

Cherwell

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on pages 12–13:



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2024: *Cherwell's*
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LACK OF TRANSPARENCY: OXFORD'S KNOWN AND UN- KNOWN DONORS

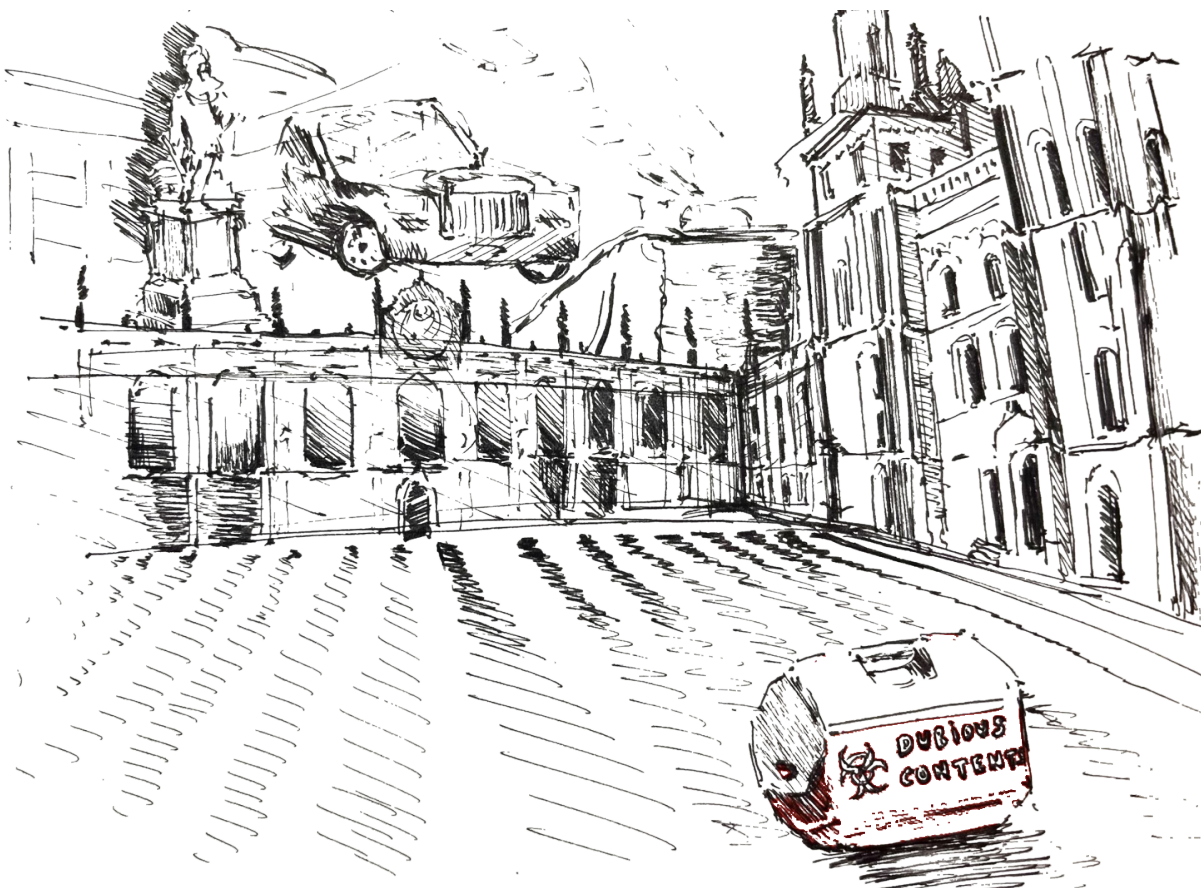
Enrique Normand Velarde
and Joseph Munn report.

Today, the names Saïd, Blavatnik, and Rothermere are as prominent in the landscape of Oxford's institutions as the long-standing names of Rhodes, Ashmole, and Radcliffe. Until 2022, the Sackler name, now marked by its association with the opioid epidemic, graced the titles of six different institutions, posts, and funds related to the University of Oxford.

In parallel, but with a much older legacy, the former Codrington Library of All Souls was also renamed in 2020 after the College was forced to reckon with the history of slavery tied to the donor, and the funds endowed to them in 1710. Both new and old, these often controversial names are emblazoned across the University's most important institutions as rewards for the largesse of donors. They continue to stand as a testament to the University's chronic reliance on external funding to finance its operations and maintain its status as a world-leading university.

