An “uncomfortable” Oxford and Empire: grounds.

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Diversity Deficit

Oxford’s Diversity Deficit

Bintia Dennog investigates fixed-term contracts and staff diversity

R
ecent 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 diffi-
cult for those who come from less privileged backgrounds. This has led to what The Econom-

ist has coined Oxford’s ‘Other diversity cri-
sis”: a lack of diversity within the staff.

In comparison to other national universi-
ties, 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 insure-
cure 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 back-

grounds.

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 po-

sitions, 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 applic-

ants 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 ap-

pointment 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 re-

search. This role is intended to be a stepping stone to more secure jobs for early-career academics.

Continued on Page 5

“I just like having the stuff.”

In conversation with the Crockery Crook

Atik vs Bridge?

Our editors go head to head in the Debate Chamber

Strike action cancels oral language exams

Oxford University Modern Lan-

guages oral exams have been cancelled for final year stu-
dents. 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 tak-

e 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 com-

ponents.

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.
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
Candidates can make up missed sessions at the start of Trinity. Hearing the news of the cancellation made one final year student said she reacted with “initial disappointment because their year group had been building up to it for three years with all the planning and early sessions” 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 proficiency”, suggesting that speaking “is the most rewarding part of the degree where improvement is most noticeable”, and is “most directly relevant to their future career”. 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 last minute nature 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 (8th week). Some students suggested postponing 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 closing 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 “too complicated” and that “it 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 attendance, at the exams, of all examiners... Cancellation was necessary to avoid allowing the exam to proceed, and, most importantly, to ensure that candidates are all treated equally... With the booked accommodation fully booked for the Thursday, it will be impossible to guarantee equitable treatment for all the c. 300 candidates across the week.” In the following weekend depend on this reasoning. During the Easter break, many academic and administrative colleagues may take some annual leave, or cancel exams as a result of the strike, meaning that 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” and “be 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 amongst students, examiners and “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 hadn’t given us any details about whether it will affect further exams”. Given that exams begin on 22nd May, the student expressed hoped 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 St George’s Day on April 23 has sparked controversy, with multiple news outlets, including The Telegraph, claiming that the college “cancels” 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 every 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 spokesperson confirmed 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 reiterated 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 Swithin’s Tower “as we always do” and will also host the University Sermon for St Swithun’s Tower “as we always do” and will also host the University Sermon for St Swithun’s Tower “as we always do” and will also host the University Sermon for St Swithun’s Tower “as we always do” and will also host the University Sermon for St Swithun’s Tower “as we always do”.

According to The Telegraph the issue of the Saint 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 “scraped 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, underscoring 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 by 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 believes 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.

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 facts, accusing the infrastructure provider and operating companies like GWR, CrossCountry and Chiltern of a “wait until it breaks” approach to railway maintenance. 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.

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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 a series of wobbles over the 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’s fireworks directors 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.”

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

Alexandra Hedström-Blake reports.

A
don 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 discipline”, 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-legitimization 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.”

Loader, 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 communities”. 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.

In what was described as one of 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 the forward 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 and 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 knows all the answers to what makes communities safe.”

Raising the issue of training, Loader had 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” 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 its 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.”

As both Oxford and Cambridge universities felt that it was their “moral imperative” 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 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 own sense of justice on Benin back in 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 evolved, 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 be resolved in such a manner. 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 and especially since the Benin Kingdom had existed since the 1200s. The Benin bronze were taken by the British in 1897. In the 120 years since then historical tensions between ethnic groups and kingdoms have evolved, 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.

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 and especially since the Benin Kingdom had existed since the 1200s. The Benin bronze were taken by the British in 1897. In the 120 years since then historical tensions between ethnic groups and kingdoms have evolved, 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.

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What good policing.
**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.

This 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 every 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

**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 interfaced in developing a test for determining the antimicrobial resistance of tuberculosis, a disease that affected an estimated 10.6 million people in 2021.

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.

