

Cherwell

Selina Chen provides an outsider's view on the encampment on page 2:



24 hours inside the OA4P encampment

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PRO-PALESTINE ENCAMPMENT DEMANDS UNIVERSITY ACTION

Cherwell News reports.

An encampment has been constructed in Oxford in protest of Israeli action in Palestine and calling for Oxford University to “end complicity with genocide”. Students, faculty, and staff have gathered to demand that the University reveal and divest funding into Israel and arms companies, as well as boycott all institutional connections with Israeli universities.

Positioned in front of the Pitt Rivers Museum, the encampment was established on Monday 6th April and is in coordination with a similar protest in Cambridge. It has been organised by the newly founded Oxford Action for Palestine (OA4P).

In a joint statement with Cambridge for Palestine (C4P), OA4P told Cherwell: “we refuse to accept our universities’ complicity in Israel’s war crimes against the Palestinian people – and we refuse to stand by while they justify Israel’s campaign of mass slaughter, starvation, and displacement.”

The encampment in Oxford comes after a string of similar movements at other universities across the world, including Yale, Harvard and UCLA, where 132 were arrested and rubber bullets used against the students.

A student participating told Cherwell: “It’s an honour to stand alongside people who care so deeply for Palestinian Liberation and demand that the genocide in Gaza must end.

“Our university is complicit in Israel’s genocide, occupation and apartheid – and as a coalition of students, staff and faculty we say no more. After seven months



of overwhelming support for Palestine on campus, we call on [the Administration] to take action that’s long overdue.”

The group has made seven demands of the University, primarily relating to the assets and investments held. They demand a disclosure of all University assets and a divestiture of all holdings in arms companies and companies “complicit in Israeli genocide, apartheid and occupation of Palestine”.

OA4P has said: “Oxbridge’s profits cannot continue to climb at the expense of Palestinian lives, and their reputations must no longer be built on the white-

washing of Israeli crimes. Today we join the university students, faculty, and staff across the globe who refuse to continue business as usual while our institutions profit from genocide.”

It is also demanded that the University and its subsidiaries end all banking with Barclays. This comes after a protest in January outside the Oxford branch in protest organised by the Oxford Palestine Solidarity Campaign.

A boycott of institutional relationships with Israeli universities has also been demanded. This consists of the ending of exchange programs, joint projects and conferences. They also

demand that the University “end research, career, and procurement partnerships with companies and institutions that are complicit in Israeli genocide, apartheid, or occupation.”

The group demands the University provides financial and material means to rebuild Palestinian universities, establish a long-term task force to recommend how best to rebuild the higher education sector in Gaza and allocate resources to support Palestinian students such as exchanges, joint projects and scholarship programmes.

Artwork by Joe Walford.

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The hidden Oxford experience: Transparency in college disparities

Enrique Normand Velarde and Joseph Munn report.

In a January 2023 address, Chancellor Lord Patten welcomed the new Vice-Chancellor, Irene Tracey, and discussed the challenges which lay for Oxford University, and its collegiate structure, in the future ahead. There he acknowledged the “wide divergence in the funding of individual colleges from their own resources” which “can lead to what many believe is sometimes an unequal student experience across the same university.”

“When we look at some of these individual internal issues, I recall the wise advice of Tancredi in the greatest European political novel, The Leopard – ‘things have to change in order to remain the same.’ Vice-Chancellor Irene Tracey has also previously referred to “unevenness” between colleges, but compared it to differences in quality across departments or in the varying experience of the University’s academics.

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NEWS SHORTS



Bannister Community Mile marks 70th anniversary of record-breaking achievement

Runners completed the annual Bannister Community Mile in Oxford on the 70th anniversary of Sir Roger Bannister's record breaking sub-four-minute mile run.

The community mile started at 9am on Monday and encouraged participation from Oxford citizens of all ages and abilities. The route started at St Aldate's and progressed down Oxford's High Street where a body of cheering spectators came out to offer support for the runners and celebrate the community spirit this event brings.

Boris Johnson turned away from Oxfordshire polling station

Boris Johnson was turned away from an Oxfordshire polling station after not providing sufficient proof of his identity. This violates the law that he passed as Prime Minister, which requires that all voters bring photo ID. Johnson failed to do this and so was required to return at a later point in the day to cast his vote for Oxfordshire's police commissioner.

Big bug tent in University Parks for Oxford Kafka 2024

A jitterbug-shaped tent will be located in University Parks between 31st May and 2nd June as part of Oxford's programme of events marking the legacy of Franz Kafka on the centenary anniversary of his death. Events taking place inside the giant inflatable bug tent include yoga, storytelling and a collaboration between Oxford-based MC Rawz and aerialist Julia Sparks.

24 hours inside the OA4P encampment

Selina Chen reports.

Mud swamps over grass where disintegrating cardboard and puddled tarp trace a crude footpath; wooden pallets provide the only solid ground. Upon this foundation lies Oxford's Gaza Solidarity Encampment, a community supported by donations where students learn from teach-in lectures and look after one another.

As a *Cherwell* journalist embedded in the camp for the first night, I didn't scrounge for polished statements but wanted to document the mundane details of life in the "Liberated Zone." Here's what I observed.

Sprung up during the pre-dawn hours of 6 May, the welcome tent stood at the encampment entrance where newcomers filled out an onboarding form asking for their first name or pseudonym only – no full names. Responses are kept encrypted and private, it says, and a legal team is advising their collective action.

Many students picked up face masks for anonymity, while some donned sunglasses and scarves. Tape covers up the initials and college crests embroidered on Oxford's signature puffer jackets.

Prominent scholars visited the encampment: feminist philosopher Amia Srinivasan brought students lunch and Israeli-British historian Avi Shlaim gifted students a box of dates. Daily schedules are filled with teach-in lectures, poetry circles, and news announcements. The day saw scheduled chants interspersed with spontaneous cheers whenever a car drove by and honked its horn in support.

Journalists from national outlets hovered around the premise,

greeted and accompanied by one of the media-trained campers acting as spokespeople. Shireen Abu Akleh media tent, named after the Palestinian-American journalist shot by Israeli forces while covering a raid, hosted a number of interviews.

Most interactions were mutually courteous, but not all media outlets were welcome: *Daily Mail's* interview request was declined due to past "unfriendly" coverage, although the dissatisfied reporter was still allowed to roam the encampment. Later, two students independently alleged that she had been unzipping tents to look inside.

Camera crews trickled out by sunset and returned as early as sunrise. "I feel like I'm on a film set," a student remarked. And indeed when I pull up the news, I see many of the familiar faces and sombre eyes I've become familiar with during my time there.

As dusk descended, exterior lights of the Natural History Museum cast a faint warm glow upon the two dozen tents. An estimated 50 campers slept there – fewer than the two hundred during the day – their soft chatter and occasional laughter audible late into the night. Many voices carried American accents, and topics of discussion involved their jailed friends across the pond and their surprise at the gentle demeanour of the British police forces.

One of the early morning guards was an Israeli-born student who moved to the UK at age seven. His parents supported his involvement in the encampment, but his other relatives in Israel weren't yet aware. "I often play a hypothetical in my head," he said, "that if I hadn't left I would have been drafted into the IDF [Israel Defense Forces]."

Two Jewish passersby separately

approached the camp in the morning and expressed their support. One of them said that he had been involved in a Jewish student group for Palestine twenty years ago: "I've come to meet my juniors."

The Israeli-British camper pulled out a Star of David from around his neck, "that's me," he smiled.

In another polite interaction, staff members from the Natural History Museum came to check that the encampment understands that the museum remains open.

But some encounters turned hostile. A construction worker employed by the company that upkeep the grass entered the encampment despite being asked to remain outside. "Wakey wakey!" he yelled at the sleepy campers in the early morning as he took photos. He expressed his concern for the state of grass under the tents and foot traffic.

At breakfast a camper comment-

ed on the incident: "Grass grows back. Palestinian children don't."

Central to Oxford's encampment were donations from the community. Upon seeing Oxford Action for Palestine's wishlist on Instagram, people arrived with everything from hot meals to chairs. The community tent was quickly filled with piles of food.

There was no top-down leadership structure in the encampment despite its highly organised operations. While there was a designated Head of Media and certain volunteers took charge of various logistical aspects, the encampment had no hierarchy, and indeed the organisers' meetings saw horizontal decision making processes.

As the encampment continued to capture Oxford and national attention, the protesters fought to direct all eyes on Gaza.

Image Credit: Selina Chen.

Image Credit front page: OA4P.



No admissions tests for English and Geography in 2024

Euan Elliott reports.

The University of Oxford's Faculty of English and Faculty of Geography and Environment have confirmed that neither the English Language Admissions Test (ELAT) nor the Geography Admissions Test (GAT) will

be set for the October 2024 undergraduate admissions cycle.

This announcement follows both faculties' decisions to disregard ELAT results in November 2023 after technical issues left some candidates waiting up to an hour for passages of text to load. English candidates were also mistakenly given

the previous year's theme to guide their analysis, leading to confusion and anxiety among applicants.

The Faculty of English has expressed that they are "committed in the long term to the value and efficacy of setting a standard test for all applicants" and "hope to be in a position to run the Oxford ELAT again" in the future.

Following the disrupted admissions tests in 2023, the University severed ties with Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) as its test provider, after only one year of a partnership aimed at digitising the testing process. The University has since announced that they are working on new arrangements for all other admissions tests, which are set to continue in October 2024.

The most recent major change to the University's admissions testing process was the permanent removal of the practical test for candidates applying for Fine Art, a decision made as part of the transition to re-

mote interviews in 2020.

A spokesperson of the University of Oxford told *Cherwell*: "We are putting in place arrangements for our admissions tests in 2024, and will be communicating with applicants, schools and test centres shortly."

Oxford is not the only university to revise their admissions test procedure. Until this year, most selective American colleges adopted a 'test-optional' policy, not requiring candidates to disclose SAT or ACT results as part of their application. This attitude was largely adopted over concerns regarding the close link between a candidate's results and their race and family income, as well as the opportunity for coaching for advantaged students. In recent years, however, many elite colleges, including Harvard University, Yale University and MIT, have reversed their stance, reinstating standardised testing as a required part of a candidate's application.

Image Credit: Daniel Stick.



SU provides updates on Transformation Period

Anuj Mishra reports.

The Oxford Student Union (SU) has released further details on the twelve-month transformation period, which it entered late in March, denying reports of a “closure” or “shutdown”. However, it is still unclear which “essential” services the SU will continue to offer over the course of its reduced operation.

The SU is due, over the course of the transformation period, to focus on what it deems “essential” activities for the rest of this academic year. These include facilitating student-led campaigns, operating the Student Advice Service, securing welfare provisions to colleges and representing students on University and college committees.

The Student Council will be replaced by a consultative body, which will allow student voices to be heard during the transformation planning. The SU also plans on consulting student opinions through JCRs, MCRs and Campaign Co-Chairs as well as by holding an “all-student meeting” in seventh week of Trinity term. The SU wrote on its website that “all other student facing activities and projects will cease for the duration of the Transformation Period”, but has not given more detail about which activities are concerned.

The SU Advice Centre has been closed to new casework since 1st May. The SU considers the centre to

be “an essential service”, and “aim[s] to get it back up and running as soon as possible”. The SU will also continue to sell welfare products to colleges and has committed to providing student representation for the University’s access and participation plan.

The Sabbatical team will be cut by half during the transformation period so there will only be the following positions in the 2024/2025 academic year: President, Vice-President UG Education and Access and Vice-President PG Education and Access. The SU states it wants to intensify “appropriate training and induction” and that “it would not be fair to bring six Sabbatical officers into an

environment where they cannot be properly supported.”

In the meantime, the SU acknowledges that students will not be represented on University and college committees not deemed as “important”.

The transformation committee, as publicised by the SU, will be co-chaired by Professor Martin Williams, the University’s Pro-Vice Chancellor for Education, and Ben Ward, an external trustee of the SU. Among the nine members of the transformation committee are two students: SU President Danial Hussain and Chair of the Student Council Oluweseun Sowunmi. The committee has appointed Emilie Tapping, former CEO of Brookes Union, as its Change Director for the course of the period.

Image Credits: James Morrell.



MI5 warns Oxford University of security threat

Vlada Palanciuc reports.

In a recent briefing, MI5 has warned that foreign states are targeting UK universities, including Oxford University, which jeopardises national security. The briefing comes after a government review of security threats found in higher education.

The chief executive of the National Cyber Security Center, Felicity Oswald, and MI5 General Director Ken McCallum announced that MI5 will consult universities on measures to secure sensitive information.

Though the announcement did not name any countries of interest, it follows from last year’s warning of China’s possible influence in university research programs.

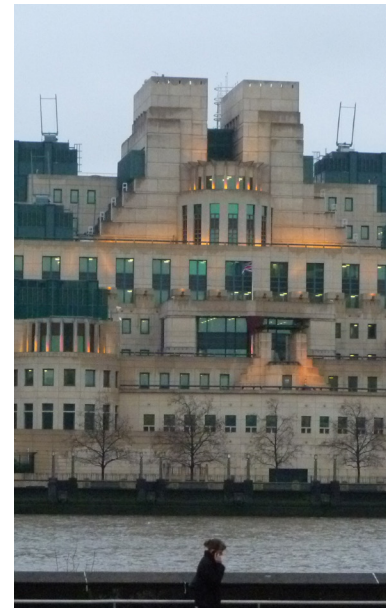
Following the announcement, new measures were introduced including increasing the transparency of research funding, increasing stringency of university personnel given clearance, and offering government funding for universities to improve internal security capabilities. Researchers and university staff coming to the UK from nations like China must also undergo lengthy security-clearing when applying for a university-related visa, particularly those working in STEM fields.

This is because STEM research fields are particularly vulnerable to espionage, MI5 warns. MI5 fears new research could be fielded by states in order to bolster their own economic and military aims. Intellectual property on new technology, chemicals, and

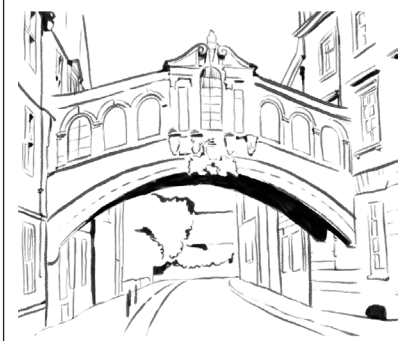
medicine are of special concern. MI5 worries the UK’s vanguard research may be leaked via compromised university staff, opaque partnerships, and cyber-attacks on universities.

Universities, including Oxford and the Russell Groups, have a longstanding partnership with MI5 mitigating national security risks that come from leaked breakthroughs in the UK. The chief executive of Universities UK, Tim Bradshaw, has said: “Russell Group universities take their national security responsibilities incredibly seriously and already work closely with government and the intelligence community to help protect UK breakthroughs in fields like AI, which are important to our national interest.”

Image Credit: stephenwalli / CC BY-SA 2.0 via Flickr.



CROSS CAMPUS



Cambridge Gender Attainment Gap to be excluded from access report

The gender awarding gap will not be included in the Access and Participation Plan despite the SU being assured by the University that it would. Over the last ten years, 33% of men achieved a first in their finals compared with 28% of women, an 8% attainment gap. In an access plan covering the last five years, the University committed to eliminate the gap in degree outcomes experienced by Black students, students with disabilities, and declared mental health conditions by 2024–2025.

Stanford releases statement cautioning students against ketamine use

Stanford University has warned against the use of ketamine. The University sent an email statement to its student body to caution them against “dangerous drugs circulating in our community”. This follows the reported hospital admissions of two Stanford students due to their ketamine usage. They have encouraged students to attend workshops and learn about the dangers of ketamine.

Bristol University proposes ban on staff-student relationships

Bristol’s UCU has proposed the banning of any staff and student relationships. The current policy ‘discourages’ relationships between staff and students. The board wants to forbid these relationships, which they define as ‘all sexual or romantic contact, whether in person and/or online or via means of other electronic communication, one-off or longer-term.’ This motion has now been passed to the committee’s senior team for comment.

Pembroke ball tickets provoke controversy

Roy Shinar Cohen reports.

As students count down the weeks to Pembroke College’s ninth week Commemoration Ball, anger over “inaccessible” ticket prices has mounted. Regularly priced tickets for the ball sold out upon their release, leaving only VIP tickets priced at £446, advertised to alumni. Over 1200 people tried and failed to obtain tickets at the release.

Chloe Pomfret, a St Catz undergrad who co-chairs Oxford’s Class Act Campaign, decried the prices on Twitter, posting “you wonder why Oxford is so inaccessible for working class students... £446 for one college ball.”

The pricing received national attention. In response to the controversy, Pembroke alum and former Big Brother contestant Derek Laud offered to cover the cost of tickets for “socially disadvantaged” Pembroke students. The Daily Mail also featured the story.

Standard student tickets sold for much cheaper, at £166. Last

month, Pembroke Ball organisers released £106 “community tickets” designed to help increase access to the ball for students who would be unable to pay the student ticket price. This is higher than typical ball access tickets, which range from £40-60.

The controversy follows the publication of a report detailing the differences in funding, amenities, and other resources available to students across colleges, published by the SU-supported Col-

lege Disparities Campaign. Pembroke College falls on the lower end of the funding spectrum; its rent and accommodation fees are some of the highest across the university.

Pembroke Ball has also banned ticket resale and name change for most student tickets, leaving some students unable to transfer tickets to friends. In their online statement, Pembroke Ball explained that the limits are designed to prevent extreme markups on resale

prices.

This hasn’t stopped current ticket holders from advertising on Oxtickets and other platforms in an effort to find available tickets. One seller offered a student ticket for £360, more than double the original price.

Pembroke ball president Ariff Castronovo declined to comment on the matter.

Image Credit: Dave S/CC BY 2.0 via Flickr.



Institute accused of 'eugenics on steroids' shut down by Oxford University

Poppy Littler-Jennings reports.

The Future of Humanity Institute (FHI) at Oxford University was shut down on 16 April after 19 years of research and operation. Research carried out by FHI included developing controversial ethical theories such as effective altruism and longtermism.

Professor Nick Bostrom, founder of FHI, traced its closure to "administrative headwinds" from the University and, in particular the Faculty of Philosophy, outlining a "pressure to conform." A former Senior Research Fellow at the Institute, Anders Sanberg, similarly maintained that FHI was "affected by a gradual suffocation by Faculty bureaucracy."

The work carried out by the Insti-



tute is notably intertwined with the philosophy of longtermism, which "refers to a set of ethical views concerned with protecting and improving the long-run future." Notable benefactors of the FHI include Elon Musk, who donated £1 million in 2015 to fund research about artificial intelligence, and who considers longtermism a "close match" to his own philosophy.

The Future of Humanity's website published a statement saying that its fundraising and hiring were frozen in 2020 and at the end of last year, the Faculty of Philosophy decided not to renew staff contracts. Its final report also stated: "We did not invest enough in university politics and sociality to form a long-term stable relationship with our faculty."

Throughout the Institute's lifetime there have been several instances of controversy relating to the organisation's framework. 15 months ago, Bostrom was involved in a scandal that revealed racist comments he had made in an email from 1996. Despite an issued apology, the Institute received backlash.

Émile Torres, a philosopher who specialises in existential threats,

denounced the work of the FHI, equating it to a "noxious ideology" and "eugenics on steroids". They also underscored the many scandals associated with effective altruism and longtermism. A few months before the Bostrom controversy, Sam Bankman-Fried was detained for a multibillion-dollar fraud. Bankman-Fried was a prominent supporter of effective altruism as well as a friend of William MacAskill, who was closely linked to FHI.

Irrespective of its closure, the Institute says it "made a series of research contributions that helped change our conversation about the future" and promises that "FHI alumni will continue to research [these] questions both within Oxford and at other places around the world."

A spokesperson for the University told *Cherwell*: "Oxford University has taken the difficult decision to close the Future of Humanity Institute (a research centre in the Faculty of Philosophy). The Institute has made an important contribution to the study of the future of humanity, for which we would like to thank and recognise the research team."

Image Credit: Cyril Malik.

Pro-Palestine encampment demands University action

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A University spokesperson said that they were aware of the demonstration, and stated that they "respect our students and staff members' right to freedom of expression in the form of peaceful protests," asking protestors to "[protest] with respect, courtesy and empathy."

Around 500 demonstrators attended a vigil the evening of 6 May to show solidarity with the healthcare and education workers of Gaza.

Over 300 faculty and staff at Oxford University have signed an open letter expressing their support for the encampment. The letter calls for the University to produce details of its endowment, including investment in arms companies in hopes that "we can have an open discussion on this issue with all the facts in hand."

Robert Gildea, a history professor at Worcester, told *Cherwell*: "It is very moving to see that students around OA4P have set up an encampment...I understand the difference that the global protest of youth can make, and I encourage other academics to support this movement."

For the latest updates on the encampment, go to cherwell.org.

Oxford pays lecturers higher than nearly all Russell Group universities

Roy Shinar Cohen reports.

New data reveals Oxford University is one of the best paying Russell Group universities.

The University ranks sixth for the percentage of academics paid in the highest category — over £65,578 per year — out of 24 Russell Group institutions. Over 30% of Oxford academics fall into this group.

According to an annual survey conducted by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), there are six relevant wage groups for academics in the UK. 30% of academics are in this group.

Oxford does not pay any of its

"Oxford does not pay any of its academics below £27,131 a year."

academics below £27,131 a year, which includes the two lowest groups. The majority of Oxford academics are paid in the fourth group, between £36,386 and £48,841 a year.

Moreover, analysis conducted by the *Tab* reveals that some members of the Russell Group pay their staff between £21,197 and £27,131 a year, the second wage group. Oxford is not among this group, which includes Cambridge University, Durham University, Queen's University Belfast and Birmingham University.

However, according to HESA's data, Oxford does pay 720 academics between £27,131 and £36,386 a year, the third wage group, which is still less than Cambridge's 920 academics in this group.

The universities that pay a higher proportion of their academics the highest salaries include the London School of Economics, the

University of Liverpool, Queen Mary University of London, King's College London, and University College London. The highest of the group, the London School of Economics, pays nearly 53% of its academics over £65,578 a year. The University of Cambridge ranked 14th, paying 24% of its staff in the highest wage group.

This data comes after a year in which some of the University of Oxford's staff have been protesting against their working conditions. Throughout 2023 staff members marched and engaged in boycotts because "our members refuse to stand by while pay is eroded and staff are shunted onto gig-economy contracts." Additionally, according

to the University of Oxford's 2022-2023 financial statement, the University has had a lucrative year. In 2022-2023 Oxford had a Comprehensive Income of nearly £133 million — an increase of more than one hundred million compared with the prior year.

Image Credit: Winky / CC BY 2.0 via Wikimedia Commons.