When it comes to external funding, the University has had perennial issues with transparency. All major donations are accepted after an opaque, University-led process of due diligence; some donations – including very large ones – remain anonymous to the public altogether.

The University assures that "all significant new funders or new gifts or grants from existing funders are reviewed by the Committee to Review Donations and Research Funding



(CRDRF)." The CRDRF conducts due diligence to review external funding and donations. The University describes it as a "robust, independent system taking legal, ethical and reputational issues into consideration before gifts are accepted." Yet the review process isn't transparent – and approximately 700 entities including private companies are on a 'Pre-Approved list' to bypass it altogether.

The University's external funding

arrangements have been severely scrutinised, culminating in repeated calls for greater transparency from both academics and members of the student body.

Scandals, investigations, and reputation laundering

Since 2022, the University has featured prominently in investigations conducted by an independent outlet, openDemocracy, into sour-

es of external funds and donations received by UK higher education institutions. In March 2022, it was reported that sanctioned Russian oligarch, Vladimir Potanin "had donated \$150,000 to an Oxford University fellowship scheme named in his honour" as a response to a *Cherwell* report on the oligarch's £3m endowment for an Earth Sciences fund in the University.

Artwork by Joe Walford.

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All three major committees pass motions declaring Un- ion is 'institutionally racist'

Selina Chen reports.

The Oxford Union's Consultative Committee (CC), Standing Committee (TSC), and Secretary's Committee each passed motions on Monday noting that the Union is "institutionally racist" following allegations of Islamophobic comments.

Graduate Officer Sarah Rana resigned following ex-president-elect Ebrahim Osman-Mowafy's allegation that the Clerk – a colloquial term for Acting Returning Officer – of a Union tribunal panel said: "we're going to remove Ebrahim [...] he's not gonna appoint a hijabi girl as his Chief of Staff."

Rana, one of three hijabi women on committee and the seconder of the CC motion, wrote in her resignation letter: "I cannot in good conscience symbolically be part of this committee that fails to protect its Arab and Muslims members... I feel unsafe, disillusioned, used, and extremely disturbed."

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NEWS SHORTS



Oxford study finds having a local pub makes you happier

A study by an Oxford psychology professor found that people who have a local pub are more likely to trust other members of their community and are more socially engaged. Professor Robin Dunbar led a study into the functional benefits of modest alcohol consumption. He argued that, although alcohol-related conditions linked to excessive drinking costs the NHS money, having a local pub reduces the impact of loneliness and depression. Last year the World Health Organisation stated there is not safe level of drinking – but Dunbar believes it has a net benefit to society.

Voi's Oxford contract extended

Oxfordshire County Council has extended its contract with Voi – an e-scooter company – until May 2026. There are currently over 850 e-scooters available for hire and they have been used to travel more than a combined 2.5 million miles. General manager for Voi UK James Bolton said: "We are thrilled at the prospect of operating in Oxford for a further two year. Meanwhile, a recent Oxfess stated: "Men in suits on a Voi will never not be the funniest thing" – evidencing Voi's popularity among students.

Inclusive music festival promoting "otherness" runs in Oxford

A festival celebrating "otherness" was held in the Modern Art Oxford gallery. Its title, 'No. 80', derived from a UK census option for people who did not identify with any of the other listings. Hosted by Young Women's Music Project, headlining the festival was Wild Mix, a queer ensemble of five singers and a kickboxing drum section.

OA4P continues protests against the University

Cherwell News reports.

After establishing a second encampment at the Radcliffe Camera, Oxford Action for Palestine (OA4P) organised a sit-in at the University Administration Offices, which involved the arrest of multiple students. A protest has also been held in solidarity with the encampment, supported by local groups and trade unions. St Anne's College alumni have signed a letter in opposition to a recent JCR motion supporting the encampment and OA4P's demands.

16 students were arrested during a sit-in staged by OA4P on Thursday 23rd May at the University Offices in Wellington square. Protesters aimed to remain until they could speak to the Vice-Chancellor. OA4P have stated that the protesters were peaceful, although the University responded saying the protest was a "violent action" that involved the demonstrators "forcibly overpowering the receptionist" and causing distress to staff.

