rely heavily on their parents - but even so, it can be difficult to get by squaring the wages from one's home province with the prices of the capital.

This economic struggle is playing out side by side with growing social tensions. In October of this year, elections will be held to choose the president, members of the national congress and the governors of most of the provinces. There's already fighting between the various political parties as they raise campaigns with different strategies to tackle inflation. Giuli tells me that "they constantly blame each other for historical problems. All this is generating a heavy social tension that will be hard to contain."

The main problem is that prices rise and wages don't

It was like Christmas came early

CHERBADLY

Hear ye! Sign Up for the Spring Punting Joust

Hear ye all brave men of action! A great tourney awaits ye upon the river Cherwell for the sweet spring is upon us and so, as the birds chirp and the sun warms the hillsides, 'tis once again time for the Oxford Punt Joust! We call out to the great punters of all the realm to descend upon Oxford to show their strength before the eyes of our gracious and merciful lord, the River King who convenes this great tourney as a gift to his people.

However, be forewarned! The tournament requires great skill and cunning and only the very best punt jousters are called to partake, forthwith. Only a soul of great mettle might survive this clash of casual river rafts!

Believe ye strong enough to un-boat the great champion of last season, Sir Hamilton the Dry? Then come ye to the mouth of the river to sign your life away upon the mighty charter.

- The rules of the tourney are as follows:**
1. The champions will select their punts and their poles at break of dawn
 2. The champions will parade their selected boats before the River King who shall grace the champions by presiding over their feats of courage
 3. Two brave champions selected by a soothsayer will position their punts at opposite ends of the River Cherwell
 4. They will charge their punts at full speed toward one another

5. Upon approach each champion will raise their poles and attempt to un-boat his opponent with the sharpened end
6. If a champion is un-boated he will be left to perish by the teeth of Drogor the River Serpent lest he swim to the bank!
7. If no champion be un-boated they must start again or be called coward and made to wear the Crown of Shame, doomed forever to the laughter of the maiden folk!

8. The tourney will continue until one great champions punt remains on his punt
9. This brave champion shall be granted the gracious kiss of the River Princess who will present him with the Garland Wreath to have and hold until the coming of the next tournament

Do you possess the fire of heart to partake in such mannish games? Any man who dares to attend the tournament but is seen to display unbecoming character or cowardice will be fed to Drogor the River Serpent.

If ye would like to attend the tourney as a spectator, tickets are ten ducats. The tourney will begin at break of day and last until the final boatman has claimed his rightful victory. Any spectators who display unruly behavior before the River King will likewise be fed to Drogor the River Serpent.

Children and seniors get in free.

John Evelyn

Trinity Term is upon us once more, and unto the Union the vultures descend. With the retirement of The King, we welcome in the reign of Limp Dick. Yet some of his team had more to worry about over the vacation than the termcard. Watch out, the hacks are coming!

All eyes are on Regina George in her upcoming presidential bid, as the Rose of St Anne promises not to be a thorn in the side of her campaign. She has reportedly found an Officer team in the Flying Scotsman, SBS in Spirit, and America's Miss Congeniality, who will surely be hoping for as eye-watering a numberww of votes as the price of one of her dresses. In what may be her final and easiest election yet, we'll have to see if this prom queen and her team #FULFIL their goals.

The token Northerner, however, seems to have found himself out of his depth. Notably on the sidelines with him are Posh Spice and the 70s Pimp. No stranger to being stranded alone in a war-zone, JE hears that the Pimp may fly solo if not air-lifted to safety once again. Time will tell if they can catch the next flight to an Officership.

Limp Dick's court of appointees include remnants from The King's reign, namely Pint-Sized Thatcher and the newly promoted Ginny Weasley. He's also dusted the cobwebs off of The Grandfather, and taken him from the bar to Senior Appointed. With the Magdalen Menace as his deputy, despite The King attempting to remove the role as the last remnant of Chairman Now-was, at least there's some assurance in case he dies of old age. And, with TriniTory and the West Country Fanatic heading up Auto-Resignations Committee, we'll have to see

just how many hacks they can knock out this time around.

Elsewhere on committee, the age-old toss up remains: third on Standing or third class degree? The Neutrality Traitor seems keen to #DEVELOP his experience in hackery even further, following in the footsteps of Captain America and running for not-Sitting committee once again. He joins Fake Blonde and the History Boy on Regina George's slate. SBS in Spirit keeps his pod together, leading us to wonder if more Gryffindors will be invading the Macmillan room with Madame MBA prior to this term's election.

Speaking of parties, the Tribunal called checkmate and our Lib-Elect found himself disqualified. It's his party, and he'll hack if he wants to. Though rumours swirl that this may not have been the end of the ordeal, with fears of an Appellate Board resurrecting another binned officer. JE can neither confirm nor deny, but reminds his readers that it's only 0th week, and the claws can't come out just yet!

Although the members might be looking forward to the riveting debates and intellectual discourse typical of the Union, I'm sure those of us who enjoy climbing greasy poles will be more concerned with w h o might throw their hack into the ring and disrupt the daz-zlingly drama-free promise of an uncontested election. After all, if I can teach you anything about Frewin Court and its inhabit-ants, it is this: history always repeats itself.

Yours,
Johnny E xo

Sudokus by Lewis Callister

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	4							
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	4			7			2	8
							4	
	6				1	5		9
			9	2	3			6

Wordsearch by Lewis Callister

This week's theme is our term's namesake: Trinities! Within the grid are 15 members of 5 iconic trios (and a mystery bonus answer) - these can be found written forwards, backwards, up, down, left, right, and diagonally so be sure to give it your best tri!

ARAMIS
ATHOS
PORTHOS

ARISTOTLE
SOCRATES
PLATO

BLOSSOM
BUBBLES
BUTTERCUP

CURLY
LARRY
MOE

ALDRIN
ARMSTRONG
COLLINS

M	I	X	O	L	P	Z	O	H	L	L	M	E	N	T
Q	S	I	M	A	R	A	T	B	A	L	D	R	I	N
R	O	F	U	V	D	M	A	E	C	O	O	B	G	J
S	N	I	L	L	O	C	L	N	E	A	L	R	I	K
O	P	M	A	S	Z	Q	P	T	E	U	W	S	C	O
H	T	O	M	R	P	I	G	L	E	N	E	S	Q	M
T	N	S	V	M	O	U	T	C	H	T	A	U	B	G
A	C	S	X	K	R	O	C	I	A	R	E	L	N	O
N	M	O	O	D	T	J	D	R	O	W	T	O	P	I
C	Z	L	Y	S	H	N	C	G	E	O	R	M	B	Y
W	U	B	I	L	O	O	A	Q	N	T	I	C	R	F
P	E	R	R	N	S	H	B	S	S	E	T	R	L	O
G	A	D	L	S	T	E	A	M	O	H	A	U	K	M
F	X	U	O	Y	F	P	R	E	O	L	S	C	B	Q
E	O	M	P	O	W	A	Z	B	U	B	B	L	E	S

Masthead

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A Fear of Pink

Deborah Ogunnoiki, Deputy Editor

Growing up as a child in the early 2000s, my introduction to what I thought was feminism was a rejection of all girly things. To be a girlie-girl was anti-feminist, giving into the patriarchal stereotypes men put upon women. Of course, I didn't word it like that when I was 6, but it was something to that effect.

So then, for most of my childhood, I avoided things that were too girly. I watched PowerRangers and Dragon Ball Z. Stacked up my collection of Hot Wheels, Beybladez and Match Attack cards. At nine, I pledged my allegiance to the Chelsea football club and joined my school football team. I wore trousers to school and expressed distaste for anything girly, whether bows and makeup or most detrimentally, the colour pink.

I avoided the colour pink like the plague. I wouldn't wear it, touch it, wouldn't play with Barbies or any other pink toys. I avoided pink because it felt too cliché for a girl to like something so feminine. Surely I was breaking some kind of feminist rule by 'giving in'? Liking pink and pastels and Barbies and ribbons and bows, felt like I was setting myself up for target practice. Being targeted by boys who might like you,

who might tease you and pull your hair because you're just the kind of girl they've been taught to like. Boys don't chase after girls who act like boys. I thought my love for Dragon Ball Z and colourfully dressed superheroes would save me from that fate. I was wrong.

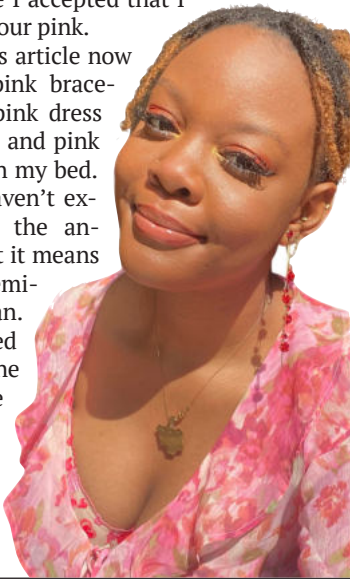
Because the truth was I could never actually hate the colour pink. Secretly, I loved it. I liked the pink things. The ribbons and bows, the dolls, the baby Annabelle's, the Lelli Kelli shoes. I wanted it all. Yet something in me told me that if I accepted my femininity, I would be subject to the same misogynistic treatment I saw other women experience. I hid behind blues, yellows and greens because I thought it could neutralise what made me a woman.

Needless to say, cutting my access to femininity did not save me from the fate all women experience. Now that I am older, and know more about feminism, I know that liking pink and girly things isn't what defines a woman. A woman isn't defined by a colour, or a piece of clothing, or even a type of genitalia. A woman is anything I want it to be. And I want to be a woman who likes the colour pink.

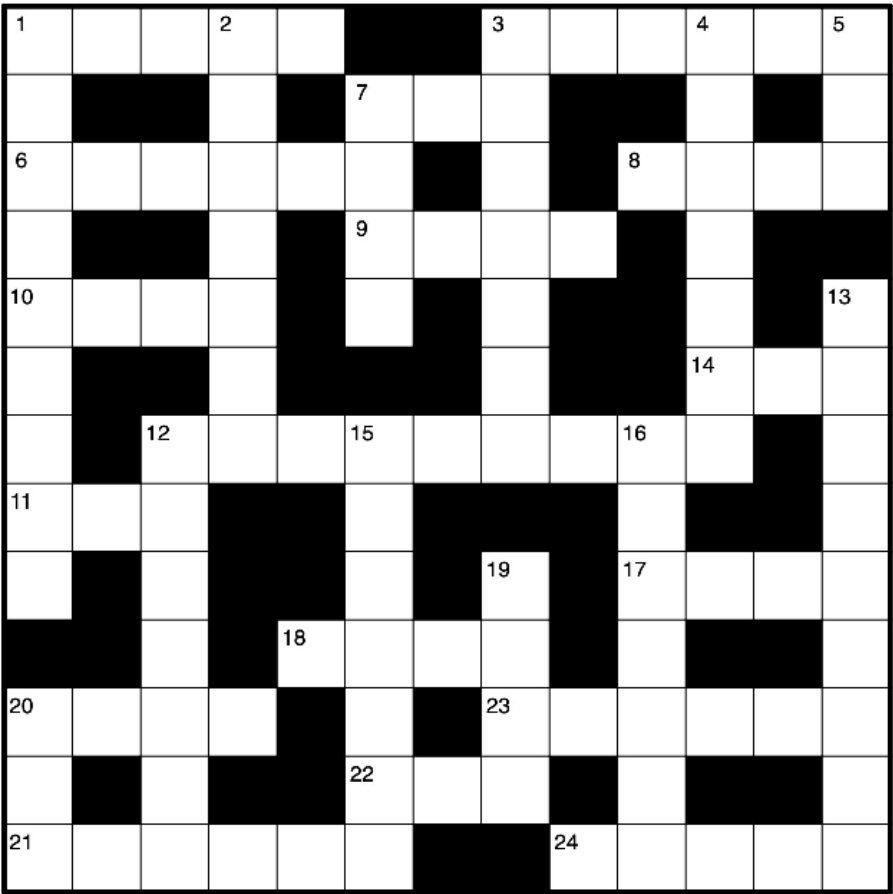
So even though I never stopped liking the cringe shounen anime or that weird interest in fire trucks, I dropped the facade that I was

super interested in football (I couldn't care less unless it's Varsity or the World Cup), and I re-examined my rights to womanhood. There is no pink access card to femininity. There's no handbook, and all the Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen movies could not tell me what it meant to be a girl. This was something I had to discover for myself, and that was only going to happen once I accepted that I liked the colour pink.