Oxford University's lecturer pay does not show the full picture

Lara Foxon comments.

Figures showing Oxford University to be "one of the best paying Russell Group universities" do not show the full picture, and should not be treated as if they do.

Statistics suggesting no member of staff at Oxford is paid below £27,131 only refer to those on full time contracts. Staff with short-term contracts are excluded from the data, as are their earnings. But even this analysis remains misleading in its focus on the amount of money staff have earned. The state of wages alone has not been the exclusive focus of the UCU. Rather the insecurity of job contracts has been exposed, as academics have repeatedly called out the casualisation of the sector. Transparency over

wages may show which universities pay their staff the 'least', but whether it uncovers the reality of the working conditions of all their academic staff is far more dubious. Does this data really 'expose' how universities treat their staff, or is it a helpful way to obscure the realities of working in

"...is it a helpful way to obscure the realities of working in higher education?"

higher education?

I'm not sure whether we should be celebrating Oxford's supposedly good wages, when other universities pay academics substantially less. The data makes apparent how much of an impact

the institution makes on an academic's salary, perhaps reflecting the general trend of some forms of higher education being hailed as more 'worthy' than others. As the government insists on the existence of 'low value' degrees and hints at the possibility of student loans being attached to minimum academic requirements, it's clear that some believe that higher education should be restricted. Focussing on what data tells us about the relative 'wages' of Russell Group institutions seems a way to further naturalise this increasing divide in higher education, which looks to pit one institution, one degree, or one 'job prospect' against another.



The hidden Oxford experience: Transparency in college disparities

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A *Cherwell* investigation into the University's rhetoric, its communications to prospective applicants, and the financial structures underlying and attempting to address the divergence in college funds uncovers the administration's current approach with regards to college disparities. A conservative suite of remedial measures is the preferred solution to an unequal University experience across Oxford's 39 colleges.

College financial structures

College financial structures are long-standing and interconnected. The University's total endowment, valued at above £8 billion in 2023, is the largest amongst British universities. Colleges account for around £6 billion of this, and rely on the gains from their endowment to provide the annual income which funds day-to-day operations and scholarships, prizes and grants. Christ Church College relies on its endowment to provide nearly half of its annual income, and it expects this dependency to "almost certainly increase in future years as other sources of income are likely to grow slowly, if at all, in real terms."

The endowments of colleges have long-term consequences on their finances and their ability to provide for students. The University has a designated fund manager, Oxford University Endowment Management, which is responsible for the endowments of the majority of Oxford colleges – though some, like Jesus College, do not opt in.

The fund describes the management of the endowments of colleges as "unlike traditional investment management

because of the nature of the beneficiaries. For most pools of capital, such as pension funds, the beneficiaries are alive. For endowments, the beneficiaries may not even be born yet."

The long-term nature of endowments means that current inequalities may have lasting consequences. The endowments of wealthy colleges like St John's

"The endowments of colleges have long-term consequences on their finances and their ability to provide for students."

College or Magdalen College can total over £700 million; for poorer colleges like Mansfield College or Lady Margaret Hall, endowments can be below £50 million. Worse, the gap is growing: in 2009, Christ Church College's endowment (£261 million) was worth about eleven times St Anne's College (£24 million) – now, Christ Church College's endowment (£758 million) is worth about seventeen times St Anne's College's (£44 million).

University communications

The University of Oxford's online portal for Admissions, its principal means of communications with prospective students, provides some general indication about the present inequalities between colleges. But these statements of difference are often phrased ambiguously or without much detail.

The implication is that the perception of an unequal University experience shared "by many" rather than the financial

divergence among colleges itself which constitutes the real challenge to the continuity of the collegiate structure. But these statements of difference are often phrased ambiguously or without much detail.

A section on the Oxford page College Life, states "each college is unique, but generally their facilities are pretty similar." Similarly ambiguous statements are found with references to the difference in financial support offered by colleges under Help with the cost: "Many colleges have generous support funds or awards which may be available..."

Official Oxford promotional material portrays the collegiate system as a quirky feature of Oxford life and the applicant's choice of a college as a relatively unimportant decision. The admissions page "What are Oxford Colleges" advertises a 2019 video which asks "Does it matter which college you go to?" before answering with an emphatic "Not Really." It goes on to assure the viewer that "once you're [at Oxford], you'll no doubt think your college is the best."

The financial disparities between colleges are nonetheless acknowledged by the University in a different section titled Do I pay to live in my college? which provides prospective students with a table displaying the differences in accommodation costs across all of Oxford's colleges, updated to reflect the academic year 2023-4. The table shows an estimate of likely costs for accommodation and meals as £6,201 for St. John's College, against £8,989 at University College. That "costs vary across colleges and are likely to increase annually" is noted for reference.

The rate of open applications provides further evidence that a non-negligible number of prospective applicants do not assign great importance to their choice of college: in the most recent application cycle, 16% of



applicants made open applications. In view of the evidence provided, this may be related to the University's ambiguous rhetoric on the importance of a college choice.

In a 2021 Telegraph article, Dr Samina Khan, the University's Director of Undergraduate Admissions, advised students thinking about making an open application to go for it: "Sometimes students worry about having to make a college choice, so we encourage students to make open applications."

St Hilda's College told *Cherwell* they would encourage students to look at factors of a college such as size, age, location, distance to departments and onsite facilities as factors that they would encourage prospective applicants to look at – and concluded that they "wouldn't advocate applying to a college solely because it's wealthy."

Nonetheless, the wealth of a student's college can have a major impact on their Oxford experience. Previous *Cherwell* investigations have shown that a college's wealth is strongly correlated with the rent it charges students and their academic performance in Finals.

The College Contributions Scheme

Awareness of college disparities isn't new: in 1997, the North Commission of Inquiry stated that "concerns arising from differences in the levels of resources available to different colleges have been the subject of much discussion in Oxford in recent years." The Commission assessed the measures put in place at the time to remedy college disparities, and succinctly concluded that "successive schemes over the last thirty years (...) have certainly not succeeded in 'solving the problem' of the poorer colleges."

Thirty years later, the University finds itself at a similar juncture. The University's current flagship programme aimed at attenuating college disparities, the College Contributions Scheme (CCS), has been criticised by poorer colleges and Private Permanent Halls for being "ineffective."

The CCS, approved as part of the University's Statutes in 2009, is aimed at redistributing wealth amongst colleges. Poorer colleges

apply for grants from the College Contributions Committee, and the Committee awards grants from the College Contributions Fund, which is funded by wealthier colleges.

In the current academic year, a group of 12 colleges, including St. Peter's College, Keble College and St. Anne's College were recipients of grants administered by the committee – most of the almost £3 million distributed among them are to be allocated towards 'Maintenance and refurbishment'.

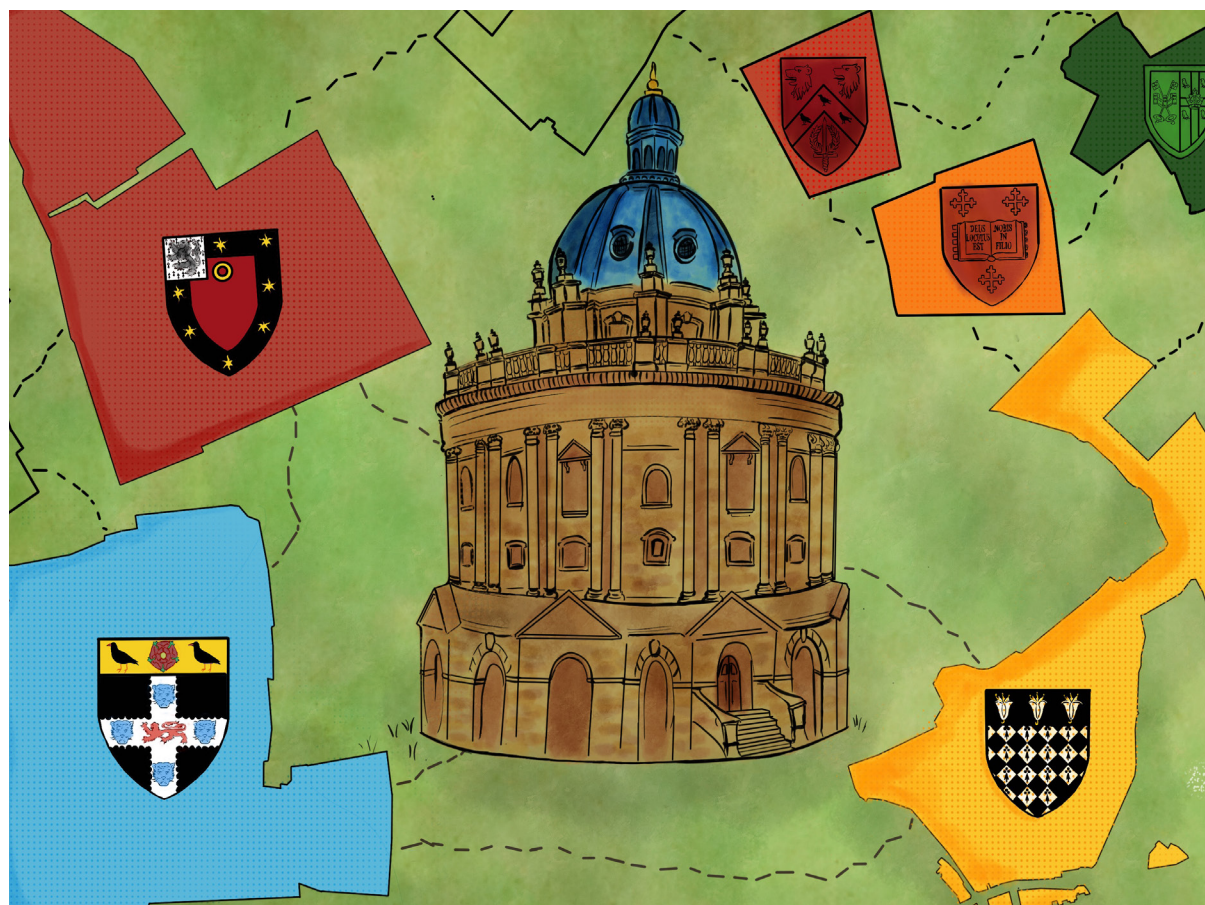
"In the most recent application cycle, 16% of applicants made open applications."

Only St Edmund Hall will utilise a grant of £18,500 to cover teaching costs, alongside a further £38,500 which has also been allocated to the college for use across the following two academic years, however, access to funds in subsequent years "shall be dependent on the success with which each college meets certain conditions laid down by Council on the recommendation of the College Contributions Committee."

Colleges which accept a high proportion of state-school students are also likely to have a comparatively small endowment, while state-school students may be the ones most in need of generous financial support. Of the ten colleges which accepted the highest proportion of state school students this year, four have been recipients of grants from the Oxford College Contributions Fund in the last three years, including Mansfield College, where a University-leading 93.2% of the British student body are state-school educated.

The collegiate system is rife with divergences, and the University is keenly aware of this fact. For the time being, however, it appears to be attempting an iterative 'band aid' approach to primarily remedy the impression of inequality, which it regards as more problematic than the widening financial disparities across college funds in themselves.

Image Credit: Daniel Stick. Artwork by Camille Simons.



The fight for truth must continue



Image Credit: 2happy / CC0 1.0 Deed, via Stockvault

CHERWELL

Roy Shinar Cohen discusses press freedom in this week's editorial comment spotlight

In 1993, May 3rd was established as World Press Freedom Day. A day to celebrate, defend and fight for the right to speak out, as well as to pay respects to journalists who have lost their lives while working to expose the truth. This year the celebration is especially sad. In the year with the most elections in history, journalists around the world are still threatened and silenced at alarming rates.

Reporters Without Borders state that a growing number of countries fail to protect journalists and the international community lacks the will to enforce measures to support the press. This (obviously) has had grave implications. In 2023 dozens of journalists were killed and 320 were imprisoned. Moreover, in the five months we've lived in 2024, we have already seen the death of 21 journalists. With the wars raging in Ukraine, Gaza, and Sudan, we will likely, and unfortunately, see this number rising.

As the Pulitzer Prize Board reminds us, the risks to journalists exist not just in war zones or extreme situations. For example, student journalists on university campuses worldwide cover some of the most influential stories of the day at great personal risk. Even in so-called 'democracies', journalists risk prison sentences simply for doing their jobs. And, as the editors and publishers of *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Washington Post* wrote: "News organizations have had to retreat from the very places where the need for on-the-ground reporting and access is greatest."

As student journalists, we must remember the brave (actual) journalists who have sacrificed their safety, freedom or life in the tireless fight for truth. We should continue to fight injustices and try not to be deterred from uncovering the truth.

The many trials of DJ Trump

Seán Timon

Like most people who've read accounts of the 2016 campaign and Trump's White House, I'm sure he never really wanted to win. Losing to Hillary Clinton would have transfigured him into a nationalist martyr for his endlessly re-rallied fanbase. Trump wanted to be the most famous unemployed person in the world when the votes were counted, free to phone his friends on *Fox News*, tweet, and watch three TVs at once while eating hamburgers in bed. When it became clear he was winning, he was horrified, his wife even more so.

Perversely, when he finally lost an election he was equally horrified. Trump put incredible pressure on US institutions to cling to power, attempting to bully his own vice president into setting aside the election results. On January 6th 2021, Trump whipped up a crowd to attack the Capitol with the same goal, leading to five deaths. Trump had gone from cynically calculating the benefits of coming second, to a kind of desperate, dead-eyed denial of the reality that he had lost, a reality he came close to overturning.

I think I might know why. It is not about the rallies, or the brand, or the art of the deal any more. He's been out of his depth for a long time and he is afraid that the sharks are finally closing in. Three years after the Capitol attack, Trump is appealing civil court judgements against him of hundreds of millions of dollars. Allegations of sexual assault have also been upheld. He faces 40 criminal charges related

to handling classified documents, four related to the January 6th insurrection, 13 related to election fraud, and a criminal trial that has just begun in New York where he is charged with 34 counts of falsifying business records.

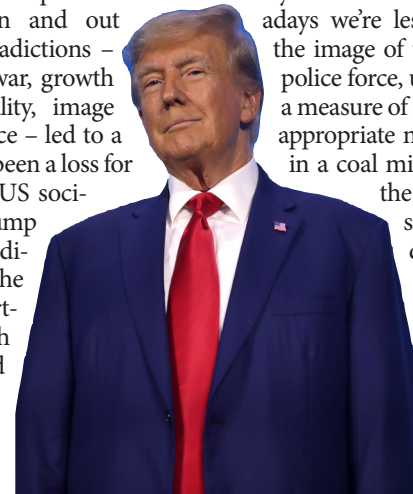
"If the US is able to convict Trump it may be able to reform its institutions and fight fascism"

These cases are coinciding with the election, and we have not yet reached 'peak Trump'. Former Republican Speaker of the House of Representatives Kevin McCarthy tweeted in April that Trump's trials are politicised and "a threat to the rule of law". He's right, but not in the way he means. Polling consistently shows that a significant cross-section of US society believes that Trump is being persecuted by prosecutors. Of the 96 original jury candidates for the NY case, 50 immediately recused themselves because they felt they could not be impartial. 12 jurors were finally selected and cautioned in court that the case is "not a referendum" on Trump's presidency. It may be difficult for Trump to get a fair trial in the atmosphere he has created. There is also the danger that guilty verdicts will lead to violence, perhaps the danger that he will unfairly be found innocent is even more serious.

For years Trump and senior Re-

publicans have been warning of widespread civil unrest if he is convicted, arguably an encouraging dogwhistle to Trump's supporters. Trump has verbally attacked members of the court and their families on social media and has paid \$9,000 in fines for making intimidating statements in contempt of court. These outbursts have led his supporters to threaten the safety of people connected to the case and seem designed to undermine and delegitimise the proceedings. Legal observers note that defendants have been jailed for much less. Indeed, most defendants with Trump's history (if not his profile) would have awaited trial in jail.

All of this comes in a wider context of the fragility of democracy. Investigative organisations have been reporting a decline in democracy globally for years, and the US is not exempt. Leaving aside Clinton's dire campaign and flaws as a candidate, Trump's election was swung by a successful Russian interference operation. This operation which capitalised on internal division and out of control contradictions – peace through war, growth through inequality, image without substance – led to a victory that has been a loss for Trump and for US society. In office Trump weakened the judicial branch and the Justice Department through cronyism and back-channel personality cult building. This



mafia leadership style enabled him to almost overturn an election and continues to be a strong element of his support base today, highlighting further vulnerability of the system.

Trump seems like the kind of person who would crash a car to scratch his nose. His actions do little to show respect for the rule of law, much less a willingness to defend it. I strongly suspect that he has no stable values at all apart from a kind of avarice. Despite this, Trump coming through these trials and remaining electable would be an indictment and a warning for institutional decay which demands a response. The fact that he almost certainly will not remain electable much longer, and that we may all soon get to see him in a prison jumpsuit to match his makeup, remains grounds for cautious optimism. If the US is able to convict Trump and put him in prison despite his power and money, maybe we can have the audacity to hope that it will go further, reform its institutions and protect them from a very American kind of fascism. Nowadays we're less comfortable with the image of the US as the world police force, unless delivered with a measure of satire. Maybe a more appropriate metaphor is a canary in a coal mine. The next year in the US will show us something of the next decade everywhere else. May we all continue to live in interesting times.

Image Credit: Gage Skidmore / CC BY-SA 2.0 DEED via Flickr



Alfie and Morien go head-to-head, debating whether we need more humanities or STEM experts

Studying a humanities subject at Oxford has been emboldened by latent prejudice against STEM subjects. This term I have studied the history of 'masculinities' across 1800 years of human history (!) and a few terms ago how patriarchy manifested itself in everyday life in the 12th century. My degree allows me to have access to these incredibly rich, but underexplored, historical concepts and, in turn, they inform how I interpret the contemporary world around me. My dogmas are now buttressed by evidence. My polemic feels more robust. It's the humanities that have gifted me this confidence.

Of course, without STEM our bridges would collapse, our diseases left uncured, and Saturn's 146th moon still nameless. In-

deed, with STEM subjects, our practical problems may be closer to being solved; but an innate hunger for comprehending life's meaning, how other humans once lived, or simply how the rest of the world speaks, can only truly be satisfied by the humanities. So, in a way, I pity the STEM-studiers because as noble as their pursuits may be, it feels like it is the 'dirty' work that some of us have to do. Thanks to them, the rest of us can ponder on the interesting, but ultimately meaningless, stuff like whether 'angels or devils' are 'sexual' or if 'more artwork should be shredded' (yes, real exam questions!). Maybe more importantly, we humanities students no longer have to face the backache of a lab stool and can, instead, smile at the thought of the three contact hours we have next week.



Imagine that some of you (especially those doing STEM) have a notion that the 'hard sciences' are rigorous, exact, and reliable, whereas humanities are less serious, in the realm of 'hand-wavy' vagaries.

Yet whilst the writings of some (*cough* Derrida), may be painfully unclear, the humanities are often still interested in analysing things in front of us, like words on a page.

STEM, however (excepting maths, which just needs some axioms), as David Hume stated long ago, relies on induction – that is, assuming the future will conform to the past, which there may not be logical reason to do. So whilst you might think that history or art are nebulous, they at least aren't (majorly) in the business of making grand predictions about the future which

we can have no confidence in.

And now, you might wonder: 'aren't you meant to be defending STEM?' The answer is: of course! How else do we make progress in the world, live our lives, and expand horizons other than inductively? If you think it's a bit edgy to proclaim that the Victorian era was actually saturated with talk about sex, think how wild it is to experiment with mixing chemicals, all just because we observed similar results before.

Well, that and healthcare helps us live longer and less painfully, technological innovations improve quality of life immeasurably, and without science we'd still be in the dark ages... Lastly, become a maths teacher and Rishi Sunak will love you forever!



Can the St George's flag ever be reclaimed?

Emily Henson

I only really know the date of St George's Day because it's two days before my sister's birthday. Beyond hazy primary school memories of dragons and knights, the day had passed me by for nineteen years now with little significance.

The flag has had a greater prominence. Despite lacking the legal backing that most national flags possess, the St. George's Flag has been adopted as England's emblem. Red crosses have been used by English soldiers since the thirteenth century. Likely snaffled from the Genoese, the English have done a good job in convincing everyone that it has the primary claim to it. Nearly 300 years ago, the monarchy stopped paying a fee for the use of the cross, and since then we've exercised relatively consistent usage of the symbol.

Proudly hung up every World Cup and bashfully drawn in before the final; in my sleepy rural neighbourhood it nearly exclusively belongs to sports fans. Being English is a relatively sports related phenomenon, and even then, we're British when Andy Murray's playing. If you asked for "the nation's flag", you'd be pointed to the Union Jack. That's the flag hung by residents intent of displaying their patriotism or filling a space in a summer *fayre* flyer.

To hang the St George's flag spontaneously would be odd. It wouldn't be deemed racist or bigoted, just quite intense. We know we're in England. The action comes across as needlessly political, and only a few feel the need to emblazon their driveway with par-

ty signs every election. We live in a nation where the majority of the population engages in politics within their homes and at the polls, if that. There simply isn't much reason to display it. So nobody does.

The flag is, therefore, mentally relegated to its main users, the far right. When the English Defence League parade it around besides signs reading "never submit to Islam" and "England: love it or leave it", it's hard to form a positive view. I'm not alone in this: a recent YouGov poll concluded over a quarter of adults have a negative view of those who fly the St George's flag, this figure jumps to 37% for under 25 year olds.

The use of the St George's flag is inherently political. English nationalism, rightly or wrongly, occupies a different space to its Scottish and Welsh national arguments. In the public consciousness, left-wing beliefs and nationalist ideals seem somewhat incompatible, despite their concurrence over the borders.

This is not to say there haven't been attempts. Labour campaigned on the issue of English devolution in 2015. Nationalism has deep roots within the working class, who have historically

been voted for more liberal candidates than their upper and middle class counterparts. The shift towards a right-wing working class was no doubt influenced by the left-wing departure from nationalism.

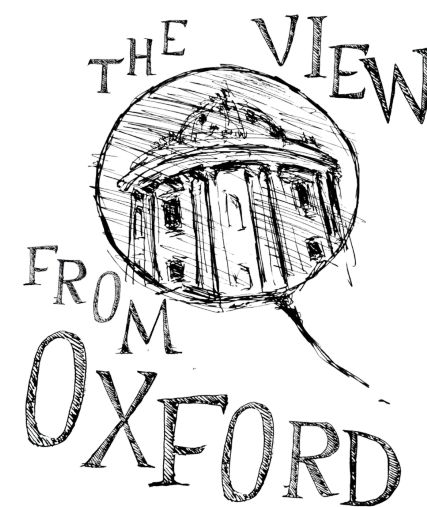
There is also, as often seems to be

the case in England, a class angle to all of this. It is the upper classes who are immune to politics, who are truly apolitical. The working classes rely more deeply on the decisions of those in power. Middle class aspirations cannot truly part with these worries, but they can separate themselves from the parts of governance less critical to them, namely, nationalism.