Protesters later advanced to outside Keble College where a meeting of the Conference of Colleges, attended by all heads of Oxford colleges, took place.

Oxford University released a statement describing the "direct action tactics" used by the protesters as "violent and criminal", instructing them that "this is not

how to do it."

OA4P is accused of "making inaccurate statements and claims about the University" and putting up "defamatory" posters of the Vice-Chancellor. The statement emphasises the "deeply intimidating environment" the protests have created, in particular, for "Jewish students and staff and members of the local Jewish community." The University stresses the importance of safety and maintaining "foundational principles of dignity, care and respect" that "some of the protesters have undermined."

The statement concludes that the recent developments highlight the need to "teach our students how to disagree well and with respect and courtesy and through our many formal and informal channels."

In a protest on 1st June, around 600 protesters marched through town in solidarity with the O4AP encampment in a demonstration supported by local trade unions and community groups. Protesters implicated Irene Tracey, Rishi Sunak, Keir Starmer, and the Oxford Union in their chants, telling them "you can't hide, we charge you with genocide" and calling for a "ceasefire now."

The local branches of the national education union, Unite, Stop the War Coalition and Health Workers 4 Palestine took part in the march. Alongside the banners of their organisations, protesters raised the flags of Palestine, Kurd-

istan, West Papua and the Communist Party.

Over 60 St Anne's College alumni have signed a letter in opposition to the recent passing of a JCR motion which condemned "the ongoing genocide within Palestine being carried out by the Israeli government", expressed support for the Oxford Action for Palestine (OA4P) encampment and demanded that Oxford University and the College make "progress towards full divestment" from companies and institutions with ties to Israel.

The letter criticised the St Anne's JCR motion for "the absence of any condemnation of Hamas," stat-

ing it was "one-sided" in nature and that it did "little more than inflame the already binary views that are so entrenched...at a time when antisemitism and discrimination against Israeli and Jewish students and staff is rife across the University."

Three Oxford city councillors of the Oxford Community Independents have published a statement in support of Oxford Action for Palestine. The former Labour Councillors wrote that they support the "peaceful sit-in" and "condemn the appalling response in the strongest possible terms."

Image Credit: Kyra Radley.



Controversial Campsfield immigration centre to reopen

Flora Symington reports.

The Home Office has awarded a £70 million contract to a construction company to reopen an immigrant detention centre, Campsfield House in Kidlington, near Oxford. Building Southern, the company involved, announced their agreement with the Home Office on Friday. Since being proposed by the government in 2022, the reopening of the site has faced opposition from local groups including students at Oxford University.

The immigration detention centre previously on the Campsfield site was closed in 2018 after 25

years, as it faced issues including riots, escapes and complaints about living conditions. 41% of detainees said they felt "unsafe". Most people were detained there for less than two months, but the longest stay was of almost a year and a half.

Planning applications were submitted to the Council in January for a new processing site, which could house up to 400 male immigrants plus 400 staff. The plan was withdrawn in March after council opposition.

The Keep Campsfield Closed campaign was started by local residents in 2022 to oppose the reopening of the detention centre. In June 2023, Oxford students held a protest outside

the Radcliffe Camera to register their opposition to the centre's reopening, and over 140 students and staff signed a letter in support of the Keep Campsfield Closed movement.

MP for Oxford West and Abingdon Layla Moran argued that "locking people up for months on end - without giving them any idea how long they'll be detained - is inhumane and unnecessary."

Oxford City Council's statement, from former Council Leader Susan Brown, also opposed the project: "[It] further demonises refugees and negatively impacts communities across our city. It creates an atmosphere of fear, mistrust, and further divides people and communities." The

newly elected City Council has yet to comment on the development contract.

The then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice and Tackling Illegal Migration, Tom Pursglove, said that reopening the centre was a key part of Home Office's plan to tackle high immigration levels and "will help ensure there is sufficient detention capacity to safely accommodate individuals ahead of removal."

He argued: "Those who have abused the immigration system, including foreign national criminals who have devastated the lives of their victims, should be in no doubt of our determination to remove them."

Image Credit: Aishia Simmons.



Student societies mobilise for general election

Harvey Turner reports.

Oxford student political societies have responded to the Prime Minister's recent announcement of a general election, which will be held on July 4th. The Oxford Labour Club (OLC) have added events to their termcard.