I write this article now wearing a pink bracelet, with a pink dress in my closet and pink bedsheets on my bed. Though I haven't exactly found the answer to what it means to be a feminine woman. I've accepted that feminine things make me happy. And for now, that's enough.



Cryptic Crossword by Sarah Beard



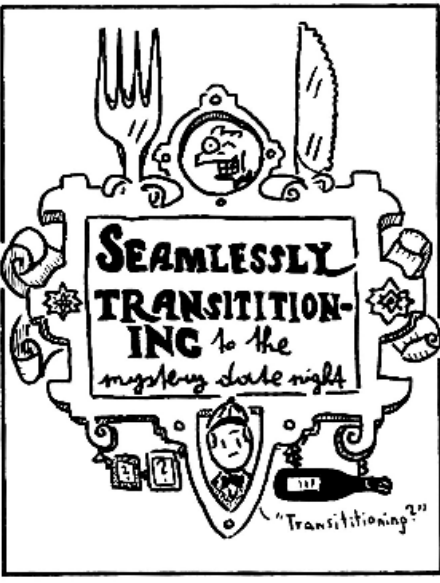
Across:

- 1. Hidden salsa interests holy figure (5)
- 3. Serial killer has twelve houses (6)
- 6. Or another? (3,3)
- 7. First six knees injured in Val Thorens (3)
- 8. Wounded horse is uncool (4)
- 9. Quite a pleasant city on the French Riviera (4)
- 10. Sweet romantic evening (4)
- 11. Vision of the ocean (3)
- 12. Unexpected disaster messes up mercy gene (9)
- 14. Living on French street causes deep regret (3)
- 17. Wedding surrounded by water (4)
- 18. Japanese soup helps to warm up vocal cords (4)
- 20. Most prematurely - half of a citrus flavoured tea (4)
- 21. Twins' quartz obstructs vision (6)
- 22. Rent gets in the middle of people time (3)
- 23. Breaded prawns rip off mathematical constant (6)
- 24. Ma makes me do it (5)

Down:

- 1. Underwater fencer (9)
- 2. The vac is finally over! (3,4)
- 3. Button alternative cipher needed to post to US (3,4)
- 4. Silver in visually descriptive language (7)
- 5. Now is your time to play pool (3)
- 7. Most of 90s boy band in quicksand harmonize (4)
- 12. Percussionists in sensory organ (7)
- 13. Verbs often used to describe daily routine are performed without conscious thought (9)
- 15. Jupiter's moon has competition - scrambled Italian dish (7)
- 16. Spanish girl visits city in Illinois (7)
- 19. I can't find my 50 Swedish cheeses! (4)
- 20. Poached elephants get gathered first (3)

Kevin and Timmy try Cherpse



by Sean Hartnett

“I just like having the stuff”: In conversation with the Crockery Crook

Discussing stealing crockery and silverware from colleges with an anonymous college thief

Deborah Ogunnoiki

In the Hilary term of 2023 Oxford was whipped into frenzy. The trend of the term being what could you get away with stealing from a college formal hall. Whatever the appeal, student thieves have been reportedly stealing things as little as forks to still lit candle sticks. The fad got so bad that colleges such as Magdalen and Balliol allegedly sending emails in order to put a stop the stash stealers. Magdalen offered amnesty to the dish delinquents claiming that they “are giving you the opportunity to return these items before the end of term with no blame attached.” A cheeky Ox-fesser captioned the email screenshot “If anyone is after Magdalen stash...JCR dining room on Friday... [smirk emojis]”. Balliol, in a similar manner, branded the silverware swindlers as “incredibly selfish” after 20 cups were stolen from Hall.

Cherwell has obtained an exclusive anonymous interview with a professional college stash thief. Branding herself as the “Crockery Crook”, in this interview she explains her reasoning behind her thievery, her tactics, and what she plans to do with her growing stash of stolen goods.

Going straight into it I asked her the question that has likely been on all of our minds:

“*It’s like a sort of game.*”

“Why do you steal from colleges?”. Her reply was slow, as she thought long and hard about her reasons for doing something that had almost become habit. Finally answering she claims that “I just like having the stuff. I think it’s kind of cool. It’s a nice little souvenir”, she then goes on to justify her actions: “I don’t see it as being that big of a problem I’m not taking that much.” She explains that “It’s just a thing. We’re all a part of taking something from each college, it’s like a sort of game. And I just felt like doing it.” It’s a different image of the “selfish” image Balliol paints of these thieves. Is it more accurate to view the trend as a sign of teen spirit? A mischievous game played together by the students? Perhaps. The Crockery Crook reflects on the first time she interacted with a fellow thief “My college mum had a collection of placemats. And I was like, ‘Ooh, let me do that as well.’ She had like five and I was like, that’s kind of cool.”

Her answer gives a different perspective on how stealing from colleges brings together students, and in the face of all the wealth that these colleges has amassed over hundreds of years, is a couple of placemats and cups really a serious crime? However, what happens after university, I ask, what will you do with this stash once university is over? “I want to keep them,” she answers, “I’m quite a sentimental person, on my wall I’ve got random little bits and bobs that I got when I was at this or that event. It’s a memory thing.” She explains that they’re currently on her shelf at the moment. Along with a collection of other random bits and bobs that she’s got at various events. Though eventually a lot of her stolen board will be thrown away, it’s nice way to remember her time at university. While this is all nice and mushy, I want

“*Every time I go into a college there is the intent of stealing.*”



to know about the thief persona of the Crockery Crook. “How many colleges have you visited with the intent of stealing?” I ask. This time her answer is quick “Every time I go into a college there is the intent of stealing.” Intrigued, I ask her if she’s ever been caught or close to being caught. Another quick reply “No, I’m too good at my job” she jokes, “I have five placemats, one from Exeter, Balliol, two from Wadham, even one from the Wadham High Table, and a Sommerville one. A wine bottle with the Teddy Hall name on it. Some napkins and some menus, but I’m probably going to get rid of them. I have a Magdalen plate and a Wadham plate.” I ask her if there are any colleges she aspires to add to her collections, stating that “I don’t think I care particularly about the college, but I just want to get little things from the colleges I go to,” but though she claims that there aren’t any she aspires to steal from, she aspires to up her game and aim to take home one of the coveted candlesticks from formal hall as she recalls a rumour of someone stealing a still lit candlestick from hall, and another brave soul supposedly stealing a whole chair.

The Crockery Crook is a woman as well as an ethnic minority, I ask her whether her acts are an act of rebellion, taking down the patriarchy and white supremacy that Oxford represents. But she rejects this “I don’t think of it as like, oh

I’m rebelling. But I do justify it in that these people have money. It’s not like these colleges are going broke because people are stealing plates.” Though it’s not for some grandiose reason like rebellion, for she’s no Robin Hood she claims, the Crockery Crook emphasises that the trend is more like a tradition and criticises the colleges for suddenly taking issue with it “it feels like how trashing was a whole Oxford tradition. And then all of a sudden, they change their mind and are now like, that’s bad. I feel like this has been a thing for ages, people have been doing it for years.”

The cutlery criminal tradition may be an attested custom imbedded in the forever bizarre Oxford student culture, but what is the Crockery Crook’s final message to those who aspire to be like her? “Just do it. It’s actually not that hard. No one really notices. Bring a tote bag, and slip it in. There’s genuinely no real skill to it. That’s it. That’s my whole advice.”

The Crockery Crook’s words are resounding. Whether you steal from colleges because you want a little souvenir, or because you’re a rebel, you’re part of a collective, a tradition created by Oxford students, for Oxford students. Will silverware stealing suffer the same fate as trashing? It’s likely. But that’s the beauty of Oxford’s weird traditions. Some last hundreds of years, and some are short-lived, only to be revived by future generations looking for some excitement to brighten up the dreary daily life of academia. Maybe what’s important is to live in the moment, no matter what.

Artwork by Thomas Godfrey.



Music and Cosplay: In conversation with MAKO Girl and cos- player, A-Ni Ochoa

Discussing being a music artist and a black cosplayer

Deborah Ogunnoiki

Cosplay, a portmanteau of ‘costume play’, is an activity and performance art where in which participants wear costumes to represent a specific character. The term was invented by Japanese film producer and director, Nobuyuki Takahashi, after seeing costumed fans in the 1984 World Science Fiction Convention in Los Angeles. However, it’s said that the history of cosplaying lies in the masquerade balls in 15th-century Europe. Gradually, the practice grew, developed, and evolved into modern-day cosplaying.

Of the many modern-day cosplayers, A-Ni Ochoa is one of the most well-known on the internet. With 940k followers on TikTok, the music artists’ cosplays have captivated the internet. She tells the Cherwell all about the world of cosplaying and what it means for her as a Black woman and music artist.

A-Ni tells us that her interest in cosplaying came to surface in early 2018, when her older sister was into cosplay and A-Ni was invited to go with her to MOMOCON, knowing that she had an interest in anime/gaming. She said she “loved everything about it!” and “was in awe of the cosplays that people had and I wanted to be able to be apart of that.”

However, as cosplaying enters more main-

stream media, issues like ethnicity and gender become more and more controversial. Issues such as blackface, brownface and yellowface become greater topics of debate as many cosplayers still feel that it’s acceptable in order to be true to their cosplays. Further issues are created where cosplayers of colour face criticism when cosplaying white characters, facing backlash claiming that “that character isn’t black you can’t cosplay as them”.

I ask A-Ni what it means to her to be a black cosplayer when the cosplaying community and the anime community can often times be hostile to black people. A-Ni tells us that “It’s very disheartening to hear that people would be hostile to black cosplayers. To me

it feels as if we haven’t progressed much as a community. Cosplaying is supposed to be fun and feel like a safe space that anyone can enjoy, regardless of what their skin complexion is or race. We have to support and protect POC cosplayers so that they don’t feel discouraged or worry about what others might think about them cosplaying. To help combat that, having a diverse community and a safe space within it can definitely be the start of making a better impact!”

Her positive attitude truly surprised me. As I

myself am a big fan of her cosplays and the general cosplay community, I know too well the levels of abuse that cosplayers can receive, especially people of colour and women. I ask her if she herself has ever experienced colourism or racism when sharing her cosplays, and how she deals with it. “As a black as cosplayer there are often times when I get a wave of hate



A-Ni Ochoa from her Twitter profile

comments from cosplaying characters that aren’t black. I would get called racial slurs, and many other things, and even had experiences of people messaging me that they didn’t like that I cosplayed a certain character.

Despite getting those types of comments, I ignore them completely and to be honest it never affects me at all. Due to me already being in the music industry prior to cosplaying I’ve already built the thick skin for it and received worse comments on that end. But overall focusing on the hate did not get me as far as I am or halt me from doing what I love to do. It was catering to the audience that do love me and being an inspiration to other black cosplayers that got me to where I am now.”

A-Ni Ochoa is one-third of the Hip-Hop/Pop group, MAKO Girls. Based in Atlanta, the group features the three West Indian sisters Kena, Mimi, and A-Ni. The girls have performed live throughout the United States and the Bahamas with one of them as young as 14. Being in the public eye for as long as they have, and as young as they are, it’s not a surprise that A-Ni and her sisters have built a thick skin against internet trolls.