It becomes quite simple then. The middle class don't want nationalism, and the parties want their vote. As a result, mainstream parties, particularly Labour, have left nationalism be. It becomes relegated to the fringes, nationalism is made more extreme. As such, the return to nationalism by Labour can be explained. The party can claim a sizeable portion of the middle class, but they need the working class to win, and hence the St George's flag appears.

The St George's flag is the flying banner of nationalism, despite Keir Starmer decrying the need for symbols. It is inherently linked with the kind of glaring nationalism that the middle classes shy away from. The argument can be made that the Conservative vote, in part, is being lost by the treatment of migrants. To remind people of their privilege of being born English is uncomfortable. Flying the St George's flag, bellowing that we should be proud to be English, just seems brash, ignorant and boastful.

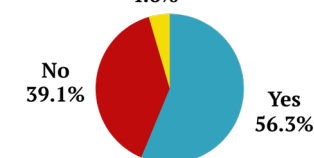
To reclaim the flag would be to embrace the idea that England has its merits. England is a comparatively brilliant place to live, very few would deny it, but very few would openly pronounce it all the same. Showing the St George's flag is garish, a flashback to a time when all most English people had to be proud of the flag. It has developed since then.



This week, we asked our Instagram followers...

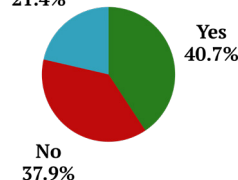
Did you vote in the local elections?

There were local elections?
4.6%



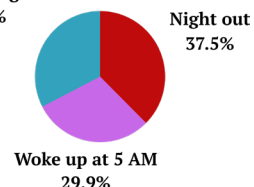
Have you signed the college disparities report?

Not yet
21.4%

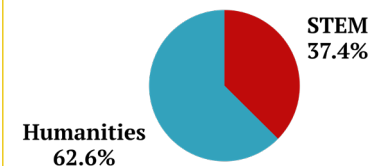


How did you celebrate May Day?

Slept through it
32.6%



Do we need more STEM or humanities experts?



The nation has the capacity for great schools, free healthcare and innovation. We have so much more to be proud of than a flag commemorating Georgios of Lydda, a man who never even stepped foot here. It is for that

reason, then, that I do not believe the St George's flag will be successfully reclaimed, at least any time soon.

Image Credit: James Cridland / CC BY 2.0 Via Flickr

Eat the rich! (Unless it's Taylor Swift?)

Amy Seal

Taylor Swift's impact as a singer-songwriter is astonishing, but so too is her impact on the planet. Despite quietly downsizing to one private jet in January 2024, her carbon footprint cuts deep: generating in two weeks 14 times more than the average American household emits in a year. Her response? To send a cease and desist to the university student who publicized flight data on the basis of "stalking and harassing behavior". This did not help her case. In classic billionaire style she used the legal system to dispel criticism, a move camouflaged by a feminist smokescreen. Which begs the question - does being a female billionaire make you a 'feminist icon', or does it protect the idea of the billionaire under the veil of the 'girlboss'?

In her 2020 documentary, *Miss Americana*, Taylor Swift describes her 'choice' to endorse Democratic candidates. But politics is not an opt-

in opt-out situation, especially at her level of fame, wealth, and influence. Politics, and political oppression is all around us. Complicity is found in silence, and we expect more of public figures whose voices carry further. So they trip over themselves to be seen as one of the 'good ones'. The question of what they communicate to their millions of fans is essential, and telling. In the case of Taylor Swift, the way she behaves and the way she thinks matters. For instance, in 'The Man' she sings:

"I'm so sick of running as fast as I can, wondering if I'd get there quicker if I was a man / I'm so sick of them coming at me again, 'cause if I was a man, then I'd be the man"

The lyrics do little to challenge hegemonic masculinity, or the legitimization of traditional masculine ideals and their dominant place in society, rather they lean into it. Though the speaker suffers under the patriarchy, she doesn't challenge its hierarchical nature. She is jealous of 'the man', more specifically an 'alpha

type' who would assert masculine dominance over other men as well as women. As she cannot achieve this, she increases her power through amassing personal wealth. Once she has ran as fast as she can, won the rat race, and broken the glass ceiling she takes her place at the top: she is a billionaire. Taylor Swift's journey may have been different, but her destination is the same. In this neoliberal form of feminism social hierarchies are untouched. While one 'girlboss' is empowered, she leaves her peers in her wake. No one is truly liberated.

For Swifties, I imagine, this must be difficult to hear. I understand, to some extent, the knee-jerk urge to protect her. To be a woman in the public eye is to be a victim of sexist virtrio - or bitterly harsh criticism on a misogynistic basis. Particularly with Kanye West's 'Famous' lyric controversy, there were swathes of people who insisted Swift must have agreed to being presented as "that bitch" who "owes" Kanye West sex for

"making her famous". For the Swifties who actually made her famous, whose support put her in the public eye (and the line of fire), the guilt must be substantial.

Though guilt does not justify the endorsement of superficial "girlboss" feminism, the authenticity of Swift's music calls for us to connect with her on a personal level. A level that, for some, supercedes political allegiances. Taylor Swift makes it clear: whatever you are going through, you are not alone. Or, are you? With her 'easter eggs' and relatable lyrics she may feel like a built-in best friend, but, to put it bluntly, Taylor Swift has no idea who you are. This sense of adoration is parasocial, entirely unidirectional. Though this is certainly not a new idea, nor one unique to Taylor Swift, the impact of parasocial relationships has been enhanced by social media and pandemic loneliness. This has transformed some of Swift's fans into a force to be reckoned with - an army entirely convinced 'Blondie' is their bestie, who are eternally prepared to mobilise in her defence, even when they shouldn't.

Taylor Swift's billionaire status, endorsed by neoliberal feminism,

is built on the one-way adoration of her fans who consume everything she creates - and she knows it. Her latest album, *The Tortured Poet's Department*, has four different vinyl versions. Each one has a different bonus track and each one is priced at \$34.99 - meaning that, if a fan wants to listen to all four tracks, their total will be just short of \$200. Similarly, her 'Eras Tour' tickets are notoriously extortionate (averaging at \$1,088.65), and the fans who couldn't make it were asked to pay \$19.89 to rent the Eras Tour movie for just 48 hours. At the end of the day, we are free to do what we want with our own money. But there is no denying Taylor Swift's business strategy exploits the leagues of fans who would do anything for her.

To Swift's fans, I must ask - is her behavior that of someone who cares more about you, or your money? Is it right that Taylor Swift is a billionaire who is almost entirely immune to criticism?

Ultimately, if someone does something damaging, we should be able to criticize their actions. Even if that person is a woman, even if that woman is Taylor Swift.

OXFORD SPOTLIGHT

Excitement flutters in the air this week as we're graced with another run of the annual Oxford Fashion Gala. Sold out once again, the night promises to electrify: expect a kaleidoscope of colour and a skyward odyssey in keeping with its theme, *A Voyage in Ascent*.

Sanaya Narula speaks to Zaira Christa, a second-year music student, and the Creative Director of the Oxford Fashion Gala. *Tell me about your fashion journey.*

In the reception area [of my apartment complex], there's this book, Alexander McQueen's *Savage Beauty*. Every day I'd come back to just read that one book. I guess from there, I took a liking to Alexander McQueen. In Year 8, I failed all of my exams because I designed a collection. Some of them actually appeared in my debut show in 2023. And then for my 18th birthday, I produced my first three pieces, three ball gowns, which I designed for myself. From there, I just designed my first collection. *Do you have a favourite memory from your experience directing the Gala?*

It has to be yesterday's photoshoot. We're making a little catalogue, which documents our theme and has profiles on each of the models and designers. We did a photoshoot which looked at Issey Miyake's work as a designer, because our show is an ode to him. And we curated looks, including some of my own. I designed a line of sunglasses and put them into the shoot. It was a fun day, the four hours went by so quickly!

What's different about Oxford's fashion scene?

I've worked in fashion in London, and that is a very big and competitive scene. Designing for two shows for London Fashion Week was kind of overwhelming, because the amount of scrutiny everyone takes on every single look you make is quite intense. So looking at the fashion scene at Oxford, it's more like a celebration rather than a competition. Everyone wants to show off their art rather than compete to be the best. And I quite like that.

In your opinion, which degree dresses the most fashionably?

Music or English students.



Image courtesy of Zaira Barakat

“Women don't look like that in Algeria”: An interview with Houria Niati

Amelia Dovell speaks to artist Houria Niati about political activism, the 1980s London art scene, and the power of perseverance.

Houria Niati grew up during the Algerian War of Independence. Amidst this backdrop of violence, which lasted seven years, and claimed the lives of over one million Algerians, one thing remained certain: she was an artist.

Niati's love for Algeria radiates from the warm description of it she gives me. “[When I think of Algeria] I think of my family. I've got six sisters, and one brother. In Algeria, we have the landscapes, the sea, the Sahara is amazing. We have different types of cities – we had so many invasions in the past, so each city has a different stamp, different colours.”

Under French rule since 1830, Algeria became a part of France, yet was simultaneously viewed as a racial and cultural ‘other’. The prevalence of European influences in the period can be seen in Niati's own childhood: her father was a landscape painter trained under Paul Cézanne, and she was educated in a French school amongst French classmates.

“When the war started, I was six years old [...] We all had French friends, you know, we were kids. But gradually, when you grow up, and you see people are killed [...] it was really, really shocking. You're in the street and suddenly people [tell you] to hide, to go home, because there are bombs in the cafe next door.”

Niati tells me about her experience protesting the French colonial authorities, which happened when she was only 10 years old, in the late 1950s. Though it's been over 60 years, she still remembers it vividly.

“One day, there was a demonstration in France. My father used to read the newspaper – whatever he used to read I used to read.”

“Automatically, I stood with the Algerian people. I stood up and I wanted to fight.”

Out - side her



French school, Houria and three friends staged a protest. “We were saying, ‘French out, stop the massacre, stop killing!’. Everything was spontaneous, we did not plan it...” Shortly afterwards, the girls were

“Automatically, I stood with the Algerian people. I stood up and I wanted to fight.”

apprehended by the police.

“They put us in jail. I [found] myself in a cell. I was very, very scared. One by one, they were taken [to be] interrogated with their parents. I was the last one. So I was the longest in the dark [...] For many, many years, I couldn't stay in the dark on my own.”

Niati was interrogated by the French authorities who demanded she supply them with the names of who had instructed them to protest. “They interrogated me in French, but I didn't want to speak in it. I don't know why, but I didn't want to speak French! I was speaking in Arabic.”

By her 20s, Niati knew she wanted to study abroad and pursue her dreams. “I was counting the days until I could go somewhere to do art.”

That

place ended up being England, where Niati balanced English classes, working, and an art foundation course, before enrolling in Croydon College of Art.

It was there that Niati produced her renowned work, ‘No to Torture’.

“The idea started growing in me in art school, in the 3rd year. We had a lecture about Delacroix. He did sketches in Algeria, taking artefacts with him [to France], installing them in his workshop and hiring women as his models.

“I started getting really nervous. I said: ‘Women don't look like that in Algeria. They're hard. They fought during the war. Why are you saying that they are idle, they do nothing?’” Playing into the Orientalist stereotypes Edward Said described in 1978, Delacroix's work showed the ‘Women of Algiers’ (1834) as passive, romantic and sensual. Yet, as Niati had experienced, women had played a significant role in the struggle for Algerian independence. Niati's work was born of this disconnect, subverting Delacroix's depiction with fierce colours, and erasing the identities of each figure's face to highlight their dehumanisation.

Niati's spirit of resistance, born out of these conflicts – both in terms of colonial violence in Algerian history, and the clashing artistic representations of women – have guided her work ever since.

“I wanted my art to confront. Yes, I love flowers and I love landscapes, but I am far away from that. I didn't even know I was doing political art until somebody pointed it out to me.”

“I submitted the work. Lubaina Himid came to see it. I was hiding it, rolled up under my bed, because I thought nobody would be interested in it.” The work has not been hidden since, after its first exhibition in Himid's *Five Black Women* exhibition of 1983.

The 1980s were an exciting time to be a young artist in London. For Niati, it was a “melting pot, of all kinds of things, people. I was nurtured there. The music was amazing. The Rolling Stones, that was my thing. There were a lot of women too, playing rock and roll too.”

Though Niati's work is exhibited internationally, and she is now represented by the gallery Felix & Spear, the journey wasn't easy. “I was really lucky to be invited to many exhibitions. Groundbreaking exhibitions.” She points to the exhibition of 1993, titled *Forces of Change: Artists of the Arab World*, which displayed 160 works from 70 artists.

“But I have not been represented. We had other issues in Algeria. We didn't have those institutions in place yet. I had to do it by myself [...] I'm not complaining because it can be such a good thing to struggle in some ways. It challenges you even more, you know?” Even now, she remarks, there are financial difficulties: “it is the trouble of any artist, I suppose”.

Turning to more recent years, Niati expresses excitement at the revived interest in feminist art, and her work. In a full-circle moment, the Tate curators discovered her from her very first exhibition, *Five Black Women* (1983). “They said, ‘Who is Houria Niati? Where is she? We want to know her!’

“It's very exciting. In French, we call it ‘le second souffle’: a second time of my life. It's amazing. It gives me this conviction and confidence to carry on.”

Niati also notes the power of art to unite communities, through her work with domestic violence charities. “You can say ‘I work alone’, fine. But believe me, it makes a big difference to make people happy. A lot of those women had never painted, had never drawn. They produced amazing pictures.”

After a career of over 40 years, Niati expresses the same perseverance and optimism, revolutionary spirit and creativity from her earli-

“I didn't even know I was doing political art until somebody pointed it out to me.”

est moments in politics and in art.

“The future is art, art, art. I would love to promote the music I've done. And I've started a series of paintings, but I won't tell you the subject. I want to keep it a secret!”

To end the interview, I asked Niati for some words of advice for young people, and young artists. “Never, never give up,” she says. “Never! There is hope that you can carry on no matter what. Have courage, really persevere. If you are an artist at heart, you can actually do it. That was always my motto, you know. Never give up.”

Artwork description (top right): Houria Niati, No To Torture (central panel), 1982, oil on canvas.

Image Credit: Houria Niati and Felix & Spear Gallery.

In conversation with Gregory Doran: “Theatre is, at it’s best, one of the most democratic of the arts”

Natascha Norton speaks with Gregory Doran, former artistic director of the RSC, about Shakespeare, contemporary theatre and the importance of accessibility in the arts.

Gregory Doran is Oxford University’s Cameron Mackintosh Visiting Professor and the former artistic director of the Royal Shakespeare Company. His current project is the student-led adaptation of Shakespeare’s *Two Gentlemen of Verona* running at the Oxford Playhouse this May.

This production marks the milestone of his direction of all 36 plays in Shakespeare’s First Folio, yet this is the first time Doran has worked with a student-dominated cast and crew. He tells me how after receiving an initial 80 student self-tapes, he and his co-directors and producers ended up with the 20 current cast members. “I was casting who I thought were the most talented actors in those roles. And what was great, and sad at the same time, was having to turn down so many talented people who actually were great actors, but, you know, [we] had a particular idea for the role.”

However, this seemingly cut-throat approach was within reason, as he reminds me about the importance of suitable casting: “There was a great Shakespeare director called Tyrone Guthrie, in the 1950s, ... who used to say that directing is 80% good casting. And I sort of believe that. I think if you’ve got the cast right, I don’t think you’ve got 20% of the job left to do, but it’s a huge part of the process.”

Having directed over 35 Shakespeare productions, Greg explains what keeps him coming back to the world of theatre, and to Shakespeare specifically: “I think I’ve always been a sort of Shakespeare nut. I was lucky in that I was brought up by the Jesuits in Preston and we did a Shakespeare play every year. So, from the age of 13, I was kind of looking at plays and wondering, you know, what kind of part might I get? I wasn’t looking at Shakespeare and thinking of answering

essay questions, I was looking at Shakespeare for the opportunity to be in the play and have a good time. I think Shakespeare became a kind of thread or passport through my life.” Greg then went on to train as an actor following his university years, and did some (to use his words) “complete rubbish, sitcoms”, before auditioning for the Royal Shakespeare Company at age 26: “And that was the rest of my life.”

On being reminded of how many incredible projects Greg Doran has worked on, and with the student cast and crew having an equally fortunate opportunity to work with

“[Two Gentlemen of Verona] isn’t like any other Shakespeare production I’ve done”

such a notable director, I wondered whether he ever felt any sense of impostor syndrome during his career and what he learnt from it. “When I became an actor of the RSC, I was in two productions in the first part of the first season, one of which I felt completely engaged in and that my contribution was embraced. You know, I felt part of it. The other one, I didn’t really know what I was doing, I was really being asked just to say the lines and follow the blocking. I realised how much better it is if you can encourage that investment from the cast, because then they will pay it back and the production will be more successful as a result. You could always tell a production where it isn’t an ensemble because the actors who aren’t speaking don’t look as though they’re listening, or

that they don’t really know what it’s about. I think [theatre is], at its best, one of the most democratic of the arts because it is about what we produce in the room.”

Having previously directed the likes of Dame Judi Dench, Sir Ian McKellen and the then Prince of Wales, now King Charles III, I wonder what drew Greg to staging his final untouched Shakespeare play in the First Folio with a strictly student dominated cast and crew. “When the Cameron Mackintosh Professorship was offered to me, the one play I had not directed in the entire first folio was *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. And because of it being about young people, to do it as part of my professorship seemed to be the ideal opportunity. Even though it’s a much bigger time commitment, it just so happened that I’d stepped down from the RSC, I had lost my husband, and I had the time. Also, it felt like the time to give back, to share the legacy of all the people that I worked with, all the great actors and directors, having had the opportunity to be in their rehearsal rooms, and share that a bit with the next generation. That’s been the joy of it. And really, what’s been lovely is how the cast all kind of seem to be embracing that.”

But why put the play on in Oxford, and why now? “One of the reasons I wanted to do this play here was because it’s a play about young people, it’s about them leaving home, it’s about them making a way in the world for themselves, working out their own identities and making horrible mistakes. Falling in love and then falling in love with the wrong people. And it becoming quickly, kind of, difficult. And what was interesting was seeing how those actors responded to the play, and how quickly they saw how it reflected their own experience and their lives.”

“For me, Verona is wherever you left home from, or whatever was, for 18 years of your life in this case, a sort of home. And to me that was Preston, which is where I grew up. I wanted people to connect with their own experience of coming into the bright lights of the big city and the excitement of that but also the challenge [it poses]... I mean, it isn’t like any other Shakespeare production I’ve done. Certainly, from the point of view of its contemporaneity, I think with comedy you need a very precise social structure that you recognise. And I guess, certainly, with the tragedies, I have found ways of finding something that is contemporary and then just smudging it a little so it doesn’t involve the kind

of things that we take for granted in a contemporary setting. I often say in a modern dress production of *Romeo and Juliet*, when they get to them I always think, why didn’t she text him? And that’s an irrelevant question for me to ask but if the production has alerted you to that kind of contemporary detail, then why shouldn’t you ask those questions?”

Once only accessible in the flesh and on stage, the landscape of theatre has rapidly changed to include pre-recorded or live-streamed theatre productions in cinemas and on television screens. Greg reflects on the impact of technological advancements on the world of theatre: “When I became artistic director [of the Royal Shakespeare Company], I had done a production of *Hamlet* with David Tennant and Patrick Stewart and we were invited to be the first theatre production to do a ‘Live-from’ (like how the Met in New York [stream] the operas ‘Live-from ...’). Theatre had never done it by that point. We were invited to do it with *Hamlet*.”

“One of the cast simply didn’t want to [record the performance]. They felt that theatre was transitory, and it should be left in the memory of the audience. But when I became artistic director, I thought, ‘Well, what I think we’re going to do is broadcast every production’, because I had decided that we would work through the entire canon of Shakespeare’s plays... I just felt that the technology was open to us to embrace. The technology of being able to broadcast live into cinemas around the country and indeed around the world. The joy of that was that somebody sitting in a cinema in Newcastle was sitting down at the same time as the audience in Stratford was sitting down. The response of a live audience was infectious.”

He shares a heartwarming memory that was made on the night of the filming of *Richard II*. “I got a tweet from somebody who said: ‘loving David Tennant’s *Richard II* at my Whiteley cinema, eating my chicken korma.’ I thought, well, A: I’m glad I’m not sitting next to you, but B: if that’s how you want your Shakespeare, then great! And if it’s not intimidating, then you kind of get a sense of what it’s about ... and maybe next time you go and see it live in Stratford.”

The production can be seen at the Oxford Playhouse from the 15th to 18th May 2024, with tickets on the Oxford Playhouse website available now.

Image Credit: Geraint Lewis.

OXFORD SPOTLIGHT

In honour of this edition’s *Cherwell* BNOC list, *Cherwell Profiles* caught up with former BNOC Daniel Dipper, to understand his experience as a ‘big name’, and how life is treating him one year out of Oxford.

What do you think of the term ‘BNOC’?

It’s an interesting concept, right? People congratulated me on it last year. And I was like, I don’t know, is it a good thing? Is it a bad thing? Maybe for some people, they want to be known, that’s maybe a goal they have. That’s fair enough. But I did the things I was passionate about which led to it, rather than it being a deliberate thing I set out to do.

Any funny stories from your time as a ‘BNOC’?

People came up to me a lot. Once I went to Bridge and I got stopped like 20 times, that was the first time I got [on the BNOC list] in May 2022. I think someone’s mum [asked for a picture] as well, at a ball?

What do you think it takes to become one?

There has to be a level of authenticity to it. I think it’s because I hadn’t set out to be known in that way, that it mostly resonated with people.

Are you still working as a social mobility campaigner?

I still work with Zero Gravity, and two of my students got offers from Oxford, which I was super happy about! In 2024, I became a youth ambassador for an organisation called Connect Hive, which mentors young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. I had mentors from them for the last two years, helping me looking at jobs post-uni, applying for scholarships and things like that. Mentoring has been really, really impactful. I’ve not really had a point where I haven’t had a mentor since sixth form.

What words of wisdom would you give to students at Oxford?

Make the most of the experience? It’s an insane opportunity and there are so many avenues you can go down. It’s a good place to explore your passions.

What artists are you playing this summer?