The University's political student societies adapted their term-time plans to engage their membership for the general election. Jack Hurrell, OLC Co-Chair, told *Cherwell* that OLC's termcard has "completely changed" and now includes events, such as a campaign launch party and training sessions.

The Oxford University Conservative Association have not yet published any changes to their termcard. In promotions for their most recent 'Port & Policy' (P&P) event, they publicised this as the first one "post-General Election announcement." The motions circulated included "This House would support Labour."

Some political societies are preparing to continue campaigning over the long vacation. Hurrell told *Cherwell* OLC have plans in place to "create 'hubs' in different areas of the country, such as the North West and London." These will be led by a local, experienced campaigner.

In campaigning efforts, societies must adhere to budget restrictions due to their affiliation with their respective parties. Their spending counts towards the expenditure regulated by the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000. The government increased constituency spending limits by 80% in 2024, raising it to £54,010.

In response to this, Hurrell told *Cherwell*: "Our first priority is to stay on the right side of the election law so we take this really seriously." Spending limits come into force 365 days before polling days, meaning the regulated period for the next general election began on July 6th 2023.

Image Credit: Simon Dawson / CC BY 2.0 via Wikimedia Commons.



Oxford graduates earn more than other universities

Roy Shinar Cohen reports.

Newly released figures show that University of Oxford graduates earn more than those from other universities. Department for Education figures reveal that Oxford graduates are the highest earners in the South-East, and among the highest nationally.

Oxford graduates earn on average £46,000 five years after graduating, data from the 2021 to 2022 tax year reveals – significantly higher than the South-East average of £29,600 a year.

Oxford law graduates had the highest pay of any course, earning on average £64,600 five years after graduating. On the other hand, the course with the lowest paid graduates is Creative Arts, with £26,300 a year. For comparison, the highest and lowest earning Brookes graduates were paid £45,300 and £19,700 a year on average.

The Oxford University Careers Service told *Cherwell*, according to a recent survey by the Careers Service of recruiters at Oxford reported that on all eight measures of employability, Oxford applicants are seen as 'better' or 'much better' than the average UK applicant. Around 93% of leavers had a 'positive outcome', meaning they are in further study or high-skilled/self-employment – put-

ting Oxford fourth of all universities in the country.

The data also shows there is a 12% gap between male and female Oxford graduates' salaries five years after graduating, with male Oxford graduates earning £49,300 and female graduates earning £43,500, on average. As per the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the UK gender pay gap was 14.5% in 2022, putting it 12th highest among OECD countries.

Oxford University Careers Service told *Cherwell*: "There are gaps in pay: on average, men earn more than women, and BAME earn more than white students; however, this can be an effect of the industry sectors that men and BAME work in, compared with women and white students. The gaps reduce when the effect of the industry sector is included. What the careers Service and university can do... is to encourage all students to explore all sectors."

Additionally, according to an analysis by *The Telegraph*, in certain subjects an Oxford or Cambridge degree can boost graduates' annual salary substantially. The subjects with the 'Oxbridge premium' salaries include Computing, Law, Mathematical Sciences, and Economics. Oxford graduates earn more than double their peers from other universities in some of these subjects.

CROSS CAMPUS



Harvard announces end to political statements

Harvard has announced it will no longer release public statements about social and political issues unless they are closely linked to its core academic mission, arguing they risk "the integrity and credibility of the institution." The change comes after a series of controversial statements on the war in the Gaza strip spurred national criticism and the resignation of Harvard's president.

Cambridge students complain about porters' working hours

Students from Trinity College Cambridge have campaigned against the introduction of twelve-hour long shifts for the College's porters, calling it an "unacceptable attack on workers' rights" in an open letter addressed to Trinity's administration, which collected over 100 signatures. A spokesperson for the College argued that: "This schedule serves the College's 24-hour, 365-day-a-year requirement to provide a secure environment for students."

Bristol students call out 'exploitative' landlords

Bristol's Student Union released a report describing the "hellish experience" of students renting in the city. Students spoke out about "exploitative landlords, broken appliances, and extremely dangerous mold". 83% of students have said their living conditions are impacting their well-being. This comes as monthly rent has increased by 64% since 2014/2015.

The report also highlighted the struggles of international students to find a UK-based guarantor, with some relying on friend's parents or financial-oriented companies.

Oxford Union Town Hall TT24: Meet the candidates

Cherwell News reports.