Though despite having a thick skin against those on the internet, how does she feel about the cosplayer community itself? The anime and cosplaying community has been accused many times of misogyny. Female cosplayers experiencing over-sexualisation, assault and lewd comments online. The anime community similarly has been accused of underrating its female characters and seeing them as figures of sexual desire rather than characters of genuine admiration or interest. These experiences have alienated women from cosplaying spaces and created an environment within the cosplaying community

that could be said to be hostile to women. A-Ni’s take on this is that “From the experiences that I have with the anime community, I feel like the women in the community are lifting each other up constantly. I love and respect all of my mutuals because they always support any cosplay that I do. They are the first ones to comment, repost, or share

my videos. They truly make being a cosplayer worthwhile and fun. Now with the misogyny that’s been occurring, I haven’t been on receiving end of it, or heard of it happening, so I won’t be able to add too much to that topic. But that’s just my experience, especially since my audience is majority women.”

It’s beautiful that a young woman has the support of her community online. But it’s not just her female audience that supports the young cosplayer. I ask A-Ni how her family feels about her cosplays. Older generations, especially African and Caribbean parents, tend to struggle to understand things like cosplaying and anime. But A-Ni answers that “My parents are very supportive of me cosplaying, they just show it in different ways! My mom would always interact with my content, she’ll be excited for any character’s cosplay that I show her, and she loves the outfits despite her not knowing the show. Whereas my dad would see my post interact with some of them, but any milestone that I hit on my page he’ll always be one of the first to congratulate me. I am very grateful to have them.”

Though A-Ni explains that there are times when it is extremely difficult maintaining multiple social media presences as a music artist and cosplayer with her fully

booked schedule. It is clear through her social media stats and bomb-ass music (stream ‘Leverage’ by MAKO Girls on Spotify!), that this is a both dedicated and talented young cosplayer and music artist.



The MAKO Girls from their YouTube channel

“
My parents are very supportive of me cosplaying

“
I would get called racial slurs, and many other things, and even had experiences of people messaging me

SPEAK DANGEROUSLY

BY THISURI PERERA

When I think of the
Women in my family,
Sometimes I cannot
Breathe.

I think about my bloodline and great-
Grandmothers, about the way my
Heart perpetually breaks-
As I realise, they must
Have cherished the sun rays
As passionately as I despise
The British rain.
They must have savoured
The taste of our sweet teas,
As softly as I correct someone
Mispronouncing my name.

I struggle to find air I
Can breathe when I
Comprehend how much louder
My voice can be today.
Then I feel guilty I'm
Writing in someone else's
Language. Guilty I can't
Walk barefoot on our beaches.
Guilty I'm never back home

At the first glimpse of the
New moon, nor on the
4th of February.

Way too often I worry I'm living
A life that is not mine, analysing
All these losses I'm meant
To ignore and comply by.
Yet I know I'm fortunate, for
My ancestors fought for the
Peace I savour today.
If I can write and fight
And dare to speak dangerously,
I have a whole island I'm in debt to,
My own heart as a sacrifice.

Then I look at my skin,
And I see gold
Where I once wanted
To see nothing at all.
And I linger in the
Sun for hours on end,
No longer fearful of
A new shade or even four.

I know the past might
Always ache through my skull,
And I know Time is
Linear and our agony forever
Irreversible.
Yet if I stand here, under
The sunrays just for a little
Longer, if I carefully
Shut these eyelids
And feel my cheeks ablaze,
I might resemble my great-
Grandmothers, and they'll know
Nothing was ever in vain-
All those battles brought
Them to me today.

For if I so often feel
As if I'm living a life
That's not entirely mine,
It's simply because I'm living
For all of them before me,
Those who lived in the absence of
Peace, or in the aftermath
Of our freedom,
by the sea.

Art

Women, scorned: Exploring feminine rage in art

Kelsey Moriarty

Feminine rage is all the rage. It's everywhere. Following Anya Taylor-Joy's declaration that she has "a thing for feminine rage", there has been growing popular realisation that the expression of it is both beautiful and necessary. Its increasing visibility suggests that society is more receptive to the celebration of female anger. Throughout history, representations of feminine rage have tended to take a more passive route in its portrayal. Women are constantly expected to be so many conflicting things — innocent yet sexual, angry yet dignified. Feminine rage allows us to ask: what happens when women focus these two polarised states of feeling into one of pure, unbridled rage?

One of the earliest and most iconic artists to answer this question is Artemisia Gentileschi. It's a continuing theme in her work, but Judith and Holofernes is indisputably the most famous. It depicts feminine rage in a way that was highly unusual for the time. Previous depictions of the murder of Holofernes presented Judith as oxymoronicallly sexual and innocent; Gentileschi was far more willing to explore the idea of Judith as the aggressor rather than a passive figure. Judith's furrowed brow and tight grip banish notions

of reluctance in the eyes of the viewer. The strong diagonal emphasis of the painting, as well as the use of light, pull the viewer's eyes towards the figures of Judith and Holofernes' neck. This works quite well — pushing women into the foreground with such intense focus really forces you to take in the brutality of the act. It's perversely spectacular, and done so well that centuries later, you also feel Judith' righteous rage. Her reconstitutive approach to a classical religious narrative, challenging contemporary reproductions, makes space for a visceral interpretation of feminine rage.

A different take on feminine rage is offered by Dante Gabriel Rossetti in the nineteenth century. His 1862 pen and wash drawing of his sister, famous poet Christina Rossetti, depicts feminine rage as normal and human. The drawing was created to alleviate and poke fun at her worries about reading reviews of her poetry collection. It depicts her in a state of delightfully destructive rage, breaking windows and toppling tables. Her impact on the scene is quite commendable, creating a strangely romantic notion of women as whirlwinds of anger. Christina is depicted in motion, clearly experiencing overwhelming feeling. The chaotic composition and hurried pen marks are indicative of immediate rage and destructive tendencies. Whilst this should create a sense of urgency, the viewer is met with comedic contrast — the scale of the drawing reminds you that this outburst is not

as consuming as the central figure believes. To put yourself in Christina Rossetti's shoes (although few would dare!) is to feel humoured and reassured looking at this drawing. Gabriel has alluded to the creation of this feeling with an inscription on the left reading "Miss Rossetti can point to work which could not easily be mended", from a Times review of her work. Christina often poked fun at her temper, and this sketch by her brother echoes that and offers a portrayal of feminine rage as natural and human, even if unwarranted.

In search of an ostensibly more modern work, Piplotti Rist's Ever is Over All (1997) is the natural answer. It combines the visceral nature of Gentileschi's work with the human element of Rossetti's — it is unsurprising it holds up so strongly. Through the compelling medium of the large-scale video installation, Rist's work is made to have an immersive and engulfing feel. On one screen is a field of flowers. On the other, a young woman walks down the street in red heels and is quickly given over to violent impulses and begins smashing car windows whilst accompanied by serene music. Shot in a single take with a camera of rather questionable quality, it emphasises the spontaneity and suddenness with which rage can overcome us, as well as suggesting that rage within women is always close to the surface. The music in the background, combined with the blue tint of



Judith Slaying Holofernes
(Artemisia Gentileschi, Naples)

the video, has a hypnotic effect designed to portray feminine rage in a surreal and ever-present way. As we continue to navigate the complexities of gender and power today, Rist's timeless approach is a good one. The constancy of feminine rage has been fascinating artists for centuries. In a world that seeks to suppress it, it is truly commendable that feminine rage continues to be such a powerful artistic force.

‘Everything I’ve Wanted All At Once’

A cultural exploration of the importance of Daniel Kwan and Daniel Scheinert’s 2022 masterpiece, and the messages behind it.

Darren Trisno

The Asian community was repeatedly promised a film that would provide Asian representation in Hollywood.

The film *Crazy Rich Asians*, set in my country, Singapore, and with a 100% Asian cast seemed like it would fit the description. It was instead an unrelatable mess filled with billion-dollar bachelor parties and expansive estates: the central conflict being that the super hot trust fund baby’s family may disapprove of you as a potential wife. It represented me as well as a zebra crossing represents a zebra. The colours were the same but everything else was frustratingly unrecognisable.

Then, it was supposed to be Shang-Chi. The first Asian superhero! But again, I – understandably – found it difficult to relate to the plot of: “my father is an evil dictator with the powers of an alien superweapon and he tortured me as a child to be a fighting machine”. While it delivered the important message that Asian dudes have hot abs too, it needed more.

Then came *Everything Everywhere All At Once* (EEAAO).

Who would have thought that a movie about jumping through universes, hotdog fingers, and a racoon that controls a chef Ratatouille-style would be the film that captures so much about what it means to be Asian. If you have not watched it, please do, and prepare some tissues.

Disappointing your parents. I would never dream of claiming it as an exclusively Asian experience. However, in a culture known to produce “tiger mums” and “helicopter dads”, this theme hits home hard. Perhaps it is because family values are heavily emphasised, and generations are culturally inclined to pin their hopes and dreams on their progeny. Or it is because instead of discussing the weather with strangers and friends alike, we competitively compare our children (our height, grades, schools, incomes, and partners). Parental pressure has always been a consistent theme in Asian media, from Bollywood’s 3 Idiots to Korea’s SKY Castle. In small doses, it feels good to be loved and supported by your parents. EEAAO captures the feeling of when one has an overdose. Joy feels shirked and unloved by her mother Evelyn. In a classically Asian manner, Evelyn has replaced “I love you” and “I’m sorry” in her dictionary with “You should eat more” and “Why don’t you ever call?”. Throughout the

course of the film, we also find that Evelyn herself has suffered from the disapproval of her father and highlighting the presence of an intergenerational trauma cycle. This is why when Evelyn does express her love to her daughter in the end (as a rock, or when they’re getting sucked into a black-hole bagel), millions of traumatised Asian children worldwide experience a moment of deep catharsis. Some have even joked that Michelle Yeoh deserves an Oscar just for portraying the inconceivable idea of an Asian mother apologising convincingly. Such a collectively shared Asian experience being touchingly portrayed in the film is one of the reasons why this film is a gem. For those who have felt underappreciated and overly scrutinised, this film offers both an apology to the children and an explanation to the parents. In the end, in the small specks of time we get to spend in this ever-expanding multiverse, we would still like to spend them being surrounded by the people we love.

For an Asian kid, there is only one critic harsher than your parents. Yourself. Maybe it is the internalised pressure from said parents. Maybe it is the inherently competitive cultures many of us hail from. Maybe it is an overemphasis on hard work and an underemphasis on balance. Honestly, if a multiverse version of my partner told me I was chosen because I failed at everything I have ever done, I would not know what to do with myself.

Evelyn

been – including a world where she realises her fantasy of being a movie star. But of course, with every universe comes its own regrets. She does not end up with her current husband, Waymond. In a heart-wrenching Wong Kar Wai-esque scene, Waymond breaks her and the audience’s hearts when he says: “So, even though you have broken my heart yet again, I wanted to say, in another life, I would have really liked just doing laundry and taxes with you.” Sure, we all want to be “movie stars”. Especially here in Oxford, the default is that you are ambitious and want to seize the world. While we are all striving to be the best, EEAAO reminds us that appreciating the magic in every day, and the blessings we do have, is sometimes all that we need. Put some googly eyes on your bags to laugh a little. Dance when there is good music. Appreciate the laundry and the taxes of life.

Waymond Wang. Waymond Wang is proof that empathy and kindness is strength, not weakness as some Andrew Tate-esque followers of toxic masculinity might suggest. When we first met Waymond he seems like the classic bumbling idiot. He is carefree while Evelyn is a ball of stress. But by the end of the movie, we see that this is his superpower, not his weakness.