I think Taylor Swift’s new album is gonna be playing. And I’m listening to a lot of LF System at the moment.



Image credit: Coco Cottam



CHERBADLY

'St. illda's': Peculiar illness sweeps Oxford college

In an unexpected turn of events, St. Hilda's college has recently been overrun by an absurd illness which saw various members of the college faculty transform into wildebeest. *Cherwell* understands that this epidemic has been plaguing the college for some weeks, but since nobody visits, or even knows where St. Hilda's actually is, the arrival of the news has been somewhat delayed.

The cause of this mysterious illness still remains unknown, with renowned experts from the University's medical, zoological and psychedelic societies all coming together to find a cure. However, during this investigation, the various 'supplies' brought by each of these societies became muddled, and as a result many of the research team have turned into wildebeest, leading to mass confusion.

The first instance of such a transformation occurred during a philosophy lecture titled 'Can animals think, and if so, would they put the jam or cream on first?'. During the lecture, the eclectic lecturer electing to inflect his dialect behind a lectern, began to genuflect and then defect into a wildebeest. The speaker remained as feckless, meandering and largely boring an animal as before his transformation. Instead of being proactive,

the philosophy students merely saw this as an extension of their class, and began to debate whether the wildebeest was consciously happy with the jam-cream layering of the scone, or whether it was just hungry.

As news of the incident spread onto Oxfess and other highly reliable, well-written and thought-provoking publications such as *The Oxford Student*, many theories and speculations about the outbreak have surfaced. In particular, a debate on Oxfess led by three individuals known as 'D.D.', 'S.H.' and 'H.N.' has caused quite the stir. 'D.D.' speculates that the wildebeest are merely 'figments of our imagination', while H.N. and S.H. believe that the wildebeest were brought in by college officials 'as a feeble attempt to gain clout'. However, it seems many online have started to disregard these two ideas, even accusing the latter two theorists of hypocrisy.

Elsewhere, in the world of college sports the wildebeest have also caused quite a ruck-us. The Head of the Blues Rugby Squad recently questioned the eligibility of the wildebeest in the annual varsity game and has submitted a request to the sporting commission, citing "the inherent similarities between the two sets of players". Regardless of whether this request is granted or not, such a match would undoubtedly be a bostaurus affair.

John Evelyn

20th April 2024

A fortnight of festivities has been and gone, and John Evelyn is here to tell you all about them. The whole committee showed off their moves en el Cinco de Mayo, while Harry the Piano took up the AB's mantle and declared Onion Twed [sic] our new president. But not everything has been plain sailing. The Deep Slate has recruited insiders across the board to launch an all-out attack on free speech: they've co-opted sound technicians, Scotsmen, and even an ox stew. While many of you decried the protestors trying to silence Nutty Nancy, it was in fact a faulty microphone that brought her down. But this didn't stop her taking aim at Hanks' Lost Volleyball for not taking questions from women. He can certainly talk the talk when it comes to increasing women's participation, but he doesn't seem to walk the walk. To be fair, at least he could pronounce his own name. Eton Mess struggled with that one, so he'd better work on it before his paper speech.

At last week's debate, the Deep Slate continued their machinations, plunging us into darkness to avoid a no confidence motion against the SNP – perhaps Herr Hummus returned to engineer the feat? Thankfully, no

one could care less about this week's emergency motion, so we can all sit in fully lit boredom. It was also a bad week for free press, with everyone's least favourite Student paper causing a ruckus. Breach of filming policy and lies about fundraising were simply too much for our DePressive Delinquent to handle, so it's a good thing John Evelyn is here to set the record straight: the 'hundreds' of protesters were in fact stew reporters coming to make up stories.

At conclave we had a feast, getting to choose between a duck and a damn turnip. Clearly Dr. Os decided that we could no longer trust humans – and in the end, even the fowl was declared too animate to do the job. We'll have to see whether the turnip is swallowed whole by committee or if he leaves a sour taste in our mouths. Recent events suggest the latter: when the In-Siddious Intruder sought to turn our watering hole into yet another Union library, Special K was quick to rip the rules change to shreds. We can only suspect that the turnip purposefully miswrote it in a clear attempt to dictate Standing policy – this will put

him in ROcky territory if he continues.

Outside Frewin Court, political drama was stirring. We witnessed the birth of the LibDemagogue, whose stunning JCR defeat must surely be intended to impress his party. After all, spectacular failure is their only defining characteristic. While we can all ridicule the Failed Dictator for his un-SUprising defeat last term, at least some of his own college actually like him. Back in the Union,

his team are thriving: Barbie's Sequel has kept everyone Standing up, showing that they Khan't be flipped. Their only hiccup has been caused by excessive oucahol consumption, with the Oucaholic showing he will deceive in library committee, deceive in the press, and deceive his own society, but he will never surrender!

John Evelyn hopes that everyone who gets a spot on this year's BNO list enjoys the validation their parents never gave them. In the meantime, I'll be enjoying the sun before returning to report on all the latest drama. ¡Adiós!



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John Evelyn



Adam Saxon
Editor-in-Chief

Last week, I went to Buckingham Palace. What was I doing there, I hear you say? Well, dear reader, my Mum was receiving an MBE (not the most casual statement to make; I am aware).

My day didn't get off to the finest start. My train to London left Oxford at 7am; I woke up at 7:45. Cue panic. I pulled on my suit as quickly as I could and ran to the station, passing many groups of bleary-eyed students making their way home from May Day celebrations as I went. I was lucky. I hopped on the 8:16 to Paddington – the last possible train that would get me into London in time to make it for the ceremony.

The ceremony itself was one of the most surreal experiences of my life.

The whole process is very regimented, as you might expect, but it is also very well executed, and very personalised to the individual receiving the award. The highlight was, unsurprisingly, the part where we were ushered into the throne room. We as guests peeled off to the right, while my Mum was directed towards Princess Anne. The Princess Royal also contributed towards making it a special day, taking the time to talk to each individual receiving an award about what they had done, where they were from, and other personal conversation topics.

The big hero of this editorial is my Mum. It was a celebration of her and her achievements, which are testament to the hard work that I have seen her put in over the years to get where she is. The MBE was awarded for her 'contribution to research funding' following her many years working for the Research Councils and then UKRI. It was lovely to be able to celebrate her, as she deserves. She's had an incredible career so far (and she's an even better mum). She'd be too humble to say it herself, but it's true.

Mum, if you're reading this, I promise I wasn't at ATIK the night before (it was May Day, I had no choice). Regardless, I owe you big time. Oh, and I'm so unbelievably proud of you.



Gracie Allen
Deputy Editor-in-Chief

I read once that your taste in music solidifies around age 24, and that you're basically guaranteed to not seek out new music once you reach

30. Isn't that terrifying? One day you're voracious, a consumer of music across genres, sounds, emotions and languages – then the next, you're 30 years old, and you're stuck. You're boring. What the fuck.

I've gone to rather extreme lengths to ensure I buck the trend (or at least solidify a diverse enough taste to keep me company for the following 60ish years of my life once I hit the dreadful 30). In my first year, I embarked on a project: I was going to listen to every Mercury Prize-winning album since the prize's inception (1992), and rank every track on a pretty intense spreadsheet. I made it to Pulp's *Different Class* (1996). Hm. Perhaps I didn't need to track the



Amelia Dovell
Deputy Editor-in-Chief

This week for Profiles, I had the opportunity to interview Houria Niat, an Algerian artist whose work I recently discovered

through the Tate's 'Women in Revolt!' exhibition. It explores the work of female artists working in the 1970s-1980s, noting that despite the long careers these artists enjoyed, they were often "left out of the artistic narratives of the time". Upon reading some reviews of the show, I was surprised at how some critics had dismissed parts of it as "without aesthetic distinction", "formulaic", or "chosen for their narratives of oppression". This critic accuses the Tate of "tone-deaf domestic bleating", at a time where the terrible oppression of women and children continues around the world today.

There does seem to be truth in the fact that the art world is at-



Oliver Sandall
Editor-in-Chief

This print edition marks the midpoint of my term as Editor-in-Chief. I can't believe it has gone this quickly. I am also pretty glad it has gone this quickly. Student journalism is – organisationally – a shit-show. Our jobs are easier than in the pre-digital age, yet we face complicated legal restrictions and battle with the unforgiving – and unforgetting – nature of the internet; all whilst refreshing *Cherwell's* Instagram to see if that darn ATIK post will finally hit that glorious one-thousand-like mark. No print edition has not been a struggle to get out – and no page is ever perfect. And I hate that. I wish *Cherwell* were perfect.

At the same time, this entire operation is running off volunteer basis. Without the opulence of what student journalism once was, I can hardly go about being a ruthless editor, firing

people left, right, and centre. If that were the case, *Cherwell* would quickly drop to the depths of the *Blue* or (and God forbid) the *OxStu*, as no-one would want to get involved with student journalism anymore. But, in truth, I'm immensely thankful for all the work our editors – at all levels – put in: your work is valuable, and we are all still learning.

As with dedicating much of your life to anything: you eventually become disillusioned with it. As a section editor, I could write and edit articles I enjoyed, thinking only about the words on the page and choosing the images for articles. Now, I spend upwards of twenty hours a week writing emails, messaging people, checking our social media – and also meticulously checking our print edition before sending it off to the printer. I am at a stage where, reviewing any page of our print, I can tell if a textbox is more than a millimetre misaligned. I also possess the superpower to tell if an image or graphic is too good to be copyright free.

I ask only one thing: please remember that *Cherwell* is as much a 'newspaper' as it is a student society (albeit one often scrutinised or criticised by students), ran by students. Less so than the Union, we don't pretend that we are the omnipotent and all-professional body which stands for Oxford. So, please, if anyone reading this is unsure whether you should get involved: please do. You're not perfect – and neither are we.

data, I realised – perhaps I could do it organically.

So that's what I've been attempting. I listen to at least one new (to me) album a week, and make notes of my favourites, and any thoughts I have on the album as a whole – and I don't confine myself to the Mercury Prize. My Trinity album list so far includes Home by Terry Hall (underrated, his Sense is better than the Lightning Seeds), the production is very 90s), Crushing by Julia Jacklin (it is crushing), and The Sundays' Static and Silence (where are you The Sundays? I miss you, I love you, come back). More than a year in, I can reflect on time well-spent. I came out of 2023 with a newfound love for funk, a greater and deep-

er knowledge and love for music, and LCD Soundsystem topping my Spotify Wrapped. Not bad.

But is the end goal even possible? To live life post-30 as a musical multipotentialite? I'd like to think so, but I'm not so sure. I was raised in a house filled with music – my dad installed speakers into our ceilings, for god's sake – but my parents will be the first to confess that they struggle to fall in love with new music as much as they did the tracks of their youth. My mum still goes mad for Tears for Fears, and my dad sees The Damned live at least every two years. It might not be a total lost cause though: they went to a Rag'n'Bone Man concert last week. There's hope for me yet.

tempting to be more inclusive. Onlookers have questioned whether this move is surface level, profiting from market-led feminism. Even so, after I spoke with Houria, I was fascinated at how she conceptualised politics and art, as completely interlinked. Rather than what that critic implies – that such political art is lazy or performative – her art is an extension of herself. Not meant to be, but inherently political. Back in the 1980s when her classmates asked her why the art was "dark and morbid", she told them: "Because I lived it." Surely for then and for now, we can learn how art was – and is – used as a tool against oppression.

What struck me even more from

talking to Houria was her optimism. She speaks in the interview about her 'second souffle', a second wind in life. 'Women in Revolt!' has helped revitalise her, give her confidence, and enable her to form new bonds with several female artists. Even if we are cynical, and think that the Tate's exhibition was surface-level, it has marked the beginning of a special journey for Houria. It seems that institutions such as the Tate wield a double edged sword, with the power to exclude artists, and to centre them. That they may rely on the fluctuating trendiness of social-justice movements is slightly problematic. But even so, I am very happy for Houria.

THE 2024 BNOC LIST

Here it is! After three weeks of voting, the results are in. With slight adjustments made according to which BNOCs gave consent to be on the list and the addition of some whose fame strictly speaking surpasses that of BNOC-hood, the list is true to those initial nominations.

There are some veteran BNOCs on the list, and some new BNOC faces. Like with celebrities in the public eye, it seems that many BNOCs on the list

are known just for being BNOCs, regardless of their other engagements. Many have been involved with the Oxford Union, which is, of course, a breeding ground for BNOC stars. More interesting are the nominations which come from outside of the Union-SU-student-journalism bubble, and whom it has taken some effort to research.

It is tempting to wonder what effect BNOC-hood has on a student's post-Oxford prospects. Classic ex-

amples of previous BNOCs (Johnson, Cameron, Gove etc.) suggest that they might enjoy a messy period of favourable limelight, but will ultimately be condemned to involvement in large scale political 'fuck-ups' that foreground their self-obsessive characters. We wish this year's BNOCs well, and hope that they heed the destinies of those that went before them.

– Rufus Hall (Deputy Editor-in-Chief, Features)



1.

SHERMAR PRYCE
[Third Year, Univ]

Ex-President of Univ JCR, Shermar is known for embracing Union life after his failed SU campaign. He said: "Here for at least another year – watch this space."



2.

CHLOE POMFRET
[First Year, St Catz]

Self-described as "St Catz's public enemy no. 1", Chloe has surpassed BNOC fame with features in nationals exposing the gross injustice that is the price of Pembroke ball tickets.



3.

DANIAL HUSSAIN
[Third Year, LMH]

As SU President, Danial recently co-authored the much praised College Disparities Report. Afraid we'd feature in the Times, we thought number 3 was a safe bet.



4.

JULIA MARANHAO WONG
[Second Year, St Anne's]

Oxford's American 'It' girl (self-proclaimed), when you say Oxford Union, we hear Julia Maranhao-Wong. Also, her Facebook friends list is probably longer than yours.



5.

JAMES MACKENZIE
[First Year, St Hilda's]

Puffer man, red puffer man, puffer red man, James has probably hacked you or you may have seen him in his BRIGHT RED PUFFER. (Image Credit: Oxford Union)



6.

'OLIVER'S OXFORD'
[Postgraduate, TikTok]

Oliver represents Oxford (no way!) to the doom-scrolling masses and is known for bringing other students their five seconds of fame.



7.

LEO BUCKLEY
[Third Year, Trinity]

After an interesting career at the Union, we hope Leo is now living peacefully in his houseboat on the Thames.



8.

ADDI HARAN
[Postgraduate, Lincoln]

Addi is the former LGBTQ+ Society President and will be Oxford SU President going into the transformation period.



9.

BENEDICT MASTERS
[First Year, St John's]

It's a mystery why Ben is a BNOC, yet his fresher-omnipresence is the stuff of legend. He explained with a riddle: "On the race to the bottom I came out on top." What is in my pocket?



10.

HANNAH EDWARDS
[Third Year, Lincoln]

Known for sitting in a big chair (former Union President), Hannah enjoys arguing with people (competitive debating), but thinks her real talents lie in solving puzzles.



11.

ELLA BOLLAND
[Second Year, Trinity]

Trinity Entz Rep and "loud American", Ella's fans admire her commitment to the Park End graft. She said: "People say what I lack in height I make up for in volume."



12.

REUBEN CONSTANTINE
[Second Year, St Peter's]

Starboy of Oliver's Oxford, Reuben's multilingual charm has everyone after him, despite the flop that was his brief attempt at the SU presidency.



13.

EMMA WATSON
[Postgraduate, LMH]

She's Emma Watson. (Image Credit: Themeplus/CC BY-SA 2.0 via Flickr)



14.

YASHAS RAMAKRISHNAN
[First Year, Balliol]

Yashas has reached BNOC-stardom through his commitment to History Soc and his Balliol bar doormanhip.



15.

HUGO ROMA WILSON
[Second Year, Trinity]

OUCA president and in charge of controlling the rabble rousers, Hugo also flirts with the Union (and the Editors, when OUCA misbehaves).

16.



BINTIA DENBOG
[Second Year, Lincoln]

The Editor we all aspire to be (and the only student journalist deserving of their place on this list), Binti is now having a more relaxed time as German Society's treasurer.

17.



LEO BRNICANIN
[Third Year, St Hugh's]

The Oxide Radio guy. Leo relentlessly promotes the University's student radio on Oxfess and elsewhere.

18.



AARON MCINTYRE
[Second Year, Magdalen]

Former OULC Co-Chair, Magdalen JCR President, and Symphonic Band President, there isn't a committee worth being on if Aaron isn't there.

19.



JOE THOMPSON
[Second Year, New]

Originally describing himself to us as an "overzealous finance bro networker," Joe would like to add that you've probably also seen him on Oxfess.

20.



ANITA OKUNDE
[Second Year, Magdalen]

Treasurer-elect of the Union and Oxford ACS VP. In the words of her Instagram bio, she'll be found "either working towards social change or taking cool photos".

21.



HOLLY TOOMBS
[Second Year, Worcester]

Holly runs "a network of group chats, that were used by 2400+ offer holders over the past two years", meaning she's culpable for bringing together two generations of potential union hacks.

22.



BEE BARNETT
[First Year, St Hilda's]

Bee is Oxford's resident fashion influencer, with over 600k followers on TikTok – and, as a result, is arguably more famous than anyone else on this list (bar Emma Watson).

23.



MATTY BROWN
[Second Year, Univ]

In his own words, Matty is "OUCA President-Elect and leader of the #FreeMattyBrown Campaign". The Editors aren't entirely sure what that is.

24.



IZZY HORROCKS-TAYLOR
[Second Year, Balliol]

The Oxford Union's very own "Barbie" (Izzy's words, not ours), she is best known for shooting her shot as Balliol's Netball Captain.

25.



PETER CHEN
[Second Year, Brasenose]

As legal counsel for OSPL, you'll see Peter running between choir rehearsals and Oxford county courtroom, keeping the copyright feds off *Cherwell's* back time and again.

26.



RACHEL HADDAD
[First Year, Balliol]

Rachel is this term's Union Secretary. Reaching such heights as a fresher, she's a safe bet for the 2025 BNOG list.

27.



LUKAS SEIFERT
[Third Year, Christ Church]

Having finally left the Union, Lukas runs Oxford's biggest podcast: LOAF. He's the only undergrad from Malta (he thinks) and his hobbies include, as he writes, "sending it".

28.



USHIKA KIDD
[Second Year, Keble]

As Ushika would say: "only here because I'm a serial over-committer... Usually found yapping about the climate or badminton, or both."

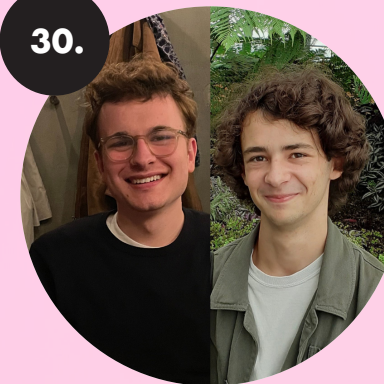
29.



OLI & ADAM
[Second Year, Somerville & Keble]

In Rufus's words: "Our very own Starmer and Reeves, this iron-fisted duo has succeeded in their campaign to modernise *Cherwell* and put it back in the service of Oxford students".

30.



MARTIN & GASPARD
[Second Year, St Catz & Anne's]

As per usual, the OxStu Editors-in-Chief mark the end of this list. Perhaps one day they will finally be able to break away from minor BNOG obscurity.

Notes from the Editors'

Rufus Hall

Writing in the OxStu, Kesaia Toganivalu once said that there are six types of BNOG: the "InDenial BNOG", the "politico" BNOG, the "hack" BNOG, the "toff" BNOG, the "GNOC" (BNOG in the LG-BTQ+ scene) and the 'mystery' BNOG. It is surely the mark of a good BNOG list that it is representative of these different BNOG

sorts. How did our BNOG list fair?

Adam Saxon

Halfway through assembling this list, I referred to the Union term card (you know the one none of us ever really read through) as the "bible of the BNOG list". It's true – and, in fairness, the hacks included on this list are some of the most well-known people in Oxford. However, if you delve deeper between the lines, there are a number of people on this list

who are known for their contributions to a wide range of non-political aspects of the University. It truly was hard cutting it down to thirty. With over 2,100 names on the form, there are so many people who could have made it – and if you didn't: take it as inspiration to come back and make your mark next year.

Oliver Sandall

We both really value the BNOG list. Thus, we decided to include

only 30 names this year to make sure we end up in the top 30. Indeed, having recently visited the Union as esteemed guests (or so we'd like to think), we feel it's only right to put ourselves among those who value their self-worth off a trivial list.

In any case, there are a couple of things to note. Shermar – your message asking me to go for a pint (which I declined on grounds of being "busy") did not influence this democratic process. Hannah

– please rusticate once more and apply to be a Puzzles section editor. Oliver – you're welcome for *that* viral video. Leo – apologies for not taking you on at *Cherwell*; your houseboat would have been great for socials.

It's been a pleasure to help organise and curate this year's BNOG list – and I hope you like the design. Thank you to Rufus for his hilarious comments throughout and also for his general wisdom. This has been great fun – cheers!

Making art in the age of generative AI

Evan Leonhard discusses the future of artistic practice in a tech-driven world



When they told us that AI is coming for people's jobs, most of us didn't think that they were talking about artists. Our popular imaginings of artificially intelligent futures often seem to bracket the work of artists as somehow beyond the cold capacities of clever machines. Could AI handle the manual, administrative, and even strategic aspects of human endeavor? Perhaps. Creativity and aesthetic sensitivity, however, were presumed by many to be unprogrammable, too reliant upon emotion and the subtleties of lived experience.

This popular tendency in viewing art and those who make it as exceptionally human is likely a kind of cultural hangover from the aesthetic theories of the nineteenth century – in which art, especially poetry and painting, were widely proposed to be the self-expression of an extraordinary individual, a genius with a uniquely profound or sensitive subjectivity. Many of our culture's paradigmatic symbols of artistic psychology, from the Vincent Van Gogh to Jim Morrison, have relied heavily on this trope of spiritual, cultural, and, frequently, tragic heroism.

All of these assumptions have been put to the test over the course of the past two years, as innovations in AI have become increasingly accessible masses and an integral facet of public discourse, especially with respect to education and the ethics of things like celebrity 'deep fakes'.

At the centre of all this is, of course, a particular sub-category of artificial intelligence known as generative AI – the kind of technology famously responsible for everything ranging from uncanny portraits with extra fingers, your favourite popstar's robot-sounding cover of a song from the 1950s, and, lest we forget, eerily corporate-cod-

ed essays from undergrads who haven't done their reading.

Well-known generative AI interfaces like Chat-GPT, Dall-E, Bard, and Amper all fall under the umbrella of generative AI Trained on large data sets of text, images, and audio, these systems are capable of generating original images, bodies of texts, and sonic configurations from preexisting materials. While the interfaces easily available for public usage, like Chat-GPT and Dall-E, very rarely produce anything of a quality high enough to raise the eyebrows of human artists, more sophisticated interfaces have produced works of considerable aesthetic merit.