**Oxfordbridge 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 Oxfordbridge’s 6 on the men’s side. On the women’s side Harvard and Yale won 15 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.
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 “[j]obs 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 in 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 place where he teaches the same cohort of undergraduates and graduates interested in the time frame for this is unclear.

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. 13% 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 UK Oxford 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 academic 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 representation where Ox f o r d is starting from a lower base than other UK universities. At the same time, there are areas where Oxford’s diversity is perhaps b i g g e r 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 under-graduates 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 Ethnic Pay Gap, establish representative 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
**Marginalia: an insight into the psychology of the Oxford Student**

**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 battering 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 smile 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 par for the course of considering the marginalia in a slightly less eloquent way. In a copy of E.P. Thompson’s *The Making of the Working Class in the Nineteenth Century*, one student – who appears to have been bored, and perhaps to a certain well-informed kind of connection to the random series of strangers who pick up the book next. 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 peering to mark your territory. There's something 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 we 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's never the best idea to damage public property, but that's another story).

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 your red bastard”. In fact, irritation, 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 bloodshot 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 peering 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 we 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.
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 YouGov, 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.
Many respondents explained that they had not attended a protest before due to time constraints, and some cited a lack of motivation, labelling the activity “self-righteous and a waste of time”. The sentiment that there was “very little faith in the aims of those who protest” was also widespread. When asked if they would be willing to attend a protest, only seven in ten respondents thinking that political demonstrations are effective.

Although the rise of the Instagram infographics model has made activism something tangible, many Oxford students stated 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. Many 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 counterpoint. 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 qualified that “seeing real, tangible change is the best feeling”.

Oxford students appear to have greater faith in more traditional, tangible protests.

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

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**Oxford students appear to have greater faith in more traditional, tangible protests.**
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 important 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 advocate 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 Sunak and Yousaf 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.
**Wednesday night Park End is a must for Argentinians. It’s so popular that locals often have to buy tickets in advance.**

The main problem is that prices rise and wages don’t...
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, it's 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 their poles at break of dawn
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-boat ed 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-boat ed 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 champion 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 manly games? Any man who dares to attend the tourney 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.

Sudokus 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 try!

ARARIS
ATHOS
PORTHS

ARISTOTLE
SOCRATES
PLATO

BLOSSOM
BUBBLES
BUTTERCUP

CURLY
LARRY
MOE

ALDRIN
ARMSTRONG
COLLINS

Wordsearch by Lewis Callister

MIXOLPZOHLLMENT
QSIAMARATBALDRIN
ROFUVDMAECCOBGJ
SNILLOCLNEALRIK

OPMASZQPTEUWSCO
HTOMRPILGENESQM
TNSTVMOUTCHTAUBG
ACSXKROCIARELNO

NMOODTDJROWTOPI
CZLYSHNCGEORMB
WUBLIOOAQNTICRF

PERRNHSBSETRLO
GADLSTEAMOHAUUKM
FXUCYFREOLSBCQ

EOMPOWAZBUBBLES
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 Power Rangers 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 cliche for a girl to like something so feminine. Surely I was breaking some kind of feminist rule by ‘giving in’? Liking pink thing so feminine. Surely I was breaking some kind of feminist rule by ‘giving in’?

I hid behind the facade that I was really interested in football (I couldn’t care less it’sVarsity or the World Cup), and I re-examined my rights to womanhood. There is no pink access card to feminism. 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 bedrooms 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.
"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 to 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 Oxfesser captioned the email screenshots "If anyone is after Magdalen stark manner, branded the silverware swindlers are entire collection. However, the fad got so bad that colleges such as Magdalen and Balliol alleg-

Illegally sending emails in order to put a stop to 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 Oxfesser captioned the email screenshots "If anyone is after Magdalen silverware, branded the silverware swindlers are the crockery crook." 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...There's genuinely no real skill to it.