As Waymond says: “When I choose to see the good side of things, I’m not being naive. It is strategic and necessary. It’s how I’ve learned to survive through everything... I know you see yourself as a fighter. Well, I see myself as one too. This is how I fight.” He’s right. His ability to empathise and love is what gets through to Evelyn, enabling her to save Joy. His ability to find happiness and spread happiness is a superpower. As a man, representations of what it means to be powerful and to save the day have always been about stoic and often muscle-bound aggression. Take Superman or James Bond. For Asian men, the media has given us the martial arts icons of Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan. Waymond initially saves the day with his fighting skills as well, in a hilarious spin on Bruce Lee’s nunchucks technique using his fanny pack. His ultimate power lies not in his fists but in his heart. He shows that to save the day, it’s not about being physically imposing or knowing how to smash your way out of anything. You don’t need to be a calculated, cold Michael Corleone or a brash, aggressive Scarface. You need to empathise with the people around you. I have had an abundance of Kung Fu stars show me that I can fight, in a million different martial arts forms. Waymond, portrayed movingly by Ke Huy Quan, showed me how I can love too.

Waymond’s doodly eyes show that his perspective on life has always been the solution to Joy’s (and our) existential dread. Joy’s

“everything bagel” black hole is black on the outside with white in the centre. It shows a dark view of the world, where most of it is filled with corruption and evil. Waymond’s doodly eyes are the perfect opposite, with a white outer layer and a black centre, showing that life is filled with mostly goodness. His eyes were first portrayed as a sign of his childishness. Evelyn angrily scolds him, telling him not to put them everywhere, making a mess. When Evelyn puts the doodly eye on her forehead during the climax, showing that she has embraced his way of life, she sees what we see. That the eyes are not a sign of weakness, but the philosophy that will save us from our humdrum, mortal dread. The philosophy of seeing the fun side of things, of making the everyday interesting, and of finding the good in the bad.

The film itself is supposed to be an attack on your senses. Jumping from universe to universe, with intense colours, choreographed fight scenes and hilarious goofs, all while our protagonists are hurtling toward the end of reality. At its climax, however, it gives us a scene in a universe where life did not form. Our protagonists become two rocks, speaking to each other in subtitles. The theatre that was bursting with noise just seconds ago is left in a deafening silence. It is in this silence that our hero, Evelyn, gets her moment of clarity, and manages to get her message across. That Joy is loved, and while everything is nonsense, love is the meaning of the universe. It perfectly encapsulates the feeling of being overwhelmed in the modern world. With assignments, the never-ending doomscroll, and a million television shows on a billion streaming platforms, one could easily feel overwhelmed. Sometimes, we just need that moment of stillness, of clarity. To breathe and just... be a rock. This might be especially important in the Asian context. Those who have been inside an authentic Chinese restaurant could attest that the interlaying sounds of chefs clanging pots, waiters shouting dialects and customers having loud conversations are part of the experience. Those who have

watched Chinese news or any Japanese or Korean game show would tell you that every inch of the screen is filled with blaring text or reaction shots. Breathe. Just be a rock. Maybe the way to solve our own doom spiral is to find that moment of stillness for ourselves.

EEAAO is a boundary-breaking, deeply entertaining film that deserves all 11 of its Oscar nominations and more. For the Asian community, it is the first true piece of Hollywood representation that has resonated with us. For me, it’s the film that showed me my past, present and future. What I could be, what I should be and what I am: everything, everywhere, all at once.



similarly struggles with her life choices. Was she doomed to living the rest of her days frustrated and burnt out, running a failing laundromat embroiled in tax issues? Through her going to different universes she sees what she could have

Daft Punk’s ‘Random Access Memories’: A tenth anniversary retrospective

Kira Atanasiu

This spring marks the tenth anniversary of French duo Daft Punk’s fourth and last album, Random Access Memories. There’s a chance the name doesn’t sound familiar to you now, but this album was big at the time—lead single ‘Get Lucky’ was the group’s first and only UK #1, and Daft Punk were essentially the protagonists of the 2014 Grammy Awards, two white-clad robot-heads collecting win after win after win, topping it off with the fifth and most important ‘Album of the Year’.

This still does not explain why we should be looking back at this album ten years on. Albums happen, they get big, even huge, but very few remain in the public consciousness after the last of their singles fizzles out of the Top 100. That said—when it comes to Daft Punk, it’s a bit of a different story.

Daft Punk have been around since 1997, which means we’ve had enough time to see whether their sound has had any effect on the landscape of music as a whole. And, decidedly, it has. Not only have countless artists from Avicii and Skrillex to Jay-Z heralded the duo’s early releases as life-changing, but their second album Discovery has often been credited as a pivotal predecessor to the EDM genre. So, the obvious question follows: if Daft Punk’s early 2000s music bled over into the pop and dance music of the 2010s, could we now be seeing the echoes of their 2013 project

in today’s pop trends? I’m arguing that we absolutely are.

Daft Punk’s fourth and final album was a real change in direction for their sound. If the duo’s previous projects are remarkable in their lack of real instrumentation, their songs formed from an intricate mesh of samples chaotically worked into dance music, Random Access Memories is obstinately analogue. With session musicians that had previously worked on Thriller, collaborations such as Buggy Malone songwriter Paul Williams, and purposefully vintage recording equipment, the album carries a palpably retro groove. Iconic disco guitarist and producer Nile Rodgers, whose instantly recognisable bright-timbred guitar appears on multiple Random Access Memories tracks, says of the project that “it’s like they went back to go forward”. If the early 2010s, when the album was being composed, are full to the brim with electronic and digital-age-sounding music—from the 2009 robopop of ‘Boom Boom Pow’ to the 2012 meme-fuelled EDM trap of ‘Harlem Shake’—then returning to vintage synthesisers and acoustic instruments is downright counterculture for a dance music group. As ‘Fragments of Time’ feature Todd Edwards says, “You’re listening to [the tracks] and they’re future



classics. [Daft Punk] brought the sound of something that’s been lost for a long time.”

So, the question remains. What is there in our current pop landscape that could possibly have its roots in Daft Punk’s Random Access Memories?

Well, of course, first of all we have the monogénre. This album brings together disco, funk, pop, and electronic influences in an early example of the genre that pop music has been tending towards since the mid-2010s: that is, no genre. While the monogénre was first being conceptualised around the time Random Access Memories was released, nowadays it’s a given in the current music industry. Neither newcomers, such as Lil Nas X with his record-breaking country-fusion ‘Old Town Road’, nor established voices, like Ariana Grande with her trap-infused Positions album, shy away from blending genres. As overlap grows between the indie, pop, rap, and rock charts, Thomas Bangalter’s quote—“we really liked the idea of breaking all the barriers between these musical genres”—starts sounding less and less about their album exclusively and more and more about the duo’s plans for music as a whole. But what genres do remain also seem to follow a markedly Daft-Punk-esque trajectory. The Grammy Awards’ website declares jubilantly at the end of last year that “pop has seen a disco

revival seeping in over the last few years”, and gives the example of Beyoncé taking inspiration from Donna Summer’s ‘I Feel Love’ for her 2022 album Renaissance—the original Donna Summer track being, of course, produced and written by Random Access Memories collaborator Giorgio Moroder. This disco revival has certainly been in full bloom post-pandemic, but the rise of retro had been building up for years—albums like Dua Lipa’s Future Nostalgia and The Weeknd’s After Hours follow in the Daft Punk tradition with their strong synth-pop influences. The Weeknd, specifically, has he been named “one of the biggest torchbearers of retro”—which is why it’s very fitting that his two 2016 hits ‘Starboy’ and ‘I Feel It Coming’ are the last two projects on which Daft Punk ever worked as a duo.

I want to make it clear that I’m not claiming Random Access Memories to be the one album that brought the retro-pastiche revolution to pop music; I can’t ignore the impact of other hugely influential musicians like Amy Winehouse and Lana del Ray when it comes to the vintage-pop trend. What I am arguing, however, is that when the Cherwell review for Random Access Memories, written almost exactly ten years ago, called the album ‘defining’, I get to confirm that as true an entire decade later. Defining, definitely, for Daft Punk as songwriters and musicians, but also more largely defining for pop music as a whole.

Image Credit: William Doran

Books

For the Love of Libraries: The Taylorian

Rumaisa Khusru

The city of Oxford is home to an extensive library system including both new and ancient ones. From the iconic Radcliffe Camera to the touristy Old Bodleian, to the various college libraries, where most students like to put in late nights of work, Oxford has plenty of study spots as the city boasts a total of over a hundred libraries. It is definitely arduous to choose just one out of the myriad of libraries at Oxford, almost like choosing a favourite book, as they all have their own special qualities and atmospheres, and studying in each one is a distinct experience.

The Radcliffe Camera, popularly known as the RadCam, is a landmark widely recognised worldwide as a symbol of the University of Oxford. Its architectural grandeur and aesthetic appeal have garnered significant admiration from students and visitors alike. However, despite the RadCam’s popularity, my personal favourite in Oxford is the Taylor Institute Library, also known as the Taylorian. Although its exterior may not be as striking as the RadCam, the Taylorian’s interior is breathtaking and sure to leave a lasting impression on any visitor.

Located on St. Giles Street, the best part of this library is that it shares a wall with the Ashmolean Museum. Once I have completed my work for the day, I often treat myself to a visit to the museum just next door. I love this library for its proximity to the city centre as well. If you have ever been inside the Taylorian, you are definitely familiar with the main reading room, and you may have even done some studying in that space. The primary reading room at the Taylorian

“*I like to think that every library has a soul of its own...*”

features an atmosphere that is both beautiful and comfortable. The grand chandeliers drench the room in a warm amber glow and help to create an atmosphere that is conducive to focus on academic work. The tables located on the balcony provide the best seating in the room. To get a glimpse of what it would have been like to be Belle from Beauty and the Beast, utilise the spiral staircase from within. From this vantage point, the view of the entire room is impeccable. I like to think that every library has a soul of its own, and where the RadCam imbues an intense and slightly chaotic ambient, the Taylorian feels more relaxed and less anxious.

I absolutely enjoy my study sessions in the main reading room, however, snagging one of those coveted balcony seats can be impossible. In those instances, a hidden gem at this library is the Voltaire room, located on a lower floor. It gets wonderfully quiet, and the mint-green walls are a breath of fresh air from the deep brown theme of the main reading room. The Voltaire room is a good idea if

the main room gets busy (as it often does).

As a student majoring in Applied Linguistics and undertaking research that frequently focuses on languages, I find that the information available at the Taylorian, a library dedicated to modern European literature and languages (other than English), is well attuned to my needs.

For all the many reasons mentioned above, the Taylorian remains one of my favourite libraries! The only aspect I wish would change about this library would be the timings. By 7 pm it is lights off so if you are someone who frequently burns the midnight oil, perhaps the Taylorian is not the best option, but it is definitely worth the visit!

Tip: Once you finish up at the library, make sure to visit the Ashmolean and then grab a bite to eat at Najar’s Place, a Lebanese food cart with great wraps opposite the Taylorian!

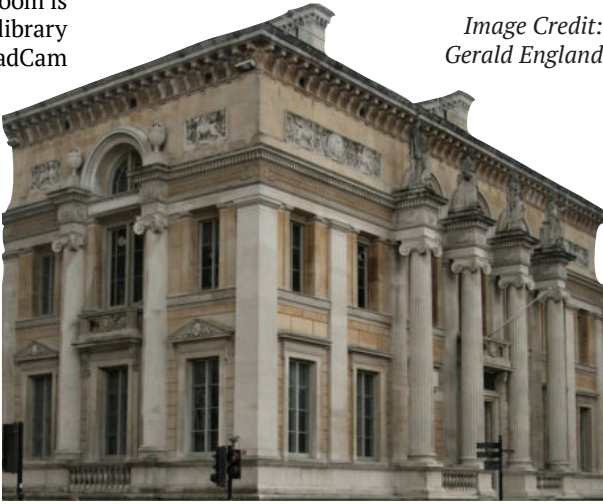


Image Credit: Gerald England

Top 3... summer reads

1. A Farewell To Arms

Hemingway’s famous story of war and love is a masterpiece. It is a compelling mix of humanity, suffering and psychology, with a large cast of characters who all bring another perspective to life. Written in his distinctive style, the novel is most brilliant for its immediacy, bringing the reader to the fore of the action, sometimes with tragic consequences.