Oxford Union elections for Trinity term 2024 are around the corner and *Cherwell* has interviewed both presidential candidates to find out more about their plans and ideas. This election follows recent controversy about the inclusivity and diversity in the Union, which involved an open letter, resignations, and all three major Union committees passing motions declaring the Union to be "institutionally racist". The two candidates running for President, Izzy Horrocks-Taylor and Israr Khan, share their views on this and how they intend to handle the aftermath. Yet, keep in mind as you read: for all the racket and ruckus Union elections provoke, neither of the last two had a say in the final outcome anyway...

Introduce yourself.

Izzy: Izzy Horrocks-Taylor, she/her, Balliol, second year, classics.

Israr: Israr Khan, he/him, Regent's Park, DPhil, law.

What experiences do you have outside the Union?

Izzy: I was an avid school debater, participating in Oxford Schools and going to finals of public speaking nationals.

Israr: I'm a law tutor. I have

quite a few years of experience in a professional capacity, having run multiple programmes and organised conferences as director of different companies.

What's the top reason you're running for President?

Izzy: Aside from caring about debate, I'm really passionate because I've always felt like there's a lack of female representation on committees and in our term cards, and I really want to try to correct that, such as through handling the membership drive.

Israr: I grew up watching Union debates and they played a significant role in my life. But as I became part of the Union, I see there are a lot of issues that recently resurfaced, like with the Union passing motions that it is "institutionally racist." I think there's a

genuine way to make a change by winning with your entire candidacy where you can then have the power to do something concrete.

What's one thing you would change about the Union?

Izzy: I'd like to make sure as many perspectives as possible are heard. One thing I'm already doing is reviving the debate magazine to give our members the chance to contribute their thoughts and foster more debate.

Israr: I want to change and reform the rules that can be weaponised against members. I am determined to reform because I've not seen any genuine commitment, or those who have tried to commit have been sidelined.

If you could invite any three speakers to the Union, who would they be?



Thames Water pay nearly £5 million for sewage cleanup this year

Faye Chang reports.

Thames Water, the UK's largest waste and wastewater company, has revealed that they have spent £4.7 million in Oxfordshire to clean up sewage overflows in the past financial year. In response to an Environmental Information Regulations request submitted by the Liberal Democrats, the organisation also revealed that across its network, the total cost of clean up amounted to £30 million.

The Cassington and Witney sewage treatment works located upstream of Port Meadow have been the site of clean-up efforts by the company. Expenditure is focused on the use of tankers, which clean spills caused by burst pipes, broken pumps, and overwhelmed sewage systems. A spokes-

person from Thames Water said: "While all discharges are unacceptable, the sewage system was historically designed in this way, to relieve pressure and prevent overflow into people's homes."

Concerns about wastewater treatment and discharge have led to persistent criticisms of Thames Water's management approach. Studies by the Oxford Rivers Improvement Campaign in 2022, found that 46 of the 90 sewage treatment works across the Upper Thames lacked the appropriate capacity, with over 85 billion litres of discharge being pumped into the river since 2020. Residents have suffered from these infrastructural issues, with those living in Lower Radley experiencing blocked drains for the past three years, which overflow with sewage during heavy rains.

Layla Moran, parliamentary candidate for Oxford West and Abingdon, stated: "This staggering figure shows just how misguided Thames Water's investment strategy is... they are leaving sewage to overflow and then spending millions of pounds to clean up their own mess."

Overflow and sewage discharge has also had significant impacts on recreation areas and facilities used by students. In January 2022, 350 protesters gathered in Port Meadow to call for an end to Thames Water's dumping of sewage in local rivers and waterways. The #EndSewagePollution campaigns launched by these organisers led to an application by the City Council to give Oxford designated bathing water status.

The application was approved in April 2022 on the condition that its water quality is considered "fit to swim in" within five years. At this time, levels of E. coli in the waters were found by Professor Peter Hammond, former Professor of Computational Biology at UCL, to be at twice the healthy limit, primarily due to sewage discharge and overflow. In both 2022 and 2023, the area has been classified as having "poor" water quality in government reports.



All three major committees pass motions declaring Union is 'institutionally racist'

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"In the wake of rising anti-Arab racism, and discrimination against Muslim and Arab students, these actions against Ebrahim are racially motivated and Islamophobic. The Union advocates so fiercely for free speech and openness but the Union's tribunal is contradicting the institution's very values."