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 trashig? 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.
Music and Cosplay: In conversation with MAKO Girl and cosplayer, A-Ni Ochoa

Discussing being a music artist and a black cosplayer

Deborah Oggunoiki

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/game. 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 mainstream 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 cosplayer 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 cosplayer there are often times when I get a wave of hate 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 so 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 underestimating 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 cosplayer 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’d 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.

A-Ni Ochoa from her Twitter profile

"I was in awe of the cosplays that people had and I wanted to be a part of that"

"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"
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.

Women in my family, Sometimes I cannot Breathe.

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Spea...
'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 racon 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 revolves 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. EAAO 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 blackhole bagely), 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’s arrival in a world where everyone has doppelgängers and does not care what the rest of the world thinks, is a boundary-breaking, deeply personal form of self-love.

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 fists but in his heart. He shows that his perspective on life has been - including a 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 gags, 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 the modern world. With assignments, the never-ending doom scroll, 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.
Daft Punk’s ‘Random Access Memories’: A tenth anniversary retrospective

Kira Atanasu

This spring marks the tenth anniversary of French duo Daft Punk’s fourth and final 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 pop-rock predecessors 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’.

That still does not explain why you 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 fizzes 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 with being one of the pivotal predecessors to the EDM genre. So, the obvious question follows: if Daft Punk’s early 2000s music bled 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 Bugsy 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”.

The duo’s previous albums were being composed, are full to the brim with electronic and digital-age-sounding music—from the 2009 reboot of ‘Boom Boom Pow’ to the 2012 mumble-fuelled EDM trap of ‘Harlem Shake’—then returning to vintage synths and acoustic instrumentation. Could the duo have been making a statement about the dance music group. As overlap grows between the indie, pop, and rap 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 marked 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 Rey 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 libraries! The only aspect I wish would change is that every library

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 30th year, the novel is more relevant 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 paranoiac view of life. Enthralling and ambitious, this is a book which I’m sure will impact you deeply.

3. We

A prequel 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.

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 in a world created by women.

So how is the 'Cozzie livs', an abbreviation for Cozzie Lived, born? According to both Vogue and Hello Magazine, "designers made denim sexy for $25". 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.

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 hoop 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 minimalistic 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 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.

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Friday 21st April 2023

Vol. 298 | 0th Week

Stage 19
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 female. 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 alas, 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.

Katerina Lygaki

Horoscopes

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

Aries 21 March - 19 April
You’re a warm presence, but you can’t be loved by everyone. Know where to spend your energy so you don’t burn out.

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.

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

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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

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

Ayaa 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 toward 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: strong, milky, invigorating, 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 structure to love within a group, to equate necessity of food with the necessity to love. From the peasants to the princes, my first time taking MDMA

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 hallucinogenic effect. MDMA is sometimes called '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 expected to sound like this:

And just admitted defeat for a bit, and gave way to a 'higher' self, one that felt at peace with itself, and at one with the universe. I don't mean it that way at all. I myself have English family, 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, not just the self. 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 itself.

It’s no secret that Arabs smoother. 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’ve never left 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 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.
**Subject: The Road I Take**

From: Aaliyah Khan

To: My long-suffering tutors

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 both 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.

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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; how the church, with its mullion sandstone nize and glances meaning, sublates those above from those below; and you wonder what each window casts inside or holds of the distant lives of saints, what it derives

of flightless angels stained in glass, formed of tesserae and plated panes which coruscate like mountain folds in evening sun; you wonder as the silhouettes lean and stumble home, and the bridesmaids cycle in figures of eight 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

Sets 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
• 80g quality chopped tinned tomatoes or passata
• 200g ricotta salata, grated
• 1/2ml Extra virgin olive oil
• Sea salt and black pepper for cooking
• A good handful of fresh basil leaves

Directions

To prepare:
Preheat 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 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 packet. 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 Olì 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 familiar by the imperfections.