2. War and Peace

Why not set yourself a challenge this summer? Tolstoy’s epic novel is as rewarding as it is long. The vast narrative and amount of sub-plots come together to present a panoramic view of life. Enthralling and ambitious, this is a book which I’m sure will impact you deeply.

3. We

A precursor to Orwell’s 1984, Yevgeny Zamyatin wrote ‘We’ in the early 1920s, at the time of the oppressive Bolshevik regime of the early Soviet Union. Set in the 26th century AD in the OneState ruled by a ‘benefactor’, ‘We’ laid the groundwork for future dystopian tropes such as forced conformity and panopticon-style surveillance. It is a short and gripping read, full of interesting, if scary, philosophical questions.

Reflections on reimagining narratives

Jeea Chadha

One of my favourite experiences in the last two years at Oxford has been my involvement in the production of ‘A Doll’s House’ in HT22, where I was in charge of the costumes. This was not just any rendition of the renowned play; instead, it was Tanika Gupta’s rewriting of the play. She transformed Ibsen’s classic, taking it from Norway and placing it into the context of 1870s colonial India just as the independence movement was gaining momentum.

I loved being immersed in a story that was so classic but in a context that was so different. However, I also remember it was not the plotline or the costumes that I found most memorable about my experience; instead, I was struck by the power of this reimagined narrative in helping carve out a space in Oxford that was solely about a South Asian experience. Admittedly the context of 1870s India was not exactly relatable to the South Asian student audience. Still, there was an element of familiarity, nostalgia even, for those who had grown up with stories and relics from their grandparents and great-grandparents about colonial India and the fight for freedom. This was a story that enabled a predominantly Asian cast and crew to establish a space for themselves

Pictured: Meera Syal



in order to explore South Asian storylines, history and fashion.

In the buildup to opening night, we invited Tanika Gupta to Oxford to discuss more about her adaptation. An ex-Oxford graduate herself, she revealed how she got into writing post-graduation. Specifically, she mentioned her membership at the Asian Women’s Writers Collective, a group that boasts welcoming the likes of Meera Syal, Rukhsana Ahmad and Ravinder Randhawa to name a few. The Asian Women’s Writers Collective was founded in 1984, and its purpose was to create that specific space for women of Asian heritage to create their own art and explore the stories they wanted to, free from outside pressure.

In “Right to Sex”, Amia Srinivasan says, “It is true that women have always lived in a world created by men... But it is also true that men have always lived

alongside women who have contested these rules”.

Many other feminists have made the same point: for as long as there has been misogyny, there has been movement against it. In the same way, it seems that for as long as there has been oppression of certain identities and a lack of relatable stories about them, there have been people of these same identities creating and consuming stories they can relate to. In fact, an example of this that has always stayed with me has been the secret language of ‘Nü Shu’ (women’s script). Originating in China’s Jiangyong county, this was a writing script used and understood exclusively by women to lament their hardships under the patriarchal system and to create stories which were more relatable than traditional Chinese narratives about women. They, too, created this space to feel represented in a society that wasn’t looking after their needs; and in a society that cared little for their stories.

Feeling seen, heard and represented in narratives not only serves to create a unique space for certain identities, but it can also increase involvement in theatre – reshaping apathy into passion and consumption.

Stories can have transformative powers; through immersing an individual in the life of someone completely different to themselves, you can build a level of empathy that can go on to change opinions and inspire meaningful conversations about societal change. I have always believed this, and for this reason, the campaigner in me always longs for more men to consume feminist narratives, more white people to consume POC narratives, the list could go on... But at the same time, perhaps it is also



Nü Shu

not such a bad thing if such stories are being predominantly consumed by those who relate to them - allowing diverse audiences to feel that their lived experiences are being represented.

Reflecting on my last two years here at Oxford, I can also think about some of the campaigning work I have done and how depressing it can be to constantly be served examples of the various ways in which certain groups of people are belittled, made invisible and actively harmed. But there may be hope in what I have also experienced in my stint in student theatre. For every harm done to a specific group of people, not only does that group fight back, but they also create spaces for themselves to explore their own narratives without the influence of any corresponding structure of oppression.

‘Cozzie livs’ core: Recession fashion trends

Fashion

Tosin Olusoji

If mankind has established one thing in the recent years of pestilence and political disarray, it is that anything can become a fashion aesthetic. From the notorious “clean girl aesthetic” (think: linen, small hooped earrings, slicked-back hair, green smoothies) to “bloke core” (think: football tops, baggy or straight-leg jeans), we’ve seen it all and yet barely scratched the surface.

However, “recession core”, a buzz phrase that has recently sprung up 3 years into the current global economic depression, is not the first example of fashion trends reflecting economic decline. Various fashion commentators have noted that the 2008 global financial crisis marked the end of the ‘McBling’ fashion trend, where celebrities and fashion models wore bejewelled materials, heavy jewellery and fur. 2008 saw many celebrities arriving at red carpet events with their necks bare instead of adorned with chains and necklaces, and in more muted, simpler gowns than in previous years.

So how is the “Cozzie Livs”, an abbreviated name for the current global cost of living crisis, influencing fashion trends in 2023?

1. Denim-everything

According to both Vogue and Hello Magazine, “designers made denim sexy for SS23”. Denim is, in fact, everywhere right now: from the famous denim jumpsuit only

3 degrees of separation away from you, to denim maxi, mini and micro-skirts that can be worn during any season. It makes perfect sense in a time of financial decline to make a staple material in everybody’s wardrobe a hot item, and high fashion slightly more relatable. Simplicity and relatability are key influencing factors for designers during recessions.

2. Loose and airy

Various observers have noted that a recurring fashion trend during economic depressions is the donning of baggy trousers, and 2023 is certainly no exception to that rule. In fact, trousers that aren’t loose-fitting are becoming an increasingly rare sight. This winter, the streets of Oxford have been filled with cargo trousers and wide-leg jeans, and during the spring and approaching summer, one can expect to see many pairs of long-line, denim skate shorts and white linen trousers. But why do we go baggy during

financial slumps? A logical explanation would be that less consumption due to financial restrictions necessitates the trousers that we do consume to not run the risk of being outgrown.

3. Minimalism

In solidarity with interior design, clothing trends, too, are becoming minimalist. The above-mentioned “clean girl aesthetic”, as well as the business casual look, were both simple but extremely popular



fashion styles throughout 2022: this suggests that bright colours, patterns and logos are receding out of popular style. Instead, we are more often seeing monochromatic or dichromatic looks. Muted tones, simple earrings (such as small hooped earrings) and plain bags (often having a barely or non-visible logo) are also on the rise.

We are also seeing less clothing in comparison to the 2019 pre-recession layering trend, where celebrities wore several layers of different coloured clothing. Echoing the recession fashion trends of 2008, celebrities are similarly losing their necklaces on the red carpet. It almost goes without saying why minimalist fashion becomes trendy during recessions, but this pattern also happens to complement the already minimalist interiors of trendy apartments, the simple logos of the biggest companies and a large proportion of current web design.

What to expect: the hemline index

According to the ‘hemline index’, which proposes that skirt hemlines increase in length as the economy declines, we should expect to see streets lined with midi skirts. However, both pleated and denim miniskirts seem to be all the rage this recession. If it is possible to place any sort of positive spin on such dark times, collectively consuming fewer clothes allows for us to get more creative with the clothes we do have, and also offers the environment a nice warm hug.

“I don’t read the news”

The trials and tribulations of navigating the news... and body odour.

Katerina Lygaki

I don’t read the news. That might sound shocking, and a little sensationalist, and that’s because it is a little shocking and quite a bit sensationalist, but at the heart of it lies something true. Like a lot of my peers, reading the news has been stressing me out. When reading a newspaper, my hand itches to flick to the Culture section, but there’s always something in me that makes me read the news first. Call it a goody-two-shoes syndrome or a masochistic flair, but I compulsively read the news section before proceeding to stress about it for the next minute, hour, day, or even week. My longest streak has actually been years – when my school kept on showing us climate change documentaries, so I proceeded to make my own deodorant, toothpaste, and soap for the next year. That streak promptly ended when my mum had to have a sit-down intervention with me about how much I smell. I don’t want to yuck anyone’s yum, but growing up for me meant recognising the fact that I am simply not equipped to make my own cosmetic products. And by my standards, that is growth.

Going back to the news anxiety of it all, this compulsive need to stay up to date with current affairs at the expense of my mental health (and personal hygiene) led me to reassess the way I inform myself. The way I get the news nowadays involves a two-step process and a lot of moxie. Step one, where I read the Instagram posts from outlets like The Times, along with their captions, and call it a day. Step two is a bit riskier and involves the trickle-down effect of receiving a wildly inaccurate yet extremely entertaining version of a current affair, after which I then have to go do some research so that I don’t look like a fool if the story turns out to be false. Like the other day, when I recounted a vividly

gripping account of a man waking from a decade-long coma that I had heard from a friend, only to have another friend show me that it was a Reddit story.

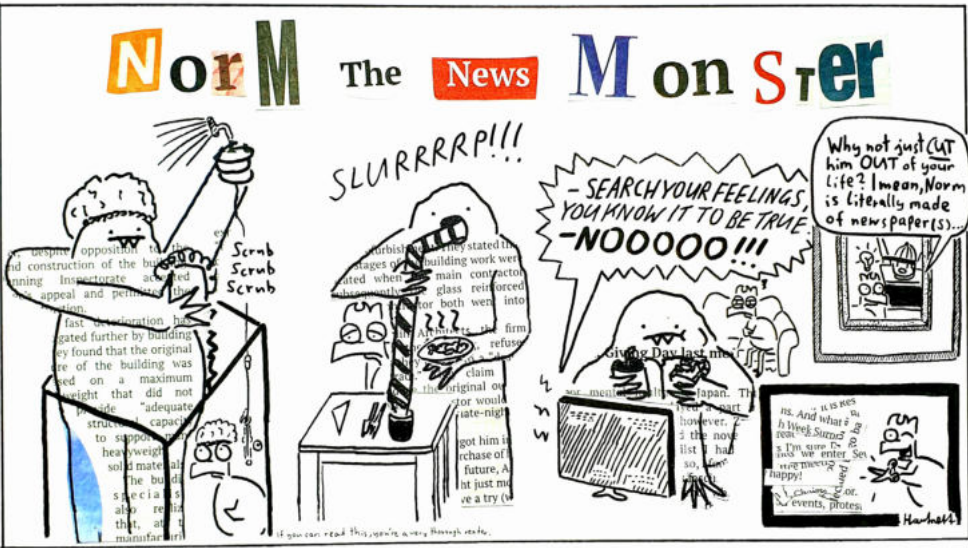
In moments like this, not reading the news is so embarrassing (and maybe secretly a little funny). Am I part of the fake news problem? Should I inform myself a bit better? I am self-aware enough to realise that this is sad. I am a twenty-one-year-old woman, so I better start acting like one. On the other hand, though, I’ve got to protect my inner peace. If I don’t look out for my MVP, who will?