The early alarm bells blared in September of 2022, when artist Jason M. Allen took home first

“Photography didn't replace painting, but it did change painting.”

place and \$300 cash prize in the 'digital arts/digitally manipulated photography' division at the Colorado State Fair Fine Arts Competition for his piece 'Théâtre D'Opéra Spatial'. The image is an epic scene from a galactic royal court in a style somewhat evocative of nineteenth-century academicism, looking almost as though Sir Lawrence Alma Tadema had painted a scene from 'Dune'.

However, in the days following Allen's big win, news broke that image had been generated using Midjourney, a generative AI system that produces incredibly detailed and often hyper-realistic images from written prompts in a manner sim-

ilar to Dall-E. The program might be best known for its viral 2023 image of Pope Francis sporting an exaggerated, rapper-style puffer jacket. Prominent voices from the art world and mainstream media alike sounded off about Allen's win, triggering an initial flurry of quasi-philosophical questioning regarding the nature of art in the age of AI.

So much of this public discussion around AI and the arts has revolved around questions of authorship and representation. Can Jason Allen truly claim artistic responsibility for 'Théâtre D'Opéra'? What about AI art generators trained on works by other human artists? Could this be considered a form of plagiarism? How should we be handling situations in which systems seem to represent problematic biases in their depictions, as in the case of Megan Fox's complaints about AI-generated images of her being excessively sexualized? While all undoubtedly legitimate and incredibly important questions to answer, a critical dilemma that seems consistently absent from this vibrant public discourse is that of artistic practice and how it might be altered or even endangered by the increasingly sophisticated abilities of generative AI.

Even the famously antiquated William Morris – who spent so much of his career trying to reclaim the dignity of artistic labour through the reviving of mediaeval design methods, made discerning use of new technologies in his printing and textile practices – granted that said technologies could be implemented without threatening the integrity of the art's quality or the labour involved in making it. Therefore, the question clearly remains: how might recent developments in generative AI and the demands of art coexist?

I spoke with Maggie Mustaklem, a doctoral researcher at the Oxford

Internet Institute. Her current project, entitled 'Design Interrupted', examines the role that AI is increasingly playing in the artistic brainstorming process, particularly with respect to how designers and architects draw inspiration from things they find in the AI-curated feeds of Pinterest and Instagram. Unlike many of the tech-savvy intellectuals who have tended to chime in on this issue, Mustaklem has actually worked in the arts as a knitwear designer, and is well-aware of the expertise such work demands.

She is resistant to the alarmism that pervades much of the popular discussion mentioned above. "I think that the scale and reach of generative AI in creative industries is often overblown," Mustaklem notes. "My research focuses on the concept stage of the design process, where designers often pull images from the web for inspiration to present concepts to clients. Gen AI is well suited to assist with this task, and many are starting to experiment with it. However, during my research I conducted workshops

“A.I. is a prompt for taking art where computers trained on patterns might have a difficult time.”

with 15 design studios in London and Berlin. All of them were experimenting with gen. AI, but none were using gen AI images to present concepts to clients. It is becoming a tool in the tool kit, but not one that has yet to demonstrably alter the design process."

This relatively modest impact of generative AI on the concrete practice of the arts is, according to Mustaklem, one of the most common misconceptions floating around this issue at the moment. Like nearly every other sector of work, it seems that the creative industries have undoubtedly experienced increasing interest in the new possibilities presented by generative AI. However, "Statistics on job replacement and efficiency," she notes, "often fail to consider points like how much of designing knitwear, or any product, is tangible and embodied, requiring localised skills and experience

"I think new media and technology needs to be considered within the ecosystems it will disrupt," Mustaklem goes on to note, "A few years ago we thought 3D printers would replace overseas knitwear factories. Even though there's some really exciting things happening

with 3D printing, most knitwear is still produced overseas. Photography didn't replace painting, but it did change painting. Gen AI will transform creative industries but it is unlikely to reshape them into something entirely different."

Some artists have already begun to hint at what this 'entirely different' future for the arts might look like. While Mustaklem has design in mind, her prediction about the reconfiguration (rather than elimination) of traditional artistic practice also seems to hold for the so-called 'fine arts,' like painting and creative writing.

An especially exciting example of this reconfiguration in the world of literature is the magazine *Heavy Traffic*. A partial product of the pandemic-spawned 'Dimes Square' art and intellectual scene in New York City, the magazine has become a burgeoning touchstone of the American literary avant-garde. Distinct from Mustaklem's vision of AI as a kind of collaborative design or conceptualising tool, writers publishing with *Heavy Traffic* present a more apophatic path for grappling with AI's ability to mimic human creativity.

In an interview with *Dazed*, editor Patrick McGraw describes the magazine's signature style as "schizzed out gibberish," citing our culture's AI-instigated shifting relationship to language as prompt for taking art where computers trained on patterns might have a difficult time following – poetic disruption and instability. As implied by McGraw's colourful description, the writing in *Heavy Traffic* is characterised by a jarring, aggressively chaotic tone and even borderline incomprehensibility.

In some respects, a move like this is akin to how painters reacted in the wake of photography. No longer needed as a medium for capturing visual reality, the impressionists sought to capture what photography could not – subjective sensation, perspective, and pure form.

Whether any of the above methods of grappling with the intersection of art and artificial intelligence can or should sustain our artistic needs into a tech-driven future is by no means evident. However, they are a reminder that 'human art' and practice are by no means under existential threat. While the great nineteenth-century myth of singular artistic genius might well wither away in the wake of generative AI, the concrete work of the artist seems entirely capable of adapting for the time being.

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

Image credit: Midjourney / Public Domain via Wikimedia Commons

Stage

The Human Body review: 'A socialist exploration of healthcare and romance'

Kiaya Phillips

I recently attended my first production at the Donmar and fell in love with the energy of the space and the risks the writers and directors were taking within it. So I was excited to see that they were doing a production of one of my favourite modern playwrights, Lucy Kirkwood's, plays: *The Human Body*. A British playwright who has received acclaim for many of her plays, including (my personal favourite) *The Children*, shows here that she is not done in her brilliance yet. Published only a few months ago (29 February 2024), *The Human Body* is new to the drama scene yet it definitely holds its own on the Donmar stage.

A Socialist exploration of healthcare and romance is perhaps an unexpected way of defining a play, but this is essentially what it was. We follow Iris Elcock (played by Keeley Hawes), a practising GP, Socialist, Labour party councillor and aspiring MP, in her efforts to implement Nye Bevan's National Health Service Act; a revolutionary change in healthcare, making

it free for all. She is the exemplary post-war woman, working hard in a day job whilst maintaining a happy home with her daughter and ex-Navy husband turned GP Julian (Tom Goodman-Hill). But everything starts to change when she meets apolitical and apathetic George Blythe (Jack Davenport), a local boy who has now made it to Hollywood but is home visiting his sick mother, turning her world inside out as she is given the glimpse of "more".

Keeley Hawes takes on the role of Iris and embodies her completely. I was captivated by her from the beginning. I could have spent the whole play just watching her face, subtle in everything she did but emotive, powerful and strong. We see her marriage be tested, questioning whether love can survive against politics, when partners have different views. Love versus Politics being central to everything in this play. And I felt for her at many points, her down moments felt particularly poignant to me. Kirkwood keeps the story blurry but we can only assume she attempts to take her own life near the end of the play, as she cannot deal with the de-

mands put on her both professionally and emotionally. I could have cried when she woke up in the hospital bed, or even more so ten minutes earlier when she turned away from her future with George, lying and telling him she would have never left her husband, despite just doing so in the scene prior. The dramatic irony Kirkwood employs here can only be described as heart wrenching.

The play was undoubtedly brilliantly acted but I also have to commend Michael Longhurst (Artistic Director of the Donmar Warehouse from 2019 - 2024) for his execution of such a well written script. The set was dynamic with a circular revolve base that sped up and down throughout the production in moments of tension and calm. There were crew members holding cameras with a live feed of the action on stage projected across the back screen, fog machines, sound effects – succinctly timed to perfection – and a striking all NHS-

blue set from the furniture, to the cigarettes the characters smoked, all the way down to the small blue canapes they ate at the dinner parties. This reminded me of the Old Vic production of Caryl Churchill's *A Number* that I saw a few years ago, with an all red set; perhaps a modern theatrical choice these female, British, playwrights have chosen to share. Thanks to Longhurst's direction all of the scenes happened seamlessly and the actors moved around, on and off stage with ease and a certain unmistakable elegance. I enjoyed how the live stream effect created a very cinematic feel to all of the moments between Iris and George, a fitting style to their dramatic and forbidden romance, as well as serving to emphasise how the play is about how the left tells stories, or sometimes fails to.

As concerns rise in the news now surrounding the future of the NHS, *The Human Body* reminds us exactly what we

could be losing by putting it directly in front of our eyes on the stage. Does Iris win in the end? In some ways yes, in others no. The bill gets passed, but she turns away from her political pursuits, she gets divorced from her husband but doesn't end up with George, and she remains a GP but with the implied new and overbearing demands a free healthcare system will present. The play is about how difficult it is to have a revolution both politically and in our personal lives, and this is emphasised by Iris at the end. The play ends with Iris centre stage, doors opened to the general public, and she projects 'Who's next?' to the crowd as we cut to a final blackout. We end with both loss and a way of looking forward for Iris, and for our societal system in general. It was a play well suited to showcasing the benefits our free healthcare system offers without being overly shoving-it-down-your-throat political. I look forward to what grand idea Kirkwood has in store for us next.

The Human Body is running at the Donmar Warehouse 17th February - 13th April 2024.

Music

Taylor Swift's *The Tortured Poets Department*: Who tortures the poet?

Laura Brink

The most tortured love affair on Taylor Swift's new album is her relationship with her audience. Following its release on April 19th, the album's reviews were marked by a shared preoccupation with the autobiographical element of her work. This extends beyond speculation as to which ex-lover any given song is about, though many relished in the revelation that her one-month fling with singer Matty Healy might have featured in equal measure with ex-partner of six years Joe Alwyn.

Autobiographical speculation amongst critics includes theories on Swift's intentions with the album. What motivated her, some ask, to release an extended version of the album (known as *The Anthology*)? Has she increased the number of tracks to a whopping 31 as a benevolent gift to her fans, or is this evidence of a cash-grab? Similar arguments have swirled around her rereleasing previous work as *Taylor's Version*, and recent songs like *Mastermind*

from her second-to-last album *Midnights*, while ostensibly about orchestrating a romantic union, have been taken as encouragement from the artist herself to interpret her public image as calculated, clever, or even manipulative. A closer look at the lyrics of some of her tracks from *The Tortured Poets Department* (TTPD) shows a willingness to engage with her self-conscious project of persona creation, as well as with the various responses to this, and, crucially, with the reality of her fame.

Long gone are the days where Swift's appeal lay primarily in her relat-

able girl-next-door country charm. Swift's return to this world in the stand-out *But Daddy I Love Him* might therefore come as a surprise. The track frames her controversially received relationship with The 1975 singer Matty Healy in the same terms as the Romeo and Juliet lovers of her 2008 *Love Story*. Swift is fully aware of the ridiculousness of adopting this posture as a 34-year-old billionaire, and does so with a mischievous wink in the line "I'm having his baby / No, I'm not / But you should've seen your faces." This lyric breaks the fourth wall of the song, thus making it ambiguous whether the plural "you" refers to the townspeople in the world of the song, or to her shocked listeners.

Swift has long cultivated a culture amongst her fans of looking for "easter eggs" in her work, for clues about her personal life and future projects, and this ambiguity seems to suggest that some sleuthing Swifties are indistinguishable from prying neighbours. Considering Swift's well-established reticence to do anything which might alienate her loyal listeners, lines like these, along with the de-

fiant "I'll tell you something 'bout my good name / It's mine alone to disgrace" and unexpectedly forceful mention of people's "bitching and moaning" about her relationship, her willingness in this song to establish boundaries with her audience is remarkable.

Other tracks on TTPD showcase a less humorous distancing between Swift and her fans. Clara Bow, one of the simpler and therefore more lyrically successful experiments on the record, picks up on the themes of Swift's celebrity career. Lara Bow is a much more mature track than others (such as *Nothing New*) with a similar theme, and reflects her awareness of the lasting impact she has made on pop culture in the past two decades. The verses chart a lineage of famous women, from the glamorous 1920s movie star Bow, to Fleetwood Mac singer and '70s rock legend Stevie Nicks. Swift, noted for her confessional first-person narrated songs, makes an unusual leap in the final verse by including her own name, as well as addressing the new star, who looks "like Taylor Swift" with a sense of bitterness: "you've got edge she [Swift] never had". The very fact that Swift is able to use herself as a benchmark for up-and-coming celebrities is proof of her success.

Swift's awareness of the kind of fame she is afforded as a pop artist who sings mostly about her love life is a refreshing moment of maturity, though it is sadly bogged down by other less insightful



tracks. All of the songs on TTPD are, however, deeply personal ruminations of the like we haven't heard from her since *Lover* (2019), given the fictitious nature of *Folklore* and *Evermore* (both 2020) and the vague lyricism of *Midnights* (2022), and might in fact align her with a tradition of tortured poets who were, like Swift, both adored and slammed for their confessionalism, such as Sylvia Plath. It is good to see Swift abandon the hopeless goal of writing relatability, and it will be interesting to see how she develops her newfound self-awareness.

Swift Image Credit: Jana Beamer / CC BY-2.0 via Flickr.

Healy Image Credit: Pedro Mora / CC BY-3.0 via Wikimedia Commons.



Film

Film around the world: Italy's *Suspria*

Freddie Sweet

The first time I heard about *Suspria*, I was nine and my babysitter was telling me I couldn't watch it, shouldn't even - that it was the most terrifying film she'd ever seen. Years later, when I finally watched it, I was surprised to find myself describing it to a friend as a "visual orgasm". Revisiting it now, I would have to say that description still holds true. If you come to *Suspria* for pure terror, that's not what you'll get. It's more a creeping kind of unease, generated by its absurd and unsettling comedy. The primary colours contribute to this too - they bathe the film in an LSD-like delirium and leave you in a William Blake fever dream. *Suspria* exists in its own realm, ungraspable and hypnotic.

You are never quite allowed into *Suspria*. Dubbed voices and

shots that cut just before a corner is turned keep you one second behind the characters, slightly and subtly disconnected. Their blank faces and marionette movements add to the feeling that there isn't a plot to follow, but rather a sequence of visual experiments that come to no solution. The set design is impeccable, with buildings that are Wes Anderson in their artificiality but Mattise in their saturation. Every colour is at its most intense and perfect. There is a red which must be the mother of all other reds.

Other than its domineering colour palette, *Suspria* is in a weird, indefinite, liminal space; and not just due to its uncanny sets. It's neither purely horror nor comedy, neither plot-driven nor plotless, the characters are neither empty nor wholly realistic. The closest comparison I can make isn't even to something real - it's to the idea of

an art-house pantomime viewed by a person on acid - and if that's the comparison I'm reaching for, it certainly cements its status as something truly unique.

It was made at a time when it was fashionable for Italian horror movies to use 'easy listening' music as a counterpoint to their most violent scenes; the elevator music that would have been playing in *The Shining's* lift pre-bloodbath. The difference with *Suspria* is that its music box refrain of chimes is suffocated by the demonic voice that whisper-sings along to them, and occasional tabla beats mix with this to create a supernatural, ritual feeling in the score. The tightrope walk of disconnecting and blending between visuals and audio is key to the film's effectiveness. Its opening scene becomes a masterpiece as the music box and rainstorm amalgamate into a suffocating cacophony, cutting rapidly back and forth into silence depending on whose perspective we assume. The score is oddly diegetic - we know on a certain level that the characters cannot hear it, and yet it can clearly see them. As they approach danger, the menac-

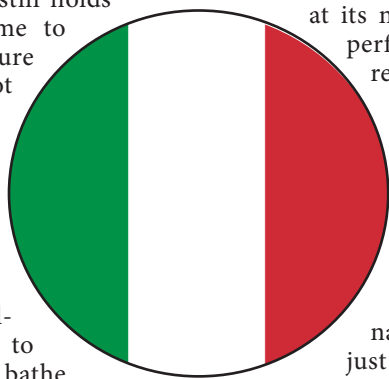
ing chants begin to drown out the incongruous reassurance of the chimes, sending them a warning that they almost seem to hear but never listen to.

One of the reasons *Suspria* is so difficult to write about is because of this liminal and enigmatic nature. Its elements meld and yet do not merge, infusing it with dread. Director Dario Argento doesn't grant us the comfort of a meaningful plot and uses the 'story' more as a line on which to hang his striking tableaux and vignettes. When asked if this film has a 'message', I would struggle to answer. Possibly, I could tenuously claim it is about class, or that it is feminist, or anti-dictatorship. In reality, I could only say with conviction that it is about beauty.

It's about decay and the allure of that decay.

The film's message must be an aesthetic one, as it is the senses that are fed more than the conscience. It's decadent and immoral, a "visual orgasm" in which we look for meaning because it seems gluttonous to enjoy without one. But *Suspria* remains a sensory feast that defies easy interpretation, forcing viewers to revel in its decadence without the crutch of comprehension. It's a testament to the visceral power of cinema, the meaning is in its sensations and not in its rationalisation. So, take a deep breath, and allow *Suspria* to happen to you.

Image Credit: CC BY 2.0, deepskyobject via. Wikimedia Commons.



WHAT'S ON?

Stage: *Blindness*

@Pilch Studio

14th May - 18th May

Experience an immersive binaural experience (adapted from the novel by Jose Saramago) coming to the Pilch in Week 4!

MUSIC: 'Night of Orchestral Jazz' @ Sheldonian

17th May, 19:30

Join Oxford uni orchestra and jazz orchestra for a performance not to be missed!

Film: *Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes*

@Odeon & Curzon & Vue

Planet of the Apes returns to screens for its tenth film, written in the COVID pandemic and coming to screens this week!

Film around the world: Germany's *The Lives of Others*

Tara Williams

I'm sure that those of us who studied A-Level German back in the day (not so long ago, if you're a first-year reading this) will be familiar with Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck's 2006 film *The Lives of Others* (or *Das Leben der Anderen*, to give it its German title). Arguably one of Germany's internationally best-known films of recent years, thanks largely to its 'Best Foreign Language Film of the Year' Oscars win, Donnersmarck crafts its narrative to shine a light on one of the German Democratic Republic's most notorious government departments: the Ministry of State Security, or the 'Stasi' for short.

The Lives of Others centres around Gerd Wiesler, a fictional Stasi officer tasked with monitoring the behaviour of a potentially dissident playwright and his partner. Donnersmarck uncovers the truly sinister nature of the former regime, not by concentrating solely on the barbaric techniques employed by the Stasi (though there is plenty of that within the

narrative too), but by turning the film into a heart-wrenching character study. *The Lives of Others* brilliantly examines its repressed and morally ambiguous protagonist, who, despite his position of relative power, suffers considerably throughout the film. His story depicts the consequences of a life lived under an authoritarian regime. Wiesler is a profoundly lonely man, acting - in a sense - as a metaphor for East Germany's near-complete isolation from Western Europe. He can only experience love and cultural enlightenment passively - through the tinny sound from a hidden microphone, by spying on a loving couple from afar with a pair of government-issue binoculars - with the physical distance between himself and those he grows fond of becoming painfully clear to the viewer. It is only through his existence as the protagonist of the film that he is humanised at all. The ambivalence and hints of individualism that Donnersmarck bestows upon him stand in stark contrast to the anonymisation that Wiesler is subjected to in his role as an intelligence officer.

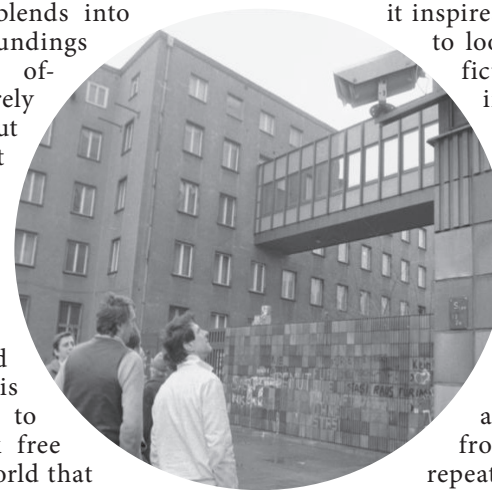
Donnersmarck does not only address this through the narrative progression, but also by utilising the film's visuals. Wiesler physically blends into his surroundings frequently, often barely standing out amongst the dreary greys and browns of Donnersmarck's expertly composed shots. He is powerless to truly break free from the world that he lives in, completely unable to experience a life outside of the confines of the GDR.

Of course, there is very little internationalism to speak of within the universe of the film. As is the case with many authoritarian governments (take North Korea's recent censoring of the completely harmless Alan Titchmarsh's jeans as an example), media, news, and culture that came from outside of the regime was heavily restricted or outright banned. Although the GDR was practically impenetrable from the inside out, nowadays international audiences are able to see clearly into what the regime once was thanks to, among other sources, films like *The Lives*

of Others and *Good Bye, Lenin!*, another German A-Level favourite. To make history more accessible is invaluable, especially if it inspires the audience to look beyond the fictional sphere into reality. As the saying goes, knowledge is power, and by having access to such insights into the past, we should be able to learn from it and avoid repeating our mistakes in the future.

Having observed the struggles of the characters of *The Lives of Others*, it is impossible not to treasure our unrestricted access to international culture and freedom of expression when compared to the totalitarianism of life within the former German Democratic Republic. It is because of this freedom that we can enjoy and learn from films such as this, which can provide us with awareness of, to return to the title, the lives of others who have lived (and may continue to live) so differently to the way that we do today.

Image Credit: CC BY 3.0, Rainer Mittelstadt via. Wikimedia Commons.



Fashion

Sunak's Samba with the fashion industry

Connie Hilton

In Rishi Sunak's recent Downing Street Interview, his words and promises were certainly not the star of the show. Showing off his Adidas Sambas, the Prime Minister took British media by storm. News outlets broadcasted a sudden decline in sales of the once popular shoe and young members of the public expressed outrage at the wealthy leader's attempt to be a 'regular every man'. The fashion community was genuinely disgusted by Sunak's choice of footwear, suggesting that he had simply ruined the trend for everyone. However, the Samba has a much longer track record than Rishi's short time in office, which illustrates the deeper connection between the PM's choice to wear them and the social connotations this gave. Was he successful in his stylistic decision, or did he cause a crash faster than Truss did?