Osman-Mowafy and three ex-Presidents of colour – Akolade-Ayodeji, Nawaz, and Roble – had signed a letter alleging that recent Union proceedings have been "disproportionately targeting individuals from non-traditional backgrounds." The letter also cites findings in the Azamati Governance Report, which follows the manhandling of a blind black student in 2019.

In the early morning hours, Osman-Mowafy was disqualified from the role of President-elect in proceedings he alleged were "steeped in nothing but racism, islamophobia and persistent bias."

In the TSC meeting, the Senior Officers said that upon receiving reports of these allegations being "in some bar or some pub," they contacted the alleged speaker of the comments who "totally and emphatically refuted the truth of these allegations" and said that instead they heard it. There will

be an appeal to the tribunal's decision, according to the Senior Officers.

In a speech at the motion, an ex-President said that, "speaking directly to the RO World [the Returning Officer, deputies, and assistants]" a certain group has made others of certain backgrounds feel like they are not part of an "in group." He also expresses concern that people can no longer speak freely – attendees at the meeting could not even name Osman-Mowafy or the Clerk despite consistent references to them. The TSC responded with a round of applause and passed a motion expressing its lack of confidence in the RO.

The Union told *Cherwell*: "The Oxford Union Society seeks to be an open, diverse, accessible, and inclusive place, where all members feel welcome irrespective of their background, and where they are treated with dignity and respect."

The Society unequivocally condemns racism, islamophobia, and discrimination in all their forms and aims to ensure that every member enjoys equal opportunity to participate in the full range of the Society's activities and contribute to its governance.

We will work tirelessly with all our members to ensure that we live up to these values."

Cherwell reached out to the Clerk for comment.

Queen's College Eaglets dining society returns amidst backlash

Emily Henson reports.

Formerly disbanded Queen's College dining society is set to return amidst opposition from the student body. The Eaglets, dissolved in 2019, previously operated as an all-male institution and is planned to return as a mixed-gender society with support from the Dean of Queen's College.

The Queen's JCR and Women's Society have each expressed concerns that the Society will be exclusionary, and have cited the alleged high cost of over £80 per dinner, and lack of name change from the original society as evidence of this. The Eaglets was previously dissolved after refusing to write a constitution, and had previously been condemned by the JCR for its exclusionary nature.

The Dean of Queen's College, Richard Nickerson, who supports the resurgence of the society, told *Cherwell*: "In the past Eaglets' membership was inclusive, geographically, ethnically, and in terms of social background and sexual orientation." In the new constitution of the Eaglets, which *Cherwell* has not seen, Nickerson has introduced "a mechanism for becoming a member which allowed anyone to join." The Society has become mixed-gender, as well as removing the tradition that members attended public schools.

Concerns around the all-male

history of the Society have been expressed by the Women's Society. In a statement, the Women's Society has said: "the decision not to change the name in itself signifies to us there has been no shift in its core values or principles, regardless of what its constitution says." The plan to invite back old members, who were part of the exclusive society, has also caused concern.

The JCR passed a motion supporting the Women's Society statement, with 27 for, five against, one abstaining. The statement included: "Women*Soc believes that Eaglets will promote a culture of exclusivity. It marks a renewed investment in a historically discriminative society, whilst maintaining discrimination through financially structured elitism. This rejects not only the college's ethos of inclusivity, but also the University's commitment 'to fostering an inclusive culture which promotes equality, values diversity and maintains a working, learning and social environment in which the rights and dignity of all its staff and students are respected'"

The new iteration of the Society has repeatedly assured the JCR that it is inclusive to all members of college. The current JCR President told *Cherwell* that "membership to the Eaglets is open to all current members of College."

Some students have expressed concern that the alleged price of dinners, between £80 and £100,

is purposeful, to exclude state-educated members of the College. These figures have been denied by the JCR President. The JCR Socio-Economic Representative stated that the return of the society would "[deter] working class people from applying."

In response, the Dean has expressed that the society is

based around dining for "those with a keen interest in fine food." He has told *Cherwell*: "The club is for those who wish to devote part of their disposable income to this, rather than, say, an evening drinking and clubbing, which might cost a similar amount."