Jokes aside, nowadays the news is really tricky to navigate. I know that I’m not the only one who feels uninformed but also dreads reading sensationalist headlines about the latest climate catastrophe, the newest economic crisis, or a current femicide. I don’t have the answers to the perfect balance, but I do think that complete ignorance cannot be the answer. I have embarrassed myself one too many times after adopting that particular coping

mechanism, so I will not be partaking in the practice anymore, thank you. But, compulsively reading the news during a machoistic streak is not it either. I wish I was Dolly Alderton so I could give myself some kick-ass advice, but alack, I am not, and I will have to learn to deal with that. Maybe it’s okay not to have all the answers just yet, and maybe it’s okay to read newspapers through their social media accounts rather than their fatalistic hardcopies that make you flick through all the news before getting to the good stuff. Maybe I should just accept my Gen Z-ness and embrace this whole digital thing.

I still don’t read the news. At least not in the traditional, sit-down-with-the-paper-and-my-coffee sort of way. My way is the more experimental, sit-on-the-toilet-scrolling-through-my-phone sort of way – but who can judge a multi-tasking queen? Certainly not me, that’s for sure.

Illustration by Sean Hartnett.



TOP 5 Evil Tutors

The Indifferent

5 When I asked for a reference from my PERSONAL tutor, I received the following reply: “Sure, but I wouldn’t have much to say.”

The Subtweeter

4 It was my first essay at Oxford, I didn’t know how to write an essay above A-Level standard and after a couple of meetings, she sent me a huge email saying how much of a failure I was and then tweeted about it.

The Poet

3 “GOD it just goes on and on. You write like you’re in a very cold swimming pool just scrabbling to get out. It’s happening, but you’re not enjoying the process,” said my tutor while reading my essay. It stung but it was actually useful.

The Prurient

2 At the end of my first-ever class, my tutor pointed out my use of Oxford instead of Harvard referencing (which is fully acceptable for my course). He nodded, sneered, then shouted at me: “PERVERT!”

The Pervert?

1 He published bad erotica which was listed by the Guardian for their “Bad Sex in Fiction” awards. He still had the audacity to critique me for using “indubitably” in the essay because he didn’t like the word - well, I don’t like the use of “neuromuscular euphoria” for an orgasm.

Aries

21 March - 19 April

You’re always a warm presence, but you can’t be loved by everyone. Know where to spend your energy so you don’t burn out.

Capricorn

22 Dec. - 19 Jan.

As a grounded and reliable earth sign, this term, know that as much as your friends rely on you, you can rely on them too.

Aquarius

20 Jan. - 18 Feb.

You’re never afraid of saying the truth as it is, but you can be a bit blunt. Know how to deliver the truth kindly this term.

Pisces

19 Feb. - 20 March

Trinity is a term for love in whatever form it comes: romantic, platonic, or otherwise. Make sure you see it when it’s there.

Taurus

20 April - 20 May

You’re a stubborn sign. Get Trinity off to a good start by resolving to know when to back down, and when to stand your ground.

Gemini

21 May- 20 June

You’re known for your perceptiveness, and you’re normally right. Go with your intuitions to start term on the right foot.

Leo

23 July - 22 Aug.

You might be a natural leader, but think about what you can learn from stepping back and letting your friends take the lead.

Virgo

23 Aug. - 22 Sept.

You renowned for being hard on yourselves, but Oxford is hard enough already – try to lower your own expectations.

Cancer

21 June - 22 July

Your hard shell often hides your heart. This term, allow your friends and loved ones to see your passionate and softer side.

Libra

23 Sept. - 22 Oct.

You’re eager to avoid conflict, but people can’t always get along. Accept the winds of change this term and voice your opinions.

Scorpio

23 Oct. - 21 Nov.

Taylor Swift might not do anything better than revenge, but you can. Though you guys never forget, try not to hold grudges.

Sagittarius

22 Nov. - 21 Dec.

The zodiac’s most free-spirited sign: you’re always looking for the next great thing. Try to live more slowly this term to find it.

Horoscopes

What should each sign keep in mind before the start of Trinity term?

Tales from the trip

MDMA (molly, mandy, ecstasy) is both a stimulant and a psychedelic, although it doesn't fit neatly into either category. It's usually taken in tablet or powder form. It boosts serotonin, enhances sensory experiences, increases feelings of empathy, and can have a hallucinatory effect. Nicknamed 'the love drug', MDMA also causes a surge of oxytocin – the hormone that bonds us to people – in the brain. Magic Mushrooms (shrooms) grow naturally and contain psilocybin – a chemical with psychedelic properties. Shrooms are usually dried and eaten. The effect depends on the strength and amount taken. They can cause visual and sensory hallucinations, and a heightened sensory experience. Taking shrooms, or indeed any psychedelic, might not always be a positive experience. A 'bad trip' can trigger anxiety, paranoia, nausea, and negative feelings. *Tales from the Trip* is exactly how it sounds: I take drugs with mild to extreme hallucinatory effects, and I log the experience. This will typically be during term, for the sake of real-time and accurate tales of trippy experiences. But for the first instalment of this column, I'm harking back to a couple of years ago, and my first time taking MDMA.

I grew up in Galloway, Scotland. If you venture into the deeper parts of the countryside, amidst winding pot-hole roads and fields that appear to stretch for miles, you

will reach a country track so hidden it does not actually have a name. Up 'the unnamed road' on Google Maps, and 'the hidden road' to locals, my father's house is perched between some jaunty hillocks and a nearby dairy farm.

I had taken a half-tab of MDMA and 20 magic mushrooms. Minutes later, it was 30 (I didn't want to risk the mediocrity of a half-trip). My boyfriend at the time had matched me, although I suspect he ate some more when I wasn't looking. We waited by the fire for something to happen, feigning nonchalance, like we weren't waiting for something to happen. Then it began – the tingling right hand. The come up on anything that isn't alcohol always begins with a right-hand tingle, like a warning signal from my body of what's to follow.

We weren't just a bunch of kids who decided to get pill-y; we were in hippy territory. Partying with us were people that had lived through the 70s and were now financially stable enough to make a night of recreational drugs. The evening had begun with shots of cannabis infused vodka (which should have been sipped, apparently) and a Galloway gin. One of the neighbour's children came and drew cat whiskers on my face in black paint. I closed my eyes patiently as she painted. "There! You're a cat." I was happy about it.

We went on a walk as it started to really kick in. It was dark at this point, but suddenly

the stars began to twinkle like they never had before. The bluish-blackish hue of the sky throbbed with vibrancy. The silhouettes of the trees carried an air of precision – as though they had been carved against the dusk with a scalpel. Bumps in the country road felt like craters. Everything was bigger, brighter, more.

I was silent. I felt my eyes widening with each step I took. I wanted to take it all in and be present in the enormity of this new heightened sensitivity to everything. My boyfriend, however, wouldn't stop talking about how much he loved me. He started rolling around on the grass on the side of the road. I didn't say anything – this was his trip, too. Who am I to judge someone if they want to roll around in grass? But then he stood up and took my face in his hands: "I see it now. It's you. Everything revolves around you. Wow." *Yikes*. I nodded and smiled but even in my drugged-up state I got the ick. I took his hand and guided him to the middle of the bridge. Beneath us was a river with a roaring current. I could hardly hear anything else until there was a rustle nearby and the water sound subsided. We stayed like that for a while: following the familiar country road, roaming about in bits of the forest, visiting old spots as though it was the first time because everything seemed new.

I was flooding with emotion, constantly on the verge of crying but with no real compulsion

to do so. I felt calm and introspective, like everything I needed resided within me. Although I might normally chat away about how I felt and what I was thinking, it felt silly to do so now. What need was there to externalise, to open myself up to validation?

If you take enough of a powerful psychedelic, you might experience ego-death. I think I had the opposite experience. It was something akin to an ego-soothe. I felt self-love. I was internally content, completely willing to melt into the background as my boyfriend reached dizzying drug heights and had earth-shattering epiphanies (he definitely did take more than me). My ego didn't die, it just admitted defeat for a bit, and gave way to a 'higher' self, one that felt at peace with its surroundings. At around 6am the sun began to come up and we began to come down. We started the walk home – half-asleep – up the hidden road, down the windy track, and next to a hill a quarter mile from my front door. Glancing over, we spotted a hare as it ran from the bottom right to the top left of the hill in less than three seconds. It didn't run, really, it bolted. It sprinted, feet outstretched, ears flopping, shoulders rising and falling, it darted, with raw and painful determination, it *flew*. We stared in awe. It disappeared, and we continued along the path.

Fasting and Feasting: food as the love language of the Arab world

How food has a great deal of cultural importance and meaning for Arabs.

Ayaat Yassin-Kassab

The love language of the Arab world is preparing and providing food. A lavishly laid dinner table may be a status symbol, or a display of wealth, but food and drink are also vehicles for empathy. From the peasants to the princes of the Arab world, everything about the way we eat, drink, celebrate, and consume is catered towards group structures, and we are taught from a young age to consider those around us before we consider ourselves.

Take the staple English cup of tea: steaming, milky, inviting, alone. 40 bags of PG Tips means 40 cuppas. There may be five of you at the table, but there's no uniting tea pot, no common ground. Just five solitary sippers, unaware that they're missing out on discussing the tea. Is it weak? Too strong? Who made it? Did they add cardamom? There's definitely cardamom in there. Arabs make pots and drink from small glass cups, and the pot is refilled until the conversation lulls, which might be a while.

There is something peaceful about waking up before everyone else and making a mug for yourself. There's something calming about moving from library to coffee shop to library again, pushing through one oat milk latte at a time. But it's also quite lonely. I don't think an Arab would really know what to do with a big inelegant mug of tea, or a vat of coffee. In fact, without other people, what's the point?

Mezze, similar to tapas, are the small side dishes that make up a

breakfast or lunch spread. Passing plates, ripping bread – we share, and each of us try a bit of everything. The meal is balanced and engaging. It's a social exercise. Even at dinner, the bigger dishes are placed on the table before serving. Everyone *oohs* and *aahs* and congratulates the cook. The food is presented as a complete work of art, a coherent whole. And then it begins. The food is divided off, but the act of serving is really an art. There are no set portion sizes. You have to stay on your toes, casting a keen eye over who's eaten and who hasn't, who hasn't yet had salad, who's growing and might eat more.

And then there's the cheap dishes that are easy to make in abundance, like mujadara (a lentil, rice, and onion combination), or molokiyah (mallow leaves stewed and paired with meat and garlic). There is the month of Ramadan, where families fast and feast together. At the end of Ramadan comes Eid al Fitr, which is today, where communities come together to cook, eat, and give food to the poor.

When there is a death in the community, neighbours send meals to the bereaved for days, taking turns cooking. There is the battleground that is paying for food at restaurants: sneaking off during the meal to pay, physically dragging each other away from the till, grabbing the nearest child and stuffing notes into their fist, whispering "give this to mama when you get home!", there is no end to the chaos.

It's no secret that Arabs smother. They visit you when you're mourning even if you want to be alone. They feed you even if you're full. They gossip and share secrets, but they'll never leave you behind. There is much more order to the English custom of separate plates and separate mugs of tea. It makes sense, in a way, to send everyone off with their respective portions and pray that there aren't any more social cues to respond to for the rest of the dinner party. I hope this doesn't read as an angry, anti-English tirade, because I don't mean it that way at all. I myself have English family, so I know that people are products of their culture, and each culture has its strong points.

But England is missing out. Not just on good food in good company, but on what food teaches us about how to look after our families, friends, and neighbours. Perhaps food is the messy paste that Arabs use to seal open wounds. We probably rely on it too much. We may say "eat more!" instead of "I love you", but it teaches us to consider a collective humanity, to love within a group, to equate necessity of food with the necessity of pack structures. Whether fasting or feasting, the togetherness is what's important.

Image Credit: Ayaat Yassin-Kassab



DOUBLE TAKE:

I’m a first year who still doesn’t seem to have found people whom I can click with, I just have a few friends whom I like hanging out with but we never really have any deeper/personal conversations. How can I find my people?