The fashion origin



of the famous 3-stripe Sambas lies in the football stands of the 1970s. Although it was created in 1949, intended to be a football shoe equipped to survive icy conditions, it became a statement of class culture only 2 decades later. Famously a working class shoe, alongside the Reebok classics, the Samba has strong roots in the British community as a durable and affordable option for playing sports that could also be worn more casually. 20 years later, their functions expanded and they became a staple of the skater community. This was a strong marker of their transition from sportswear to streetwear as they were a clear indicator of this aesthetic. Meanwhile they were famously shown off by artists like Oasis, which gave them a strong platform in English culture throughout the 1990s and maintained their roots in the working man's style. They maintained some popularity by the 2010s, but were overtaken by Converse in sales

due to their pedestal in the fashion community. Nowadays, however, the Samba has returned in an American resurgence. Supermodel Bella Hadid and pop icon Rihanna have both expressed a devotion to the trainers, often papped sporting them in their casual looks. By early 2024, Sambas were selling out at every release in a rapid comeback instigated by the 'it-girls' of the 21st century.

By April, even the Prime Minister was swept up by the trend, flaunting a pale pair with navy chinos and a white shirt. Immediately, fans of the Samba took to social media to express their outrage at Sunak's fashion statement. Footwear stores quickly expressed their concern that the politician's love for the retro trainers had massacred their resurgence. Defending himself, Rishi claimed to have always loved the look of the Adidas Samba, reminiscing on receiving them as a gift from his brother one Christmas. Although he issued an apology for his fashion choices that day, the PM's decision to wear Sambas may have been more complex than a Christmas present. In a desperate attempt to be perceived as a regular civilian, he may have switched out his Oxfords for Adidas. Rishi is well aware of how his image has been damaged by Tory sleaze and elitism, so his Sambas may have been a political move to appear less isolated from the general public. However, all he did was tarnish the image of the Adidas Samba.

EDITORS' PICKS...



Book of the week: *Klara and the Sun*, by Kazuo Ishiguro
Georgia Campbell

Kazuo Ishiguro's eighth novel, written during the height of the coronavirus pandemic, imagines a dystopian world in which complex robots, known as AFs ('Artificial Friends'), are created to provide companionship for isolated teenagers. Ishiguro's style is gentle, but always acutely poignant, as he explores the ethical dilemmas of a future reliant on conscious AI. With a film adaptation starring Jenna Ortega set to be released later this year, I can't recommend this book highly enough.

Film of the week: *The Zone of Interest*

Billy Jeffs

This 2023 German-language film explores the banality of evil by dramatising the domestic life of the family that oversaw the Auschwitz camp. Director Jonathan Glazer's fixed-frame cinematography creates a documentary-style feel that lives up to A24's stylistic cachet, and Sandra Huller's performance as the family's matriarch propelled her to international stardom last year. The Oscar-winning sound design also serves to background the horrors of the camp, never allowing the audience to accept only what they see.



Music of the week: *May Ninth*, by Khruangbin
Zaynab Ravat

Listening to Khruangbin's latest album is a form of self care. Each song is fresh and airy, but a standout to me is May Ninth. The elegant and subdued vocals complement the layered instrumental, paired together seamlessly in an ethereal and melancholic soundscape.

Since the interview, Adidas have released a statement expressing their huge profits in the first quarter of 2024, which has put young minds at ease about the sudden death of a trend they may have just bought into. Despite this, Sunak has certainly left a mark on the iconic

appearance of the Samba. Whether that is for better or for worse is not completely clear, but it is evident that the Sunak-Samba controversy is an unforgettable moment where politics and fashion aligned.

Image Credit: Blundstoneboy/CC BY 2.0 via Flickr

Art

Freida Toranzo Jaeger's prophetic glitter

Madeleine Jacob

Freida Toranzo Jaeger names her paintings like items in a manifesto: *Extinction is the price we pay for our existence* (2023), *Open your heart because everything will change* (2023), *For new futures we need new beginnings* (2022), *Create to Destroy, Destroy to Create / On Taste and Poetry. Fuego* (2019). Across the exhibition, Jaeger's oil paintings are hinged together as sculptural installations. They stand as columns or hang from the ceiling. Four are tiny mechanical pyramids, opening and closing intermittently like automated origami fortune-tellers. Jaeger hopes her hinged paintings recall the foldable triptych altarpieces European missionaries carried across colonial Central America (Jaeger is Mexican and currently resident in Mexico City).

Thomas Gainsborough's painting *Mr and Mrs Andrews* (1750) embeds its subjects in the landscape they own; the blank canvas where a baby could be painted is the unpainted patch of futurity nestled in Mrs Andrews' skirt. And like Gainsborough, Jaeger puts the images of the

future which the powerful invest in (today, the sleek space-age minimalism of Elon Musk's private space exploration company, Space X) in conversation with the Garden of Eden's idyllic space-time. Jaeger's dexterous selection of painterly approaches includes a neo-expressionist graffiti line (that seems to be adopted from her Hamburg tutor, Jutta Koether) as well as flat, caricatured Eves snatched from fourteenth-century European painting and returned to us in the guise of Mexican muralism.

The kitsch, cute and reconfigurable in Jaeger's work reframes the bloody history of European oil painting – so long the lapdog of the rich and powerful. Jaeger's heart-shaped paintings, vibrant threaded bows and bedazzled celestial landscapes play on an impulse to crush the cute and critique the insipid. In *Cybertruck* (2020), an arbour of flat, painterly flowers adorns a car interior. Visible through the car window is a white strip painted with a minute fire. Lines of sgraffito slice through the white to produce a shattered effect. The painting's title and this shattered centre recall the 2019 Tesla expo, where Franz von Holzhausen threw a ball bearing at the unveiled Cybertruck's 'Armour Glass' shatterproof

windows only to have the glass splinter. By recalling the meme-able moment, Jaeger invokes thousands of words worth of internet discourse, which has already made the ironic event into a tiny, recognisable emblem.

The paintings' small fires are responsible for much of the allusive work: the fire of love, the home fires, the spark of the carburetor engine and the forest fires, which slide in and out of reality every record-breaking hot summer. In *Cybertruck*, Jaeger marks the fractured centre with the emblem of a tiny fire. *Life Fears* (2019) depicts a Pomeranian dog recoiling from flames on a plush red passenger seat. Jaeger is depicting our own half-life on the



brink of climate breakdown. She seems to be satirising the rhetoric of techno-futurist billionaires and the like, who conceal their politics in the aesthetics of prophecy. "I don't ascribe to any political party or economic model that currently exists," tweeted Musk's ex-partner, musician Grimes in 2022.

Jaeger concentrates on interiors: dashboards, vulvas, human organs, the garden of Eden and space-stations. The lungs of *The powerful return of cosmic pessimism* (2023) are painted onto a disk hanging low in the hinged prism-like diptych. Their pale snaking bronchi lead up to the red threads which suspend this smaller canvas in the centre of the two adjoining it. There is a synergy between the thread-like lung interior and the taut, twisted, looping threads which just touch it as they rupture the canvas. At this point of juncture Jaeger translates a stylised symbol into the complex, tactile material of the thread. The taut thread, which suspends the lungs, reminds us that our bodies cannot be disentangled from the space they occupy. After all, the easy, virtual rearrangement of images – the glimpses of heaven and hell reflected in the windows and wing mirrors of *Deep adaptation on Audi Aicon 2020 costume design* by H. Memling (2019) – finds its limit in the embodied, breathing body.

Jaeger's relationship to the tradi-



tion of Mexican muralism – most widely recognised as the allegorical narrative wall-paintings by Diego Rivera – can't quite be called a debt: Jaeger is conscious of the manual labour, political allegory and craft practices that tradition seeks to depict (although she chooses the traditionally girly or Latina pastimes of embroidery and rhinestoning instead). Yet Jaeger's subject isn't straightforwardly a political history of Latin America. Instead, she paints us a fiction of the future: a flattened world where delicate flowers, heart and lungs, space, as well as Adam and Eve, all have the solid, shiny surfaces of a Tesla's interior. The endlessly customisable interior is beautiful and tactile, but there is only space for one or two on the inside.

Image Credits: Madeleine Jacob.

Books

Ten Years to Save the West by Liz Truss review: Revenge of the lettuce

Rohan Kaya

I have met Liz Truss only once. It was in Oxford Town Hall in November of last year and I had tried (without success) to smuggle in an iceberg lettuce under my shirt. The lettuce having been confiscated, I made my way into the hall. Very soon Truss climbed onstage, looking pleased as a duck. She began to rant about how she had been toppled by transgender activists in the civil service and the left-wing economic establishment. What struck me even more than the talentlessness of her oratory was her absolute lack of self-awareness or self-reflection. "It is," as James O'Brien puts it, "as if Liz Truss seems to operate in a universe where she's never met Liz Truss."

The same attitude is clear throughout Truss' new memoir. Reflecting on her time as Prime Minister, she mentions "policies I believed in" in the same line as "catastrophic economic meltdown" without ever once linking cause to effect. She cannot accept that her policies were on the wrong side of the debate, and the few debates in this book which she does win are, as if in the shower, completely imaginary. Justifying radical low-tax policies, she writes that: "If we push taxes up to 80 per cent... fewer people will aspire to earn more or start a new business". A sound point. But nobody is saying that we

should push taxes up to 80 per cent.

High taxes, wokery, identity politics, the deep state, global left-wing media elites – these, in Truss' eyes, are the evils from which she is destined to save the West. She comes out with solutions like "We Must be Conservatives" and "We Must Dismantle the Leftist State". Much of it is pure Daily Mail stuff (although the Mail sells roughly more copies every fifteen minutes than this book sold in its first week).

Truss, like so many populist politicians and pseudo-intellectuals, is eager to defend "Western values" from attack. But I doubt whether she or anyone of her political leanings could define that term if called upon to do so. It is a tricky one, not least because by naming something as a Western value the implication is that it cannot be an Eastern value. Then what exactly is a Western value, according to Truss? Democracy cannot be one, because she speaks at far-right conferences alongside maniacs whose stated aim is the outright overthrow of

democracy. Tolerance? No, no, she wants to repeal the Equality Act. Human Rights? Impossible: she is also opposed to the Human Rights Act. Rational thinking? Individual responsibility? No, in Truss' case they all fall flat. All that she knows for certain is that Western values are under siege from the woke mob.

The "wokery" charge is interest-

ing only in one respect. In principle Truss is right to object to "the rewriting of history", though her examples on the matter are quite misguided. She opposes the idea of schools teaching more inclusive curriculums, or of students moving slaveowner statues from street corners into museums; she cannot see that for a country to have an honest rethink about its own history is not revisionist, at least not dangerously so. The real dangers of revisionism come when some countries – some, indeed, which she otherwise praises in this book – completely erase or deny the barbarities of their own recent history, and, doing so, go on in the present day to enact even more terror. That is infinitely more dangerous than the kinds of trivialities which Truss falsely holds up as examples of "rewriting history".

One positive which emerges from this book is that she has at any rate given up trying to cast herself as a modern-day Margaret Thatcher. She compares herself instead, bizarrely, with Sir Robert Peel. A far closer parallel would be Anthony Eden, another Tory who, despite extensive experience as a minister, made such a hash of the premiership that his only choice was a very hasty resignation. Truss also expresses a strange admiration for the polemicist Thomas Paine, whose work she surely cannot have read; otherwise, she would have denounced his plans for an eighteenth-century welfare state as "hand-outs".

The accounts of Truss' early career

make for fun reading. We learn that at school she was wildly paranoid about the risk of being stabbed with safety-scissors. (It would be useful if any psychology students are able to connect this early phobia to her later career: please do get in touch at culturecherwell@gmail.com).

She was shaped by her time as an officer at the Oxford Student Union, which left her with a loathing of "political correctness". In Parliament, when she inherited Labour's Department of Edu-

cation, she describes her horror at discovering... "rainbow decorations hanging from the ceiling". It is also interesting to learn that, as early as 2010, *The Spectator* had named her the "human hand grenade", and perhaps, if we had known that, we wouldn't have allowed her within firing distance of the economy.

There is no question of Truss' genius, at least in Truss' own mind. I can only think that – perhaps having heard that the infallible sign of genius is to have all the dunces in confederacy against you – she cast the Treasury, the governor of the Bank of England, Joe Biden, the Office for Budget Responsibility, and the late Queen in the role of the dunces, and herself in the role of the genius referred to.

And there is nothing that makes for funnier reading than a self-proclaimed genius.

[Read the full article online at cherwell.org!](https://www.cherwell.org/)

Truss Image Credit: Simon Dawson / CC BY 2.0 via Flickr.



Exploring

Fay Lorien discusses discovering her ancestral culture



When I was younger food and media were the only things that gave me insight into my background. I grew up with Russian fairy tales my grandmother used to read to me and Soviet-era movies my mother showed me.

One particular movie that stuck with me is a 1981 Ukrainian version of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, a vibrant animated film that sticks surprisingly close to its source material (when you compare it to the Disney version). Just hearing the score makes me nostalgic and I keep coming back to it.

I watched *Whale Rider* (Niki Caro, 2002) when I was 15. It was the first time I'd seen any Maori representation on screen. It made me want to learn more about myself and my tribe. That movie for me is what started it. My parents never told me a lot about that when I was younger so I kind of had to find out for myself. Says Kim, who is now writing a dissertation on indigenous studies.

On this journey of trying to get close to this part of my culture, media plays an important (and fun!) role. Especially the pieces I enjoyed as a child, that I was introduced to through my family hold the most importance to me. I started reading books my mother read when she was in school (though I am still working my way up to *Crime and Punishment*).

For cultural identity, I see media as a cornerstone. This includes music, journalism, books, movies etc. These areas can influence and shape our perceptions of a country or culture. Though viewing a lot of Soviet media, it is also important to consider the impact of propaganda and suppression. *The Master and Margarita*, now one of my favourite novels, was only published twenty years after it was written and remained heavily censored until 1973.

In modern-day Russia, censorship and propaganda remain issues. I find it increasingly important to engage with media in a conscious and critical way.

Having to constantly re-evaluate the media I consume can at times feel like a burden. However, there are plenty of modern writers engaging with their culture in a conscious way. To name one example: in *A Terrible Country* by Keith Gessen, a Russian-American man returns to Russia to care for his ailing grandmother. Reading a story from this perspective has been incredibly relatable, as someone feeling far-removed, experiencing this country through the eye of a partial outsider.

The Source

The Mermaid

Lucy Pollock

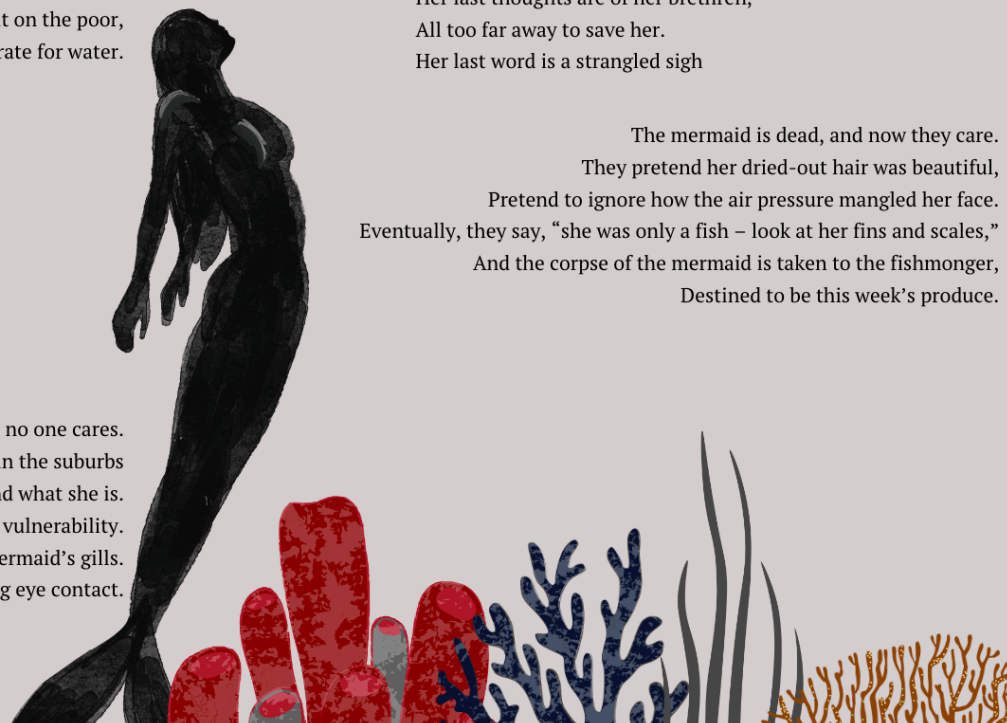
The mermaid is dying, and no one cares.
She does not belong here, here in the suburbs
Where council-mandated hedges block her from the sea.
She does not belong where houses must fit an aesthetic.
She does not belong where those in mansions spit on the poor,
Where they would not deign to spit on her, desperate for water.

The mermaid is drying out, and no one cares.
Her kelp-like hair turns to straw,
Her skin, now cold and dry, shrivels like a prune,
Her tail flip-flops next to a manicured garden,
Her gills gasp.
She loses control of her limbs; she is close to giving up.

The mermaid is gasping, and no one cares.
Stuck here in the suburbs
Surrounded by people who can't understand what she is.
A man walks past, and scoffs at her vulnerability.
A kind woman pours the last of her Voss water on the mermaid's gills.
Everyone else walks past, avoiding eye contact.

The mermaid is on death's door, and no one cares.
Her tail has stopped convulsing, now.
Her gills have stopped screaming.
Her last thoughts are of her brethren,
All too far away to save her.
Her last word is a strangled sigh

The mermaid is dead, and now they care.
They pretend her dried-out hair was beautiful,
Pretend to ignore how the air pressure mangled her face.
Eventually, they say, "she was only a fish – look at her fins and scales,"
And the corpse of the mermaid is taken to the fishmonger,
Destined to be this week's produce.



Cherwell's checklist

Our life editors' list the types you're sure to find at your college ball...

1 *The dad-dancer.* Just as Sophie Ellis-Bextor envisioned, this person aspires to commit murder on the dancefloor. They'll do the macarena, start a conga chain and spin everyone in circles all before 10pm. Be warned, if you choose to join them, you'll need stamina, or alternatively, a few drinks in your system. Don't be surprised if you're both barefoot by midnight; nothing can disrupt the groove.

2 *The aspiring DJ.* There comes a point in time where every twenty-something male decides that their true calling in life is to DJ (female DJs of Oxford, where are you?). You better believe that your college ball has pulled out all the stops to hire the hottest student DJ on the ball circuit (*eye-roll*). We can guarantee an abrupt transition between Sweet Caroline and Mr Brightside followed by, in our humble opinion, too much ABBA.

3 *The food connoisseur.* When you've spent, in some cases, £250 on your ticket, it seems only rational to try and get your money's worth – and, for some, this entails trying every culinary delicacy on offer. This person will spend their whole evening standing in queues for pizza, doughnuts etc, only to leave at 1am when the food runs out.

4 *The matchmaker.* We all have that one friend who views a ball as the perfect opportunity to meet prince or princess charming. They'll flirt with the bartenders and make some heavy eye contact with every suitor in a five metre radius, before trying to set you up. Ultimately, you'll all end the night with your arms wrapped around each other, shouting Robbie Williams' Angels.

5 *The sleepyhead.* Having done an all-nighter the day before to tackle their backlog of work, this person deeply regrets their lack of foresight when it dawns on them that the ball is in fact a whole twelve hours long. Rest assured, although they may not meet their coursework deadlines, with a steely determination, they'll make it to 6am if it's the last thing they do.

6 *The gatecrasher.* Who, me? A gatecrasher? Never. This vagabond will spend the best part of a week hatching their grand plan to sneak into the ball, when they could just as easily walk in through the main entrance. They're ironically also the person most able to afford the eye-watering ticket price, but their brag that they gatecrashed the ball makes them incredibly cool.

There's a fine line between love and hate

Flo Johnston reflects on the complicated relationships we have with our siblings.

After watching a TikTok that said we have already spent the majority of the time we get to ever have with our siblings by the time we leave home, I ran into my brother's room, misty-eyed, ready to spend some quality time together. I was immediately reminded why this isn't such a bad thing.

I adore my brother, but nobody seems to aggravate me as much as he does. Siblings seem to always know exactly how to push each other's buttons; they know every weakness to target before we've even recognised it ourselves. As annoying as this may seem, it also proves that they often know us better than anyone else. They've seen every phase of our lives and been forced to love us through each of them; for the majority of us, this is the only example of a lifelong friendship that we have. I have to give my brother some credit for this because I've lived through some shameful personality changes, but he's always been there (even if it was to tell me how ridiculous I looked).

But now I'm crossing into uncharted territories. I'm away for half of the year and my brother has a social life that most definitely does not include me. He's not around to flex his stringy arms in my mirrors or laugh at our parents; suddenly we've both started spending time at home alone and it's strikingly empty. Growing up and moving out has always been a fear of mine, yet I only ever thought about it in relation to leaving my parents. Siblings are always growing alongside us, often catching up to us; it's impossible to imagine a time without them. However, when I look at the

relationships between my parents and their siblings, it's very apparent that something must change. Without the forced close proximity, siblings drift to make their 'own' families, making time for the people they choose rather than their old family.

We've all heard the saying "blood is thicker than water", calling for us to put family before all else, but I think few know its original meaning. The full phrase actually writes that "blood of the covenant is thicker than water of the womb", which instead encourages us to hold agreements that we make to friends or partners above our own family. It's easy to agree with this – why should

“Growing up and moving out have always been a fear of mine, yet I only ever thought about it in relation to leaving my parents.”

we be forced to favour people with whom we share nothing but blood? Friendships are founded on common interest and love by choice; this surely is a worthier connection to value than the genetic lottery which chooses our siblings.

But I would argue that sharing a childhood with someone creates bonds that can never truly be lost over time. Whether this is with a sibling or a friend you've had since primary school, I think it's hard to outgrow a shared history; people change but your memories stay connected. Nostalgia has a beautiful way of idealising people from our youth and, though this can be misleading, I believe this is why siblings will always be important to us. They represent our childhood selves; aging and distance can't ever remove this connection and they remain our link back to our past. Surrounded by them, we can again become the most immature version of ourselves, back to the years of bickering and fun – and this isn't a bad thing. This break from pretending to be an adult is something I will always look forward to when I return home during the vacs and something that I hope will never change in the years to come.

Though writing this has made me appreciate my brother, I know this will be a short-lived gratitude.

“Sharing a childhood with someone creates bonds that can never truly be lost over time.”

Nonetheless, I hope this acts as a reminder to our future selves to soak up our last links to childhood and stay close with our biggest enemies (and bestest friends).