The revival comes on the heels of a growing distaste for drinking and

dining societies. Oxford University Conservative Association banned Bullingdon members from holding any offices, in an effort to move towards "a more open, welcoming, and tolerant environment for all." Multiple colleges, including Queen's College, have banned exclusionary societies hosting events on site during term-time.

Oxford's unsavoury past revived

Morien Robertson comments.

The Eaglets not only boast an illustrious history of exclusion – remaining an all-male club well beyond Queen's admitting women – but are alleged to have dinners which cost each member between £80-£100.

Both facts make the idea that simply changing the entrance policy will remove any trace of exclusivity from the club laughable. Yes, the change nominally allows "anyone to join", but similarly I'm *allowed* to bang my head against a wall every day. To put it abstractly, opportunity concepts of freedom are inadequate: they overlook the mental and physical resources you must have to exercise the freedom.

The price of the dinners is the easiest case. If you do, as the Dean suggests, spend that amount of

money on a night clubbing, then I submit you have some major thinking to do. But preferences aside, the sheer fact is that disposable incomes vary widely, and for most students are very little. Maybe

"There's no getting round the fact that the club is entrenched in Oxford's history of wealth and male privilege"

those who go to The Eaglets genuinely would spend that much clubbing, but that's a false equivalence – that amount simply isn't affordable for most.

Even if the dinners are half that

cost, there's no getting round the fact that the club is entrenched in Oxford's history of wealth and male privilege. No-one should say that clubs or institutions aren't reformable, or that they are immutably determined by their history, but it's clear that the Eaglets' proposed reforms are very far from sufficient. Ploughing ahead with the same name and old members indicates nothing other than an unwillingness to change with the times.

If you want a fine dining society, then there's nothing wrong with that. But resurrecting a group which epitomises the privilege and exclusivity that used to, and unfortunately still does, characterise Oxford only reinforces the idea that some are more equal than others.



Lack of transparency: Oxford's known and unknown donors

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Speaking with *Cherwell*, Jenna Corderoy, a lead reporter on openDemocracy's investigations team, said: "I really do think it's vital and ethical that universities, because they wield such great influence, tell students and the public how they are funded."

Other investigations have shed light on the extent of fossil fuel donations to the University: "Oxford University also regularly consults fossil fuel companies about FOI requests, having taken between £10.8m and £20m in funding from them since 2016/17." As well as defence contractors: "Oxford University told openDemocracy that Rolls-Royce gave over £17.5m but said it could provide no further details since it would reveal confidential information." Finally, in a large-scale investigation into anonymous donations, it found that: "Oxford University alone accepted more than £106m in anonymous donations – the highest amount of any Russell Group university."

In late 2023, *Cherwell* looked into the funding of the Oxford Nizami Ganjavi Centre, an institution named after a thirteenth century poet and not the donor responsible for an anonymous gift of £10m to the University, and whose real identity still remains unknown. It was reported that Nargiz Pashayeva, sister-in-law of the current President of Azerbaijan sat on the board of the Nizami Ganjavi Centre and was also identified as a key facilitator for the creation of the Centre itself.

Crucially, it was also found that Pashayeva had been quoted saying she "would like to thank Mr. Iskandar Khalilov for his financial support of the Oxford Nizami Ganjavi Centre" in a 2017 article from the Azeri outlet Azernews. *Cherwell's* further inquiries into Khalilov as the potential anonymous donor were inconclusive. An FOIA request to the University to disclose the name of the donor was rejected on the grounds of a "breach of data protection principles" and "prejudice to commercial interests."

OpenDemocracy's inquiries into the matter have been similarly frustrated. It argued that "the University is so insistent on keeping the donor out of public scrutiny that it is going to court to block a Freedom of Information request from openDemocracy." In turn, the University responded that "openDemocracy had taken the Information commissioner to a tribunal after the Commission ruled for the University".

Recently, Dr John Heathershaw, a Professor at the University of Exeter and a notably active proponent of transparency in university funding, told *Cherwell*: "in the Nizami Ganjavi

case, Oxford claimed to the information officer that there was no risk to reputation laundering because the identity of the donor was kept secret." Heathershaw is engaged in the research of the global phenomenon of 'reputation laundering' defined "as the intentional, minimising or obscuring of evidence of corruption and authoritarianism in a kleptocrat's home country and rebranding kleptocrats as engaged global citizens."

Heathershaw elaborated: "