Hello, dear cherub, and thank you for reaching out to me. I’m so sorry that your first year has been difficult and I know that making friends can be the most arduous task when Oxford is teeming full of extroverts who also somehow know each other super well.

The first thing to say is that you’re not the only one, there are plenty of people around you who are feeling very similar and might be feeling just as isolated as you. Please don’t be disheartened and persevere - things will get better! Friendships in university can also change so much as you go through your degree and you’ll often find that you might find that people around you who have close friends may not be as close with them in second year. This whole ‘friendship thing’ is a process that moves with the way that you mature once you’re at university and how you develop as a person and even the idea of ‘clicking’ with someone can be completely temporary and they might not fit your needs as a friend in the long run.

Now for some practical advice. Use the hectic-ness of Trinity Term to your advantage!

The sun has (almost) come out and, even though I’m assuming you’ll be facing prelims at the end of the year, take advantage of the hundreds of events that people will be holding around you. Join college events, whether it’s at bops or welfare teas, that way you can meet some more people within your college who you’ll probably be with for the rest of your degree. Go to a bunch of society events. There are so many societies in this university there is going to be one that will fit your interest, from LGBTQ soc to Gilbert and Sullivan Society. This will also help if you’re a bit introverted because you’ll be able to start talking to people about this shared common interest that you have and make friends that way. It’s a great way to find “your people”. With these existing friends that you have, it might be worth trying to foster something with them, as well. Join them for coffees, go to events with them/ask them if they’d be interested because they might have the potential to be a really great friend, you just don’t know it yet. You may even find that you get closer to your coursemates during your exams because NOTHING draws people together so much as academic stress.

I am well aware that this is easier said than done but put yourself out there! It might be a small city but there are plenty of people that you’ll be able to find someone that you click with. Best of luck my lovely and have a great start to your trinity term!

Lots of love,
Aunty Alice x

Don’t worry babes, we’ve got this. Here’s what you’ve got to do: find the nearest private school lad, cling to them and let them find friends for you. Exactly what I did in my first year. If there’s anything you should know about this university, it’s that it is overflowing with private school alumni who ALL know each other. They think it’s so uncanny that somehow they can recognise most people walking down Cornmarket Street when the truth is, they are all just part of the interconnected web that is English private schools. If YOU, in fact, went to private school – what IS going on? Surely you should already know at least ten people here?

If we’re feeling super desperate, this is the next step to take. The clubs. Blow off prelims if you have to - it’s not like they count. I don’t think I’ve ever bonded with someone more than I have, pissed in the smoking area of Bridge. You want a deep/personal conversation? Jackpot. You don’t need to be great mates to be able to have one, sometimes you just need to have downed enough shots of tequila (or Apple Sours, up to you). Sometimes being friends with someone is just about being able to piss about with someone or, you know, taking them to a club and watching them chun over Cornmarket Street after a night out at Plush. Yes, it’s sweaty, and yes it’s crowded. But - you wanna make friends? Stick yourself in the most crowded spot there is.

If none of this works, then hun, people are just shit. Clicking with people? Complete

bollocks – it’s not real and it only exists on sitcoms – just like finding ‘the one’. Some people, you think you’re mates, until it reaches room balloting and you realise only the real ones stick around after that. I hope you know that even though you might think that all of those people around you have a massive group of close friends? It won’t last. Uni friendships come and go with every Union president. I’m not friends with everyone that I was in my first year and I made new friends in my second year. You might even bump into someone you knew for a year and it turns out they were a diamond in the rough (not everyone can be as loud and proud as us x).

The last thing I would like to add is; why so pedantic about whom, Season 4 Ryan? (It’s a reference to The Office) I really hope you don’t correct the people around you because if you are, that is almost definitely the crux of your problem.

It’ll be alright bestie - just sort it out.

The Mad Hatter x



To: My long-suffering tutors

From: Aaliyah Khan

Subject: The Road I Take

Send

For a period I notified my tutors of my delayed essays solely through the medium of pastiche. This is a mock-up of Robert Frost’s The Road Not Taken that I wrote in my first year, for which I received a (mocking) first:

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not go right
And be on time, long I stood
And looked down one as far I could
Where I contemplated timeliness;

Then took the other, what a wrong turn,
And having definitely the worse time,
Because I was silly and foolish;
As for the hours that passed, they
Had worn me down around the clock,

And so this morning I forlornly lay
In leaves of unread critical theory.
Oh, I kept it all for another day!
Yet, knowing how way leads on to way.
I doubted if I would ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I -
I took the one I have always taken,
And I have made no difference.

Photo Column: Easter Wedding

Flynn Hallman



and you wonder where
the column’s fluting goes,
and why those gargoyles pose
at love above the gates;

of flightless angels
stained in glass, formed of tesserae
and plated panes which coruscate
like mountain folds in evening sun;

how the church, with its
mullion sandstone nose
gives and glances meaning, sublates
those above from those below;

you wonder as the silhouettes lean
and stumble home,
and the bridesmaids cycle
in figures of eight

and you wonder what each window
casts inside or holds
of the distant lives of saints,
what it derives

with flowers in their baskets,
shuddering along the cobbled stone.

Pasta Alla Norma

This week’s recipe is brought to you by **Giovann Attard**. When he opened Norma on Charlotte Street in London he brought his home Sicilian cuisine to the UK in new and exciting ways. His signature dish is this pasta which, legend has it, was created in Catania to pay homage to Bellini and his new opera by the same name. It is a perfect example of how cheap, easily sourced ingredients can come together quickly and easily for a delicious dish.

Ingredients
Serves 4

- 400g dried rigatoni pasta
- 2 medium size, firm aubergines, trimmed and cut into 2cm dice
- 1/2 onion, peeled and finely chopped
- 2 cloves of garlic, peeled and finely chopped
- 800g quality chopped tinned tomatoes or passata
- 200g ricotta salata, grated
- 150ml Extra virgin olive oil
- Sea salt and black pepper for cooking
- A good handful of fresh basil leaves

Directions
To prepare:
Pre-heat the oven to 230C.
Put the diced aubergine in a colander in the sink and sprinkle with salt. Leave to sit for 30 minutes.
1. Rinse the aubergine in cold water, pat dry with kitchen towel and toss in a bowl with half the oil, then bake, well spread out, for about 15-20 minutes until caramelised, turning occasionally to make sure the pieces don’t dry out.
2. Meanwhile, heat the other half of the oil in a medium saucepan over a medium heat and add the onion and garlic. Saute for a couple of minutes, then add the tomatoes and half the basil and bring to a simmer. Turn down the heat and cook slowly for about 23 to 30 minutes until thickened (the exact time will depend on your tinned tomato brand).
3. Once the sauce is almost ready, cook the pasta in plenty of boiling salted water to al dente or follow the instructions on the pack. Add the aubergine to the sauce and discard the basil. Drain the pasta (reserving a little of the cooking liquid) and toss in the sauce. If the sauce seems to thicken then add the liquid to loosen. Now divide between plates and sprinkle with the ricotta and the remaining basil leaves, roughly torn over the top. It’s best allowed to cool slightly before eating.



Why food?

Oliver Hall

I’m Oli and I am going to be running the food page at Cherwell this term. Appropriately I suppose, since I am obsessed with food and a lot of people ask me what it is that I love so much about it. Meals themselves and flavours are of course a big part, more than anything, it’s what goes with it. For me, food is about experiences: I love bringing people together with food, getting to know different cultures through food, the art of constructing dishes, and am fascinated by the industry.

Food writing can too often be pompous, prescriptive, and presumptuous. I love a Michelin-starred restaurant as much as the next person but you know what I prefer? Finding an amazing street food stall on holiday or a tiny little Italian café down a side street that’s quietly been trading for decades. This term I’ll bring you reviews, recipes, stories, and hopefully a whole world of food discovery.

Cooking

Cooking is so many things for me. Firstly, it’s a stress reliever. After a long day churning out essays or reading, there are few more pleasant things than putting on a podcast,

opening the fridge, and making dinner out of what I can find. A different kind of non-academic challenge, as long as there’s some onion, tomatoes, garlic, and eggs, then I know something good is possible!

Even better than that though? Cooking for a crowd. Every week I love bringing together friends and putting on a dinner party. Think sharing plates, roasts, cheese, wine, good music, and great chat.

People

I do a lot of food reviews and I often visit restaurants for my podcast. On it, I talk to chefs, managers, and owners of places from Oxford to London, or further afield. The meals become twice as meaningful when you know how they are created and the life story of the people behind them. One of the first podcasts I ever did was with Andi, the owner and founder of Bbuona. When you hear the love and passion that goes into creating every dish there despite the challenges he is facing with Brexit and price rises, and the fact that he is the only restaurant in the country to import some of his ingredients, that pizza tastes ten times better.

The industry

There has never been a more fascinating

Bbuona - Italia a Oxford

Oliver Hall

Owner Andi first set up Bbuona alongside Alessandro as ‘Buongiorno & Buonasera’. Back then the goal was to create a Roman-style bar with authentic pinsa just one of the offerings. It quickly became clear though that pizza was the star of the show and a quick rebrand later, Bbuona was born. Now, the restaurant maintains the Italian-style bar (I often find myself standing here enjoying an espresso and a cannoli) but also operates as a more formal sit-down restaurant with table service. Everything here is authentic—I can’t stress that enough. I brought my Italian friend here on his first day in Oxford and it is now our regular haunt. Any Italians in Oxford will find themselves in a dreamland of Ichnusa (Sicilian beer), Crodino, and products from across the country—think of it as a kind of ‘Italian greatest hits album’. The biscuits on the bar are imported from the same Sicilian people as Italiamo and some of the other desserts arrive weekly from Rome. Cheeses, salamis, and vegetables are similarly drafted in from a range of suppliers and producers.

Pinsa is a uniquely Roman pizza variety and is worth explaining. It is a much lighter, healthier, and thinner dish than the Neopolitan style that is most common in the UK. I’ve never seen it offered in England anywhere else and it is of course made in-house here daily by the team. In Rome, pinsa is traditionally prepared in the morning and heated to order by the slice but here that approach obviously isn’t sustainable. Instead, the bases are prepped by hand early on and left to rise and aerate before being dressed and cooked to order. The dough itself is completely unique—much easier to digest, it uses non-GMO rice, soy, wheat, and sourdough flours to make it 80% more hydrated than a traditional base. The same starter has been used by Bbuona since 2017 and the pressing and hand-tossing process (pinsa derives from the word pinsere, to press, in Italian) gives it its signature light and airy crust. That focus on non-GMO products is

hugely important to Andi. In fact, he is quick to point out that it is a hugely important part of Italian and Mediterranean food as a whole. Fats and carbohydrates have been a natural part of our diet for all time but he preaches the evils of the introduction of artificial sugars and other products. You simply won’t find them here.

And so on to the food—and what food it is. There is an extremely diverse range of dishes here with all price points and budgets catered for. Andi says that that is something that was important to him. Ingredients are high quality throughout all of the dishes but you can still get a pizza for less than £9. Alternatively, there is scope to go all out for the Tartufo option at £15.95 or add your own ingredients and toppings.

The new gluten-free pinsa is something that Andi is particularly passionate about. In the past, there was always a gluten-free offering but it was a Neopolitan-style base due to the extreme difficulty in creating authentic pinsa without gluten. Now though, the restaurant has partnered with a supplier in Rome to exclusively create and supply them with an authentic pinsa-style dough for gluten-free customers. Cooked on a different surface and in a different oven from the other pizzas, catering for allergies and dietary requirements is a core part of the menu at Bbuona.

From the starters, we sampled the bruschetta, which were delightful. The dish comes with three different varieties; topped with aubergine, cherry tomatoes, and peppers. The cherry tomatoes are definitely the simplest of the trio but for me their freshness was by far the most refreshing.