Image credit: Nathan / CC-BY-2.0 via Flickr



Dear Cherwell, my academic life is totally over!

Dear Auntie,
My tutor caught me chunning into a plant pot during our ball. How will I ever recover from this, or is my reputation ruined?



Before we delve into the clusterf*ck of an evening you clearly had, I must ask if you are okay, if only to tick the welfare check-box (for ethical reasons). You're likely nursing a heavy hangover. Fill a large water bottle, nibble on a plain crumpet, knock back some paracetamol and return to bed. You can read this tomorrow. Or just find a copy when this edition of Cherwell inevitably gets lost down the back of a JCR armchair.

But deary me! I know this expression of concern will do little to soothe your hangxious fervour, but perhaps it'll validate your feelings.

We all want to feel justified in what we think and feel. Yet perhaps not when you've chunned in front of your tutor and all you want is Auntie to tell you it's okay and it happens every day. And while it certainly doesn't happen every day, it has certainly happened before. In the near 1,000-year history of the University of Oxford you'd be kidding yourself to think a little bit of a vomit is the worst debauchery the depraved students that haunt these hallowed halls could come up with.

Unless you emptied your ball food burritos onto a rare specimen of alpine succulent, on loan from the Botanical Gardens, I think you'll be okay. And even if you did, those hardy extremophiles will just about cope with your noxious stomach acid. What won't do is for you to allow this singular moment of indulging in life's simple pleasures (which you clearly did, all too excitedly) to ruin any future interaction with your tutor. Let them chuckle to

themselves with that wry smile as they often do; maybe it's at your expense, or maybe they're just reliving the chaos of their youth. Like all awkward situations, it's no use darting your eyes to the side, looking at the floor, and nurturing an atmosphere of guilt and wrongdoing that is more sickening than the act that got you here in the first place. Walk into that next tutorial with your head held high. Own your plant pot (in the emotional sense – no sticky fingers on college property!).

It's about learning to live with no regrets. A cliché, yet true. Accepting there are things in life you wish had played out differently. But what you learn from these moments, how they shape you, and the funny memories they allow for you to look back on is what counts. Your tutor will teach thousands of students over their tenure, but you'll forever be that special one that 'watered' the hydrangeas with a cocktail of rum and tequila. I reckon

that's not a bad legacy to have. I'm not saying all is forgiven; I'd advise staying prompt on your essay submissions and bright-eyed in your tutorial engagements. Alcohol-induced vomiting is what my mother describes as 'drinking to excess' and any academic laziness could lead your tutor to flag you as a welfare concern. You'll suddenly find yourself in an Oxford AA, where the Dean is your sponsor and across from you is the lecturer you always thought slurred their words but you didn't want to point it out. A chilling scenario.

Vomiting on plantlife. A bush. A lawn. Or a potted plant. We've all been there. And while your tutor watching on likely wasn't part of your picture-perfect ball hurrah, you shouldn't shame yourself for it. I hope you managed to enjoy the rest of your night. And good luck in your next tutorial. You can always just say there was something in the food.

Got a problem? Need some advice?

Email lifestylecherwell@gmail.com or message one of our editors!

The great outdoors: Oxford's best green spaces

Faye Chang

As the sun emerges from its miserable winter enclave, so do students from their rooms, shedding the weighted blankets and hot water bottles of the colder months to enjoy the sun. As we flock to revel in these warmer months, here are some of the best natural spaces around Oxford.

Amidst all the stress of tutorials, collections, and exams, it's often easy to forget the world outside of Oxford's academic halls. Hopefully, these suggestions can act as some guidance for your journey during Trinity to venture into the beautiful natural spaces around us - and maybe find some more of your own too!

Port Meadow

Port Meadow is a picturesque location year-round, forming a grazing ground for herds of free-roaming cows and horses. Even when the plains are flooded, the meadows retain their scenic beauty, with swans milling through the long rushes and Ophelia-esque pools of duckweed and algae along the walking path. Through the gate and along the walk, you'll also find a looping trail passing by a copse of mossy trees and Jack by the Hedge flowers. The only caveat: if you do



choose to have a picnic here, beware any inquisitive animals that may come passing by! My own snacks have stayed safe so far, although some of other meadow-enjoyers haven't been quite so lucky.

Oxford Botanic Gardens

Oxford's Botanic Gardens offer a sumptuous range of flora, with over 5,000 different species; it's a peaceful retreat from the action of the city centre. From water lily glasshouses and rock gardens to a literary-themed section and various geographical collections, the Botanic Gardens have something for any taste. The main garden is open from 10am until 5pm daily, with free entry for students if you show your bodcard.

Christ Church Meadows

Well known to students and tourists alike, Christ Church Meadows remains an iconic and reliable escape to the outdoors. The walk along the river or around the field makes for an easy break from being cooped up in the library - it's open in daylight hours throughout the year, granting ample time to let the sun sink in. Bounded by the rivers Cherwell and Isis, the meadows are also perfect for watching boats row by, with Boat House Island only a short walk away. For your own peace of mind, though,

I would suggest finding a quieter path to walk on during Torpids season.

Fellows' Garden, Merton College

Boasting a dedicated team of gardeners, Merton's Fellows' Garden is a delight in all seasons - in spring, the lawns are lined with irises, almond trees, forget-me-nots and snowdrops, among many others. Robins and magpies hop their way through the bushes, and squirrels scamper their way around arching tree trunks. While the lawn in the garden has ample space to sit and spread out a picnic blanket, the iconic Tolkien's Table also offers stone benches to rest on, overlooking the garden on one side, and Christ Church Meadows on the other. A short walk away, on the other side of Merton, you'll also find the sakura, daffodils and tulips in Grove, with benches dotted around to study, or simply indulge in the view.

Addison's Walk, Magdalen College

Perhaps overshadowed by the Deer Park, this quaint, wooded walk around the back of the college is a lovely immersion in the beauty of nature. With various sitting spots, some carved from old tree trunks, dotting the way, it's excellently suited for a slow amble along the river and through the trees. All varieties of flowers, from harebell to heather, line the path, across which the occasional heron or mallard might swoop.

Iffley Lock

Right by the canal, Iffley Lock was initially built as a weir to prevent flooding and ease the process of navigating the river. While it still

serves this function now, it's also a picturesque location of willows and stone bridges, perfect for a river-side wander. If you venture slightly further towards the highway strip, you'll also find a gorgeous heath filled with shrubs and blossoming hawthorn - if you don't mind the occasional rush of cars passing by, it's a beautiful spot for picnics, flower-picking, and frolicking galore.

Wytham Woods

A prime bird-watching location for all avian enthusiasts, Wytham (pronounced *why-tum*) Woods is one of the most researched areas of woodland globally. You'll find yourself steeped in a long-abiding natural history: areas of the woods can be dated back to the last Ice Age. Spanning over 1000 acres, Wytham promises much to explore.

Bagley Wood

Saving what is, in my opinion, the best for last, any burden that the half hour bus trip from the city centre to Bagley Wood poses is dwarfed by the beauty and serenity of the space. Even on a misty, clouded morning, the nature reserve is full of whimsy: from the hanging bird feeders adorning the sides of tree trunks, to the abundance of bluebell patches and moss.

For those who delight in the quiet procession of life around them, Bagley Wood is also home to snails, slugs, frogs, and all assortments of little creatures, along with the occasional woodpecker and owl amongst the steady chirping of morning birds.

Christ Church Meadow image credit: Danny Nicholson / CC-BY-ND 2.0 via Flickr



You may not have made the BNOC list, but we think you're the bee's knees.



There is always fun to be found, just chuck a few rogue spanners into the works.



Suns out, guns out (but put the dogs away).



Today is a beautiful day to go full menace mode. You have it in you.



Stop making mountains out of molehills - it is never that serious.



For the love of God, stop reading *Cherwell* and start revising.

Soul stew: Compulsive movement

Georgia Short explores the nuances of placing an emphasis on exercise...

Content warning: disordered eating

Frankly - and, granted, a little oddly - I'd quite been looking forward to writing an installment about compulsive movement. There does seem to be a general lack of awareness around this subject and initially I was more concerned about restricting my remarks to four hundred words. Now I'm on word number fifty, I no longer think this is going to be an issue.

What is there to say about compulsive movement, other than that it's boring? It's so boring I feel guilty at the thought of anyone reading this, granting it a minute - if not less! - of their attention. It's so boring that while you're doing it, you're too bored to even feel sad and frustrated that you're doing it.

Compulsive exercise as a term might sound somewhat familiar. When I Googled it, the first study that came up started with some quotations from Eminem talking about his running addiction in

Men's Health. In the same interview, he describes exercise as a 'good' addiction, before going on to mention that he 'ran to the point where [he] started to get injured'. For me, compulsive exercise stopped feeling 'good' - both physically and mentally - pretty quickly. Every time I exercised, too much and on too little fuel, I felt noticeably worse, which was an issue because it made me worse at compulsive exercise. The dissociation here is recognisable: when my Achilles' tendons became inflamed from excessive walking, I walked to the furthest Boots I knew on the other side of town, to buy compression bandages. But primarily to get my steps in.

Remarkably, there is yet another gradation of bonkers beyond this, which extends beyond exercise and into just... moving. Moving, at all, or even simply exertion: unloading the dishwasher somehow requires pacing in circles around the kitchen, laptop work is to be done standing, and in the car you sit - sitting! Dear God! - bolt upright, so your muscles

don't get the chance to relax. It is the atomization of daily life, and it was mind-melting.

So that's another installment done. I was going to include a paragraph about the redemptive power of yoga and how momentous it is, in a

situation like the one above, to actively focus on what your body is feeling for, perhaps, thirty minutes, given that your entire belief system is structured around ignoring and suppressing this at all costs. But it turns out, I was too sad and frustrated.



♎ Libra



Keep it going babe, the universe is sending you a reward very very soon...

♏ Scorpius



Do not mess with anything this week; things are looking shaky.

♐ Sagittarius



Blast 'Espresso' in the library and sing along loudly. The people will understand. It's tough out here.

♑ Capricornus



Go gallivanting. Gaze at some stars. Kiss a few strangers.

♒ Aquarius



Hey honeybun, take care of yourself this exam season. We demand it.

♓ Pisces



Raise the stakes. Gamble all your shoes and mugs away with strangers.

Byte-sized buzz: The craze for short-form media

Reuben Meadows

It feels essential to state that 'short-form' media, in its clips and images, is inevitably never a short-term experience. We've all opened our phones searching for some momentary respite, only to look up after what feels like seconds to see the hours have flown by, a deadline has been missed, your window plant has died, and the seasons have changed. Our phones provide immediate escapism, an instant detachment from an intellectual hole we have dug for ourselves in some dark corner of our degrees. We used to read books; now

“Is sharing Reels simply a new form of communication, or should we decry this new way of expressing friendship?”

we just close the eleven SOLO tabs and open Instagram Reels.

Oh Reels! Where would I be without you? Probably more in control of my life. I was never one for the Tik Tok craze, since the Gen Z energy smothering it reminded me too much of a Musical.ly childhood (and that's trauma I'm yet to unpack, trauma that can be left behind in the world of Reels).

Snuggly tucked into my Instagram homepage, countless worlds zoom past at my fingertips; the best National Trust spots in Somerset that you must visit this summer, three mistakes you're making with bacon and an absurdist collage of mournful racoons staring out of windows to Olivia Rodrigo's 'Driver's Licence'. As you can see I've kept these examples intentionally vague – allowing someone to scroll through your Reels feels as violating as finding out your parents have been through your browser history.

I used to spend hours staying up chatting to friends on my first phone, an Alcatel Pixel that didn't have the capacity to download apps. Now my friend and I exchange Reels about bowel movements and tarot card readings without a word passing between us. Liking it suffices. Sharing with someone something they'll relate to, find enjoyment in, or take offence to – well, that takes a personal understanding of who they are. Is sharing Reels simply a new form of communication, or should we decry this new way of expressing friendship? Humanity survived the transition from

stamping letters to instant, direct messaging. So why not this?

Perhaps because its speed and pace makes us prone to overload and overstimulation. In no time,

we'll all be down-

loading com-

pressed Reel

compendi-

ums into our

brains at 1000

TB a second.

In my degree we

(my tutors) ask

whether there

is a limit

to growth

we should

not exceed.

Never mind

all that

economic

bullsh*t, is

there a limit to

the amount of con-

tent we can con-

sume? I can just

about cram a few

hundred references

into my mind palace

before feeling like an

academic aneurysm is

approaching. Yet, how

come I can watch a

few hundred Reels

(is that a shocking

amount? It's certainly

an honest

one) and feel nothing

but glee, before the

Reels come-down hits hard.

My essays remain unwrit-

ten and emails unanswered.

The reason is dopamine, and he's

a mean guy. I give it agency only

to abandon all responsibility

for my own lack of self-control.

Over the past 20 years, young

people have been spending

more and more time on our

phones, and yet we face the same challenges and daily to-do lists. While the scrollaholic may struggle to complete these tasks, more

“If I put the Reels aside and took a break from that infamous 'blue light' ... perhaps I'd have more energy to talk to my friends with words, not just Reels.”

often students are getting less sleep as a sacrifice to time spent on social media. Flicking through BeReels, losing ourselves in a Youtube Shorts rabbit-hole, or in a Vinted shopping basket – it's often the last thing we do before going to bed and the first thing we wake up to in the morning. Perhaps this reveals more about my own behaviours than I'd care to admit, but I am not the only one. Chronically sleep deprived, and yet doing nothing to change it. I'm that guy face-down in the library or precariously swaying in the back of a lecture. Far from ground-breaking, but if I put the Reels aside and took a break from that infamous 'blue light' (did you just roll your eyes?), then perhaps I'd have more energy to talk to my friends with words, not just Reels.

Cherpsers 1

Cherpsers 2

Cherwell sent two lucky readers on a blind date. Find out how it went – from both perspectives...

My first impression of my date was that she was sitting alone; she had a certain mystique about her. Though I was unaware she was my date when I scanned the room, my neck craned back to her. Once I sat down and she asked me what I'd ordered, the mystique became warmth. We met for coffee at The Missing Bean. We each mostly talked about ourselves. Our mutual hatred for the National Trust's exorbitant prices stood out. The highlight of the date was when she earnestly asked me to make a supermarket tier

list. She was adamant there were right and wrong answers. Much to my relief, my list was acceptable.

The most embarrassing moment occurred when I trod on her foot when giving her a departing hug. My initial impressions definitely held true as the date progressed, but it was complemented by an endearing bubblyness. I was slightly awed by the number of hobbies and interests she had. I think I'd be open to getting to know her better, because the date was simply a nice time.

First, a confession: Cherwell's cupid accidentally attached the name of my date to an email chain, presenting an opportunity to do some preliminary research (read: stalking) of which I naturally availed myself. Therefore it would be somewhat misleading to speak of first impressions, other than that he was taller than I expected (win), wearing Dr Martens (even bigger win) and had shorter hair. We met at the Missing Bean and, after some initial criticism on my part for his choice of regular milk, not oat, we got into the nitty-gritty of poetry (breaking the

mould for an Oxford conversation topic), our degrees and the perils of supermarket shopping. I was somewhat gutted that he did not bring up ultimate frisbee, a key point about him I gleaned from some region of the internet, but we most certainly did not run out of things to say. Somehow, he managed to stand on my toe as we hugged goodbye but, as I was also wearing the aforementioned Docs, I hardly felt a thing. In three words: engaging, chatty, intellectual. No second date on the cards, but in typical Oxford fashion I bumped into him on St Giles a mere four days later! It's such a small world, isn't it?

Looking for love?

Email lifestylecherwell@gmail.com or message one of our editors!

LOVE EMPIRE

The best iced lattes in Oxford

Theo Mama-Kahn

Summer has arrived! Well, not quite, but as the weather picks up, more and more of us will be needing icy cold beverages for fuel and refreshment. Fortunately, my iced coffee addiction is non-seasonal, and I've been generous enough to try a plethora of iced lattes and rank them so you don't have to.

10. Pret A Manger

Price: £3.85 (or £30/month); Taste: 5/10; Experience: 5/10; Overall: 5/10.

Perhaps it's because I drank way too many of these when I had a subscription, but I really don't like the taste of Pret's coffee anymore. However, if you have a subscription, this is the most economical option.

9. Starbucks

Price: £3.95; Taste: 6/10; Experience: 4/10; Overall: 5/10.

The Starbucks on Cornmarket Street not having seats is a shame. That being said, I consider Starbucks' speciality to be their extremely sweet and customisable frappuccinos, not their basic coffee, which is nothing special and generally overpriced.

8. Taylors

Price: £3.80; Taste: 7/10; Experience: 6/10; Overall: 7/10.

This is where the list gets good! Taylors' coffee is nice and their cafés can be found all over Oxford, which is great for an independent shop, but I have nothing too special to say about the iced lattes in particular.

7. Vaults & Garden

Price: £3.80; Taste: 7/10; Experience: 8/10; Overall: 7/10.

The iconic Vaults & Garden café right next to the Rad Cam is a must-visit for its delicious

food and beautiful interior, but their iced lattes are great too. I would probably not go here just to get a coffee, but if you wanted some food or a pretty space to sit along with it, then this is your best bet.

6. Black Sheep Coffee

Price: £4.09 (£2 on Mondays with UNIDAYS); Taste: 7/10; Experience: 7/10; Overall: 7/10.

Personally, I only

ever go here on Mondays to take advantage of the student discount, because I think the drinks are otherwise overpriced. I really like their digital kiosks and the fact that you can choose which beans you want your drink to be made with.

5. Joe & the Juice

Price: £4.30; Taste: 9/10; Experience: 7/10; Overall: 7/10.

The iced lattes from here are creamy and tasty, but unjustifiably expensive. It is also relatively far from the city centre, located at the back of Westgate. However, if you are willing to go the distance and to pay more for your coffee, then I do recommend it.

4. Ole & Steen

Price: £3.85; Taste: 8/10; Experience: 8/10; Overall: 8/10.

Ole & Steen makes a really tasty iced latte, as well as sweet treats. I never have trouble finding a seat there. It is quite pricey, but if you download their app you can earn free drinks.

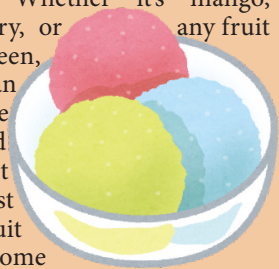


Easy vegan sorbet

Try our recipe for a simple vegan dessert...

Desserts are hard to make vegan. There are so many factors: eggs, butter, gelatin... with how precise baking needs to be, a vegan dessert is often limited to bad versions of our classic desserts using vegan substitutions. Yet there is another path: sorbet. Whether it's mango, raspberry, or any fruit in between, you can make a good sorbet with just the fruit and some sugar.

Boil simple syrup by adding twice as much water to the amount of sugar you want to add and boiling until dissolved. Take 500g of your frozen fruit of choice and put in a food processor. Add as much simple syrup as you want and blend until thick and smooth. At this stage, you can add things like mint, lemon, or honey, and add more fruit if the mixture is watery or thin. Put the sorbet into a freezer safe container or bag. Here, you can swirl multiple flavors or keep your sorbet plain. Leave the container in the freezer overnight, then scoop and serve!



Sushi Bowl: A sensational start

Amanda Li

There is a new sushi restaurant in town! More than just another Wasabi and Itsu, Sushi Bowl in the Covered Market is a well-located new spot for a roll or poke bowl on the go. On the corner of the Covered Market, next to the fruit stand and Sartorelli's, the restaurant opened fairly recently yet has already been getting busier and busier. I stopped by on a Saturday afternoon in search of a little treat to celebrate finishing my collections.

Sushi Bowl had only been open for a few hours by the time I arrived on their opening day. The fish looked fresh and bowls were flying out the door. I was most intrigued by the salmon poke bowl displayed on the counter – pieces of salmon and avocado arranged into a flower-like swirl on top of warm sushi rice. They had other bowls with more ingredients, but I thought the salmon-avocado bowl best fit my cravings. Sushi Bowl also has a refrigerated shelf offering other Japanese foods: steamed and fried gyoza, mochi with ice cream, and even fried chicken. All the food was made fresh and some even fresh to order, with veggie options in both sushi and sides.

Sushi Bowl is a grab-and-go restaurant, with the fridge and counter taking up most of the space on the corner. Compared to most of the other restaurants' large seating areas within, it certainly was cramped, with the only seating being some small tables outside of the restaurant. The indoor space was still cozy, well-lit, and it was certainly entertaining to watch people come and go outside. Unlike Wasabi

and Itsu, which make their food in the morning and set it out until the night, Sushi Bowl consistently cooked throughout the day and was willing to make food on the spot, which alleviated my worries of having unfresh fish.

The owner, Yaning Xiao, was just setting out samples of her chicken gyoza. The tantalizing savory scent had me take a bite; immediately I was hooked. The gyoza had umami and a bit of broth, with a crunchy outside – just what a gyoza should be. I ordered a full order of six immediately and Xiao quickly made a batch of gyoza for me. They were hot out of the fryer and stayed warm on a chilly day all the way to Christ Church Meadows. Despite being a rush job, the gyoza were just as good as the sample. The sushi bowl's rice was not too sticky, and the fish was cold and fresh, with the perfect texture. Paired with the avocado and a bit of soy sauce, it was delicious and not too heavy on sauce like many other sushi bowls. The fact

3. Society Café

Price: £3.70; Taste: 9/10; Experience: 9/10; Overall: 9/10.

Definitely one of my favourite coffee shops, Society Café has a wide choice of beans. Although it does get busy inside, they do have outdoor seats too, which are great now that the weather is improving.

2. Colombia Coffee Roasters

Price: £4.50; Taste: 10/10; Experience: 8/10; Overall: 9/10.

You can really tell that they care about their coffee here, and this is reflected in the incredible taste of their drinks. Unfortunately, they don't have that many seats and their iced latte is quite pricey, but for a takeaway while you shop around the Covered Market, there is nowhere better.

1. Caffè Nero

Price: £3.75 (or £3.19 with student discount); Taste: 9/10; Experience: 9/10; Overall: 9/10.

I always find myself coming back here because the iced lattes are just that delicious, refreshing and creamy. All of the Caffè Neros in Oxford are nice spaces to work in, but the one inside Blackwells is a particular favourite. They also have a loyalty system: if you get the app and link it to your uni email, you get 15% off, and every fifth drink is free if you use a reusable cup.

that the bowl didn't have mayonnaise made me feel like it was more authentic. The overall experience of ordering and eating good sushi in less than ten minutes was phenomenal, and I was so happy to catch the restaurant on its first day.