Food writing can too often be pompous, prescriptive, and presumptuous. I love a Michelin-starred restaurant as much as the next person but why don’t you try to find something you prefer? Finding an amazing street food vendor for your birthday 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 churn 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 I’m doing good. Not possible! Even better than that thought? 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, owners of places, around the UK as well as Oxford. I bring you the love and passion that goes into creating every dish. I’ve had to learn to love as well as ferociousness. 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 high costs, and the fact that he is the only restaurant in the country to import some of his ingredients, that pasta tastes ten times better.

The industry

There has never been a more fascinating 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 a chain of events created by the UK government 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 you can’t miss the mean that profitability is far from guaranteed.

More than this, there are new and exciting concepts trying to disrupt the market all the time. New disorders are reading a 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 exciting to see it.

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.

Bbuona - Italia a Oxford

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Owner Andi first set up Bbuona alongside Alessandro as ‘Buongiorno Pizzeria’. 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 mainstay of the shop. A year later, Bbuona was born. Now, the restaurant maintains the Italian-style bar (I often find myself standing here enjoying an espresso and a cannolo) 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. Andi travels in Italy to source his fantastic ingredients, and our Energetica was a very well-presented dish which came with three different varieties; topped with cherry tomatoes are definitely the star of the show and a quick rebrand

Pizza-wise, we got three different options. Firstly came the Bbuona. Ansi’s offering but it was a Neopolitan-style base much darker, creamier, hazelnut chocolate base that definitely makes for a dish that’s shareable. The sweeter cream is balanced out by an extremely diverse range of dishes here with all price points and budgets catered for. Andi says that is something that was important to him. Ingredients are high quality throughout all of the dishes and you still get a good meal for less than £9. Alternatively, there is scope to go all out for the Tartafo option at £15.95 or add your own ingredients and toppings.

A 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 a gluten-free version of the classic. But even 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 a range of suppliers and producers, 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.

Salads are also on the menu for those looking for a light option, and our Energetica was a very well-presented dish. Less dressed but still a meal worth ordering. 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. Andi’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

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. The hazelnut argorostine 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 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 remiss to get anything else. If you are between meals when you wander through Gloucester Green, I have found that the cannolo and an espresso for cocktail at 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, the 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.
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 the next test. Following the 1972 mandate, women’s World Cup tournaments to date.

Cup debut.

The crucial action of the half, though, was yet to come. A high tackle on her opposite number, sending Cambridge 7-0 up. The women’s fixture kicked off first, marking the 35thVarsity under South-West London’s grey skies. From the start, Cambridge looked far the stronger team, establishing themselves strongly in the opening encounters. After a period of sustained pressure, stemming

half and skipper Emilia Bushrod

drew first blood with a quick snipe, with a converged 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, Oxford’s support 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-

whistle.

To assert her name outside of the USA will be

taken on the team, with the team playing 63 games,

Cup to select and trial a squad. With Mead and

America, marking 30 games unbeaten!

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Kirby out of the World Cup with injuries, and

the semi-finals. Both teams triumphed over the

England last summer as the love for women’s

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After 2-0 Williamson

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Klopp's reputation should not render her

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 Haywood. I think she had a game where

she scored only 3 pointers, that’s crazy! Camilleplays 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 varisities.

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 Ifley. BUCS games are as good as pro, usually with 6pm or 8pm Tip. It’s good vibes even if you don’t really know basketball, it’s always fun.

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To assert her name outside of the USA will be
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, Klopp needs to be able to adapt to such circumstances and find and develop a Plan B that is more defensively susceptible. Instead, fans are left frustrated by seeing the same game plan for each game and repeatedly seeing the same pattern. One of the most conspicuous gaps is 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 2-0 win over Spain in the semi-final 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 fantasie

Klopp is still relying on his 24-year-old centre-back, who is a former centre-half, is a centre-back, is a centre-back, is a centre-back, is a centre-back. The natural leader of his position and has eight years of his tenure for Liverpool to bid farewell to one of the most iconic and successful figures in the club’s history.

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.

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