Salads are also on the menu for those looking for a light option, and our Energetica was a very well-rounded dish. Not overdressed at all, the customer is left to drizzle any mix of oils and vinegars to their liking.

Pizza-wise, we got three different options. Firstly came the Bbuona. Ansi’s favourite (hence taking the name of the restaurant), it is simply a tomato base with prosciutto crudo and burrata cheese. This burrata is my favourite of the many kinds

time to learn about the food industry. Because of Brexit, UK restaurant owners and chefs are faced with more challenges than ever before. The import restrictions and work permit chaos caused, combined with the supply chain issues created by war in Ukraine and crippling price rises across the board have forced adaptation and inventiveness. The places that have survived use new ingredients in different ways, change their organisational structures, and manage price rises. Next time you are in Love Coffee just ask them about this stuff: they might be full all day, every day, but razor-thin margins and astronomical rents mean that profitability is far from guaranteed.

More than this, there are new and exciting concepts trying to disrupt the market all the time. Next time you are reading a menu just pause and think about how many more vegan and vegetarian dishes there are compared to five years ago. The world of food and drink is changing in front of our eyes and it’s incredibly easy to miss.

The world of food is endless and the possibilities for enjoyment and fascination are limitless. Hopefully, this term I can help you discover the joys of cooking, eating, and learning about food.

of cheese here. As I have written before, I really think that many pizzas are ruined by ‘over-cheesing’. This couldn’t be more different—the burrata falls apart beautifully and the creamy interior breaks away and spreads over the base to create a cold, creamy contrast to the hot tomato base.

Desserts here are a whole different equation. You can go crazy if you have room with the Nutella pinsa. The name though is deceiving—the base here isn’t actually Nutella but instead a different and much darker, creamier, hazelnut chocolate base that definitely makes for a dish that needs sharing. Ice cream is also on offer in all the classic flavours alongside the biscuits of several varieties that are on the bar. The hazelnut aragostine are superb but the pistachio profiterole style pastries are a different option to pair with your espresso.

Really though, that espresso wouldn’t be complete without a Bbuona cannolo. Alongside Gusto, this is one of the only places in Oxford that freshly pipes its cannoli and the only place in Oxford that will do it in front of you. There are pistachio and chocolate fillings but the star of the show is the traditional ricotta dipped in pistachios. Given how hard it is to find in the UK, you would be remised to get anything else. If you are between meals when you wander through Gloucester Green, I have found that a cannolo and an espresso or cocktail at Bbuona can solve any internal crisis.

Bbuona on Gloucester Green is a restaurant that I love. There is so much going on, and yet it still manages to stay perfectly simple. The focus is on authenticity and quality ingredients in everything that comes out of the kitchen. The sheer quantity of regulars from Oxford’s Italian community is a testament to this and you simply can’t miss the passion of every single member of the team. That passion and warmth really do make it feel like home. Whether you are in need of a pick-me-up, a midweek lunch, or a celebratory dinner, Bbuona can fit the bill for any occasion.

Women take home victory at Twickenham’s Rugby Varsity

Tom Farmer

There are few institutions as obsessed with the past and tradition as Oxford University tends to be, and that is truly felt at OURFC’s Varsity. Both the men’s and women’s fixture took place on the same day, the third time in history, the large crowd were in for a bumper day of rugby.

The women’s fixture kicked off first, marking their 35th Varsity under South-West London’s grey skies. From the start, Cambridge looked by far the stronger team, establishing themselves strongly in the opening encounters. After a period of sustained pressure, scrum-half and skipper Emilia Bushrod drew first blood with a quick snipe, with a conversion sending Cambridge 7-0 up. Their opposite numbers in dark blue looked scrambling and disorganised in response to the Tabs’ seamless attacking play. It didn’t take long for Oxford to strike back with full-back Clodagh Holmes scoring her first try of the day. The Tabs clawed back their lead with a well-disguised tap-and-go penalty from Cambridge’s Jackson, prop Grace Izinyon ploughed over the line. The game was set at 12-5 to Cambridge, with half-time approaching.

The crucial action of the half, though, was yet to come. A high tackle on her opposite number

earnt Cambridge winger Emily Bell a ten-minute trip to the sin bin. Could Oxford capitalise on the extra man?

As the second half kicked off, this was answered very swiftly. After 4 minutes, expansive play from deep inside their own half led to a second Clodagh Holmes try, narrowing the score to 12-10. Oxford was a different team this half, utilising an off-loading game that the Fijian 7s team would have been proud of. Alex Wilkinson scored Oxford’s third try which was followed by an impressive conversion from Iona Bennett, giving Oxford the lead. This lead kept on growing, with great footwork from Shams helping Clodagh Holmes complete her hat trick and then add another. The Dark Blues almost had a dream ending when fly-half Hawley picked up the ball ten metres into her own half, beat three players and touched the ball down on the line...only for the try to be disallowed. Despite this, the day could not have gone better for the women. Winning the second half 26-0, captain Lauren Webb and her team had successfully defended their Varsity title. Despite a strong start from Cambridge, Oxford’s fluid backs and the player of the match performance from Clodagh Holmes ensured that Oxford started the day in winning ways.



Looking ahead to the Women’s World Cup

Chloe Glynn

At the 2022 Euros, the Lionesses won the first major football trophy England has seen since 1966. With less than 100 days to go, they have set their sights on a new prize, the 2023 World Cup which will take place in Australia and New Zealand in July. This promises to be a record-breaking event, in both attendance and viewership, having already become the first World Cup to take place in two nations, with eight nations making their World Cup debut.

But who will take home the prized silverware? Which players should we look out for?

Defending their title is the USA, a fierce competitor who has won four of the nine women’s World Cup tournaments to date. Historically the USA has been a league apart with female players in the USA receiving high levels of funding, following the 1972 mandate for US colleges to provide equal sports funding regardless of gender. In comparison, the FA did not lift the ban on women’s football in the UK until 1971 allowing the USA to be a generation ahead in cultivating young talent. The USA is a

more physical team than the European nations, requiring technicality to overcome. Although the squad has not been announced, they will likely be captained by Becky Sauerbrunn, with a focus on older and more experienced players such as legendary NWSL’s Golden Boot winner Alex Morgan who will be 34 at the time. Waiting to solidify her name outside of the USA will be 22-year-old, NWSL MVP of the year, Sophia Smith, with only one less goal than Morgan in the NWSL she will put the European’s to the test.

A significant threat to the USA comes from current European champions. After their Euros victory, England’s record goalscorer Ellen White MBE and seasoned Midfielder Jill Scott MBE retired making space for younger, but less experienced, players. Despite this, the Lionesses beat the USA 2-1 in October and went on to win every game in the Arnold Clark Cup. After losing three of their most experienced players: Chelsea Midfielder Fran Kirby, England vice-captain Millie Bright and BBC player of the year Beth Mead MBE to injuries, the Lionesses returned to Wembley on April 6th to face Brazil in the Finalissima. In contrast to previous matches the Squad

CAPTAINS CORNER

This week, we spoke to Shivani Abensour, President of OUBBC.

How’s the season gone?

Both teams are in BUCS Division One, where the men finished third and the women finished second – a great result as we worried we would get relegated! The women 2’s however got relegated to division three, which is unfortunate but probably a good thing anyways, because they lost quite a lot of players last year.

How did varsity go?

Varsity was a clean sweep for OUBBC with wins across both the blues and reserves for men and women. The W2 game went down to the wire, you didn’t really know who was going to win to the last minute. The other game were close such as the woman’s Blues fixture. One of our shooters got a few 3 pointers and that created the gap. All games were a really good fight-it wasn’t like one team was like massively dominating over the other. By the end of the day, we had maybe 200-300 spectators!

The best and worst bits about being President of OUBBC?

It’s a lot of responsibility, and I juggle lots of jobs at one time. But I am giving back to a club that has given me so much. But also changing in the way the club was run. Giving

more attention to women’s and wheelchair basketball at Oxford. OUBBC is a joint club and equal treatment is important.

Who are the ones to watch?

Holly Hayward. I think she had a game where she scored only 3 pointers, that’s crazy! Camillaplays WNBL for reading, not only is she an amazing player she has a great vibe. On the men’s side, Josh Soifer has the record for the highest number of points in a game in our history. It was over 50 points, 56 maybe, which is crazy. Also, their captain Alex Carruthers, is another great player.

Where do you see the club going in the future?

Definitely growing wheelchair basketball more, helping them to have a proper team. Besides that, the goal is to build solid teams and keep winning our varsities.

Where can we watch OUBBC?

The season’s over now. But when it resumes, we have BUCS games on Wednesdays and the NBL on Saturdays all at Iffley. BUCS games are always great to watch, usually with 6pm or 8pm Tip. It’s good vibes even if you don’t really know basketball, it’s always fun.

for the World Cup and all eyes will be on the young James, Hemp, Russo and Kelly to take up the offence. The World Cup squad is yet to be finalised, but England is not short of talent and the ability for players like Rachel Daly to play in defence or attack provides good options for new super subs.

Alongside the USA and England, Spain and Germany also have the potential to make it to the semi-finals. Both teams triumphed over the USA recently, alongside giving England a run for their money in the Euro semi-final and final respectively. Although Australia’s Matilda’s are less likely to make it to the semi-finals, they will feel the benefits a home crowd brought to England last summer as the love for women’s football spreads down under.



Klopp the Problem?

Declan Ryder

Liverpool’s demise this season has been quite the show to watch. Less than 12 months ago, the team was two wins away from a quite remarkable quadruple; now, they are languishing in 8th, 29 points off the top of the league and leaving manager Jürgen Klopp to remark that he is



only still in a job “because of the past”, rather than his team’s current form.

So, is Klopp really at the heart of Liverpool’s rapid decline? The majority of pundits and fans alike have been reluctant throughout the season to point the finger at the manager, but the poor form has only worsened and it has become increasingly clear that Klopp should not be exempt to such accusations. Liverpool’s high defensive line, a key feature of their tactical success over the past 5 years, has been repeatedly exploited, to the extent that their expected goals against averages out to 1.63 a game this season, compared to an xGA of just over 0.99 per game last season. The defence is far too vulnerable and the team seems to lack the energy to press from the front in the way they have in years gone by. Part of this may be due to the physical toll that last season’s accomplishments will have inevitably

taken on the team, with the team playing 63 games, compared to just the 45 that current league leaders Arsenal played in the last campaign. Irrespective of this, though, Klopp needs to be able to adapt to such circumstances and find and develop a Plan B that leaves the team less defensively susceptible. Instead, fans are left frustrated by seeing the same game plan for each game and repeatedly seeing the opposition exploit the conspicuous issues of the high line and in particular target the particular defensive weaknesses of Trent Alexander-Arnold on the right side of the Liverpool defence.

In the 2-2 draw against Arsenal we saw Klopp’s response to Alexander-Arnold’s defensive vulnerabilities. In the match, he took up more of a midfield position, a role much of the fanbase have been calling for him to adopt for many years. Alexander-Arnold’s midfield role certainly had positives, with him getting on the ball frequently and affecting the game, even providing a sublime assist for Firmino to level the game in the 87th

minute, but it did continue to expose Liverpool defensively, with Arsenal’s second goal coming from a Martinelli cross down Liverpool’s right hand side. The results, therefore, are so far inconclusive but it will be interesting to see in the coming weeks if Klopp employs a similar system or introduces new tactical nuances.

Klopp’s reputation should not render him immune to criticism. Football is a ruthless industry and owners have short memories so is his time running out? Liverpool are willing to give Klopp the chance to rectify the rut, and I believe they are right in doing so. Klopp is still here on account of his prior merit and has earned the right to get to the end of the season, get the necessary squad reinforcements in the transfer window and change. If the 2023/24 campaign takes off much like the current one, however, then it may be time after 8 years of his tenure for Liverpool to bid farewell to one of the most iconic and successful figures in the club’s history.