Xiao and her husband run Sushi Bowl as a family business. Their daughter attends university here; the restaurant is connected to the community. You can see the love they have for both their business and their craft in every dish. The owners source Scottish salmon and pacific tuna, pairing high-quality ingredients with great techniques learned from years in the restaurant business. If you're in the Covered Market, why not stop by just to try one of their side dishes, or make a quick meal of it – you can't go wrong!

Image credit: Amanda Li.

Food: 4/5 Price: 5/5 Atmosphere: 5/5

Overall: 4.5/5



Balancing Act

George Exley brings you another lesson in healthy eating...



As a medical student, I've been lectured at great length about fluid balance, detailing how the body is able to maintain homeostatic control of electrolyte concentrations through exquisite hormonal balance. What it all really boils down to is matching intake with all the outgoing via sweating, breathing and excretion. The common advice heard from the Eatwell guide, produced by Public Health England, suggests that 6-8 cups of fluids is sufficient to replenish all losses. This, of course, is a rather arbitrary amount and in fact varies significantly based on levels of exercise, age and environmental factors.

Some foods are predominantly composed of water while other (tastier) items have significant amounts of salt. These will have opposing actions on your hydration levels, with many people unknowingly finding themselves in a constant imbalance. Hydrating candidates such as watermelon, cucumbers and strawberries will no doubt easily spring to mind, however, fewer people readily think of their more parching counterparts. The recommended daily intake of salt is 6g, which may at first glance seem manageable from browsing labels in the supermarket. Eating out is a different story, unfortunately, with high street chains far exceeding this often in a single serving; the Spicy Giuseppe from Pizza Express contains a whopping 8.4g! Salt is a flavour enhancer and as such is added in large quantities to processed foods in order to improve the flavour. When considering this, controlling your intake becomes simple: consume more whole foods and choose the low-sodium version, where available.

Hydration is becoming increasingly commercialised, with the popularity of electrolyte products amongst non-athletes skyrocketing. 'Electrolytes' is a term that is often thrown around in common vernacular, but specifically refers to minerals that are electrically conductive when dissolved into fluids. These are commonly sold as sports drinks and sachets, labelled as restoring all essential ions, although in most cases consumption is entirely superfluous and the same contents are obtained naturally through your diet. Instead, use responsibly in instances where you may be exercising for longer than 90 minutes or are particularly dehydrated, as they may reduce cramping and nausea.

Life without sport: Let's talk about injuries

Rebecca Pearson

As Roland Garros looms, an increasing number of reports claim that Rafael Nadal is facing a steady amount of injury 'limitations'. At 37 years old, the 'King of Clay' is tackling questions and fears surrounding his body's capacity to continue playing tennis. In a similar state of precarity, a week ago, Andy Murray was spotted on his Instagram returning to the tennis court, newly-recovered from two damaged ligaments in his left ankle. Tennis is known for being high-impact on the body, catalysing the discussion around whether both Nadal and Murray are nearing their retirement from the sport. Yet, their defiance against their own physical clocks and injury risks actually exposes something else: a fear of life without sport.

Student athletes also know this fear all too well and, yet, it is scarcely discussed. When hours of tireless travelling, training, and competing becomes your daily norm, one awkward slip, crunch, or click can send life into disarray.

An OULTC member told *Cherwell* about their experience of sports injury, and it presents a brutal reality: "It's hard to realise how much our bodies are relied upon to get through life: walking to the shops,



joining social events, getting books from libraries... When this is all taken away, and you can't even play the sport that you grew up loving, nothing's much fun. You then feel so crazy about it happening to you in the first place – one moment you're fine, and the next you feel a pop and your tendon has partially ruptured."

Research in sports psychology emphasises that a 'strong athletic identity could have certain benefits, such as sport commitment and motivation, aiding confidence and organisation, 'but that strong and exclusive athletic identity could be detrimental to athlete well-being at times of injury, de-selection, and career termination.' (Eubank et al., 2020). Psychological highs and lows

are anticipated, yet unpredictable, and without proper access to sports physiotherapy, injuries can become increasingly long-term, with niggles lingering.

Sport's psychological attraction lies in its ability to offer a unique opportunity for mental concentration and escape. A Psychologist told *Cherwell*: "You're focusing on that specific moment: the ball coming towards you. Sport fosters an opportunity for connection with other team members and training partners, whilst simultaneously taking the emphasis away from competitive social interactions."

Read the full article at Cherwell.org
Image Credit: Carine06/CC BY-SA 2.0 DEED via Wikimedia Commons.

The death of the FA cup

Sebastian Page

For the majority of people, Joe Ironside could be a next-door neighbour, or an aptly named blacksmith. For myself and perhaps just ten thousand other people around the world, the name is synonymous with cult hero status. On a miserable afternoon in January 2022, he pivoted on his weaker foot, and calmly swept the ball past Martin Dúbravka to hand Newcastle one of just two losses at St. James' Park for the calendar year. Myself, alongside the fellow Cambridge supporters were sent into raptures up in the famous away end. I'm hugging strangers and someone's set off a yellow smoke grenade at my sixteen-year-old feet. The magic of the FA cup is a sentiment that all fans of teams below the Premier League hope to experience, and the financial magic provided by a big team are the dreams of every team owner.

The FA cup, which first took place in the 1871-72 season, and once won by Oxford University in 1874 after a victory over Royal Engineers, boasts some staggering prize money figures. But for the lower league teams, these figures are dwarfed by the potential for TV revenue and gate receipts. The FA cup uniquely enforces evenly split gate receipts between the home and away sides, the only anomaly being an even more fa-

vourable 55/45 split in favour of non-league sides when they play away against teams in the Football League (clubs in the top four divisions). This year's fairytale run by Maidstone United of the Vanarama South (England's 6th tier) to the final sixteen, or fifth round proper, earned them around £350,000 in prize money, but owner Simon Ash expected a total revenue of nearly £800,000 after gate receipts from an away fixture at Championship side Coventry City (where I unfortunately watched a first half hat-trick from Ellis Simms put Elokobi's side to the sword). This £800,000 does not even include the £125,000 offered for the rights to an ITV broadcast of the fixture.

The competition rules dictate that should a fixture end in a draw, the tie must be replayed at the other team's stadium, however, from the fifth round proper fixture to the final, fixtures will instead go to extra time and penalties, as fixture congestion has become an increasingly contentious issue in regard to player health. These replays offer teams like Maidstone the opportunity to earn these huge paydays, often reviving a club's financial status. Maidstone operated at a £200,000 loss in the 2022-23 season, so this run will extend the club's lifespan for the next four years, regardless of any future money earned, a guaranteed future that will even make professional sides jealous.

However, on the 18th of April, the FA announced that all replays after the first round proper will be scrapped. Since Championship sides like Coventry City enter in the second round, and Premier League sides enter in the third, this makes it incredibly unlikely for a minnow like Maidstone to draw the lucrative away fixture away that could preserve them for years.

Beyond the financial side, the scrapping of replays denies fans and players a possible once in a lifetime opportunity to witness the atmosphere that most Premier League fans regularly take for granted, or even a Wembley visit. Many Cambridge United fans like myself will recount that day in Newcastle as one of the highlights of their years of support, and players share similar sentiments. Manager George Elokobi told Kent Online that: 'The magic of the FA cup is still alive. It's about showcasing our skills and coming up against a fantastic Championship side in a fantastic stadium.' One of his star forwards and Grenadian international captain, Jacob Berkeley-Agyepong, shared a similar view, telling me via Instagram messages that 'the run will live with [him] forever', and that '[he] wants to go on another one'. The 'special' experience even led him to 'tears of joy' for the first time in his career after both the Ipswich and Coventry fixtures.

Read the full article at Cherwell.org

Hassan's final: St Catz defeat New College 7-0

Raghav Chari

St Catherine's College soundly thrashed New College in the Hassan's cup final on Saturday 27th April. The match, played at the Oxford City ground in Marston, was a close contest until half-time, after which Catz scored six goals to take the cup home with a canter.

The Hassan's final: St Catz vs New College, the clash of two titans. College football has few greater encounters than this. It felt much like it was out of the rhetorical question: the teams were good, but could they do it on a cold rainy afternoon in Marston? Catz took kickoff and immediately took possession too. The first half in general was characterised by rather steady build-up play by Catz, who were especially strong through the wings, making many runs and constantly pressing the New College back line. The New College defence did a good job warding off the attempts made by Catz early on, and most of the first half was very tightly contested by both teams, with New College being right in the game and making a few runs on the break. Slowly, though, the Catz team began to push through. A few shots were made, and then a shot on target. Finally, right before halftime, Catz made a play through the centre and scored their first goal in the 39th minute.

After that, the floodgates opened. Within a 14-minute passage of play, from the 58th to the 72nd minute, Catz scored thrice in rapid succession, each one coming from the result of aggressive build-up play and some fine finishing from the Catz strikers. And then, for good measure, they scored twice again after that, in the

81st and 83rd minutes. By this point the New College defenders looked well and truly defeated and exhausted. The second half, which Catz had so completely dominated, saw them saunter to victory assuredly.

The point of difference between the two sides was their respective midfields. In truth, in the first half, Catz only had a slight advantage in possession, and New College was able to wrest control reasonably often. But where the Catz midfielders were able to make use of possession, making plays and being dynamic both defensively and offensively, the New College midfield were rather ordinary and none of their presses resulted in genuine pressure on the Catz defence. The New College midfield was ineffective in assisting their own defence against Catz's high line, resulting in the New defence having to absorb all the pressure. And once the defence buckled, it was a goalfest.

Catz supporters were in greater evidence compared to their New counterparts. One Catz supporter, who did not wish to be named, told *Cherwell*: "We've got a strong squad... we came second to Keble in the league and lost to Balliol in Cuppers, probably were better than them though". They added that they were "happy with [this season]". Spirits were high in the Catz camp all throughout. Captain Jake Wong, speaking after the victory, told *Cherwell*: "We're absolutely buzzing, happy to have any bit of silverware." He added that he was excited for the celebrations later, stating: "I believe we're going to get free drinks for our medals in the JCR!" All in all, Catz walked away with a comfortable and well-celebrated victory.

Image Credit: Raghav Chari.



Results Round-up

Swimming - Cuppers

Hertford/Lincoln - 124	Keble - 110
St Catherine's/Jesus - 124	University - 107
St Edmund Hall (1) - 112	Worcester - 107

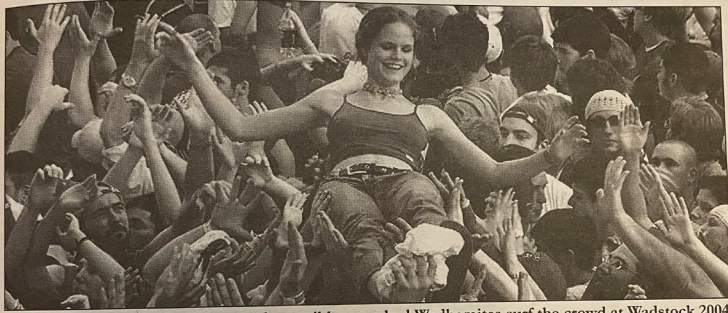
Cricket - Cuppers fixtures round 1

Worcester vs Hertford	Keble vs Corpus Christi
Jesus vs SEH	Kellog vs Linacre
University vs LMH	Mansfield vs Balliol
Brasenose vs St Peters	St Hilda's vs Somerville / St Anne's

Tennis - Cuppers fixtures

Magdalen vs Keble	Merton vs Christ Church
Jesus vs University	St Hugh's vs St Hilda's
Exeter vs Somerville	SEH vs New College

Surfing and rock at Wadstock



Live music and a carpet of beer made sensibly anoraked Wadhamites surf the crowd at Wadstock 2004

Lucie Cowie

Another Wadstock has eclectically rocked suitably anoraked Wadhamites and their lucky guests. The College's annual music festival took place on the evening of May Day. Spontaneous crowd-surfing, an accumulating carpet of empty beer bottles, and (possibly related) raucous dancing were interrupted by unique diversions such as competitive tequila croquet.

Oxford's resident non-cheese embracing community was treated to a schizophrenic musical extravaganza. The uniformly blond-tipped, indie blandness of boy-band rockers The Trend was sandwiched between bizarre ambient sounds and exciting laptop electronica from a lab-coated duo.

As darkness and, for many, new levels of drunkenness, descended, the musical talent emerged. Experimental collective Confidential filled the dance floor

with their funky breakbeats and the stunning vocals of lead singer Simone. The Shimonos kept the party mood going with their covers of Franz Ferdinand's 'Take me out', and the obscenely popular Busted classic 'Year 3000'.

However, Kilroy's diva-esque singer Autumn and the band's diverse fusion of funk, soul, jazz and samba pushed the upbeat atmosphere up a gear, leaving the audience in impatient expectation of next year's offerings.

The Oxford calendar is filled with a number of must-see events that students scramble to see year upon year, and few of them can claim to be as popular as Wadstock. This week's archive column takes a look back at Wadstock '04 – meaning the festival is over twenty years old.

Clearly, selling tickets has never been a problem for the one-day music festival which showcases student artists. Those lucky few who were able to get tickets were treated to bands such as "The Shimonos", "Confidential", and "The Trend" – I wonder where they all are now.

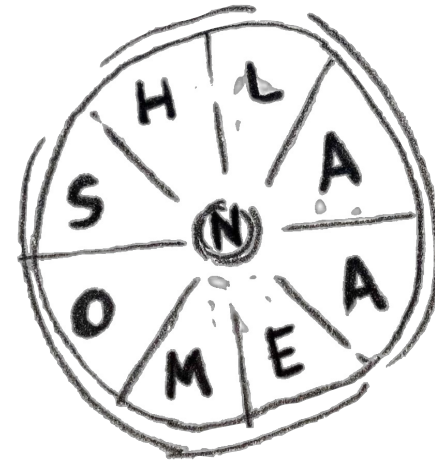
Also slightly funny to note about this one is the nod to Franz Ferdinand's Take me out being played at the festival – a song that had come out earlier that year and is now nothing short of an indie classic. It's good to see that Busted's "classic" Year 3000 was also getting the level of praise it deserves back in 2004.

One also has to wonder about the date of the festival. Given that in 2004 it took place on the evening of May Day (I'm not sure if this refers to the evening before or after the Magdalen choir singing). Regardless, for those who did go I'm sure it was a case of sleep schedules going out the window in favour of

some proper, let loose fun.

It's important that the talent of Oxford's rich music scene continues to be appreciated and developed. There's such a diverse and strong set of skills at the University, and fostering that allows students an escape from the academic rigour that haunts our lives too often.

Wordwheel by Nathaniel Read

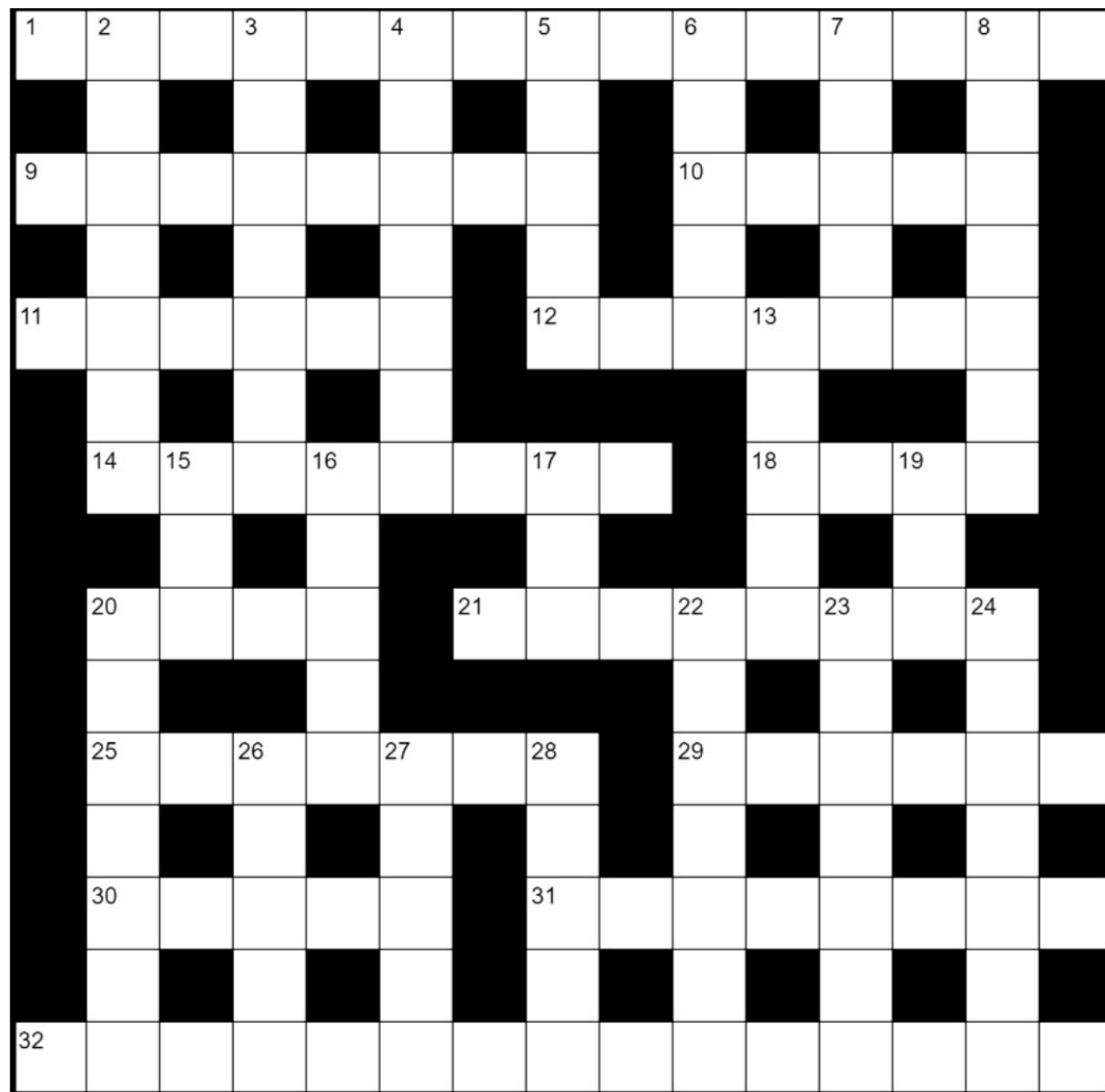


Find as many words as you can. There are two words that use all the letters. One of them is Oxford-related.

Good: 25
Very good: 41
Excellent: 49
Outstanding: 60+

Brought to you from the **Cherwell** archives
by Adam Saxon

Cryptic Crossword by Jack Meredith



- DOWN**
- A grandma with no daughter organised one of these (7)
 - Snuggled nude, shuffled around, snoring and first light (7)
 - Not the first merchant frenzied for cut of money (7)
 - Finance what fellow, cow, and scarecrow do? (5)
 - Sea battered canoe (5)
 - I'm Oscar – a new, rising girl's name (5)

- Former partner hot? Sort out urges! (7)
- Play is OK, and fourth from Wilkes Booth (5)
- Arbiter that withholds your ID? (3)
- House up north has one grand toilet (5)
- Trim top off money tree (3)
- Regret: brutal without bounds (3)
- President operating below Navy's standards (7)

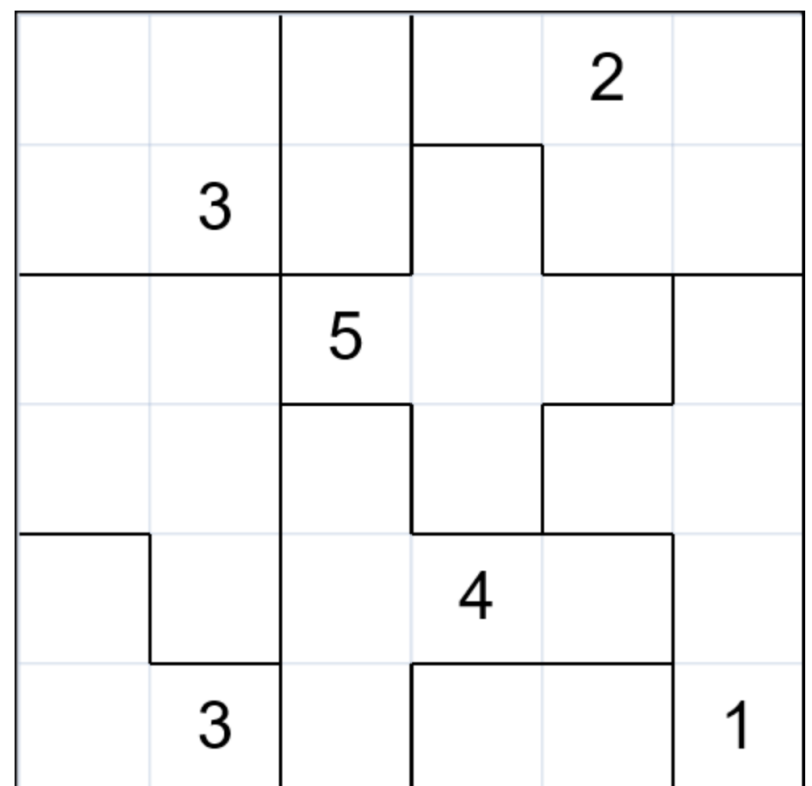
- Deer squashed by motorcar I bought (7)
- Dash to my MP after small sign of a problem (7)
- Twister divided a party (7)
- Asian country broadcast Parasite (5)
- Metropolitan bachelor into pot (5)
- Scour undergrowth (5)

- ACROSS**
- Make merry! Describe the village

Week 1 Cryptic Crossword answers:

- Across:**
- Scans
 - Talent
 - Alas
 - Brandish
 - Goat
 - Decide against
 - Stiletto heels
 - Gala
 - Sin taxes
 - Bake
 - Stares
 - Desks
- Down:**
- Hairiest
 - Bean
 - Strident
 - Arch
 - Sanguine
 - Data
 - Ill-fated
 - Goodness
 - Soldered
 - Alan
 - Saps
 - Ajar

Suguru by Miranda Devine



- wine (5,3,4,3)
- A swing set is where they play? (4,4)
- Manage backward hotel for period (5)
- Interminable movie about robbers' start and end of casino caper (6)
- Looking back, engineers I know are not as straight (7)
- Sloppily dive into feast- primitive! (8)
- Rowers are nothing since swallowing river (4)
- Jay and another bird with drooping cheek (4)
- Stocky stupid lot (8)

- Shows embarrassment in first and last across (7)
- Comment on the subject of famous Cuban? (6)
- Disappointment when damp IBS spilled on queen for all to see (5)
- Concrete cladding victim makes counterclaim (8)
- Previously fashionable, and an Oxbridge achievement, to expose oneself rarely (4,2,1,4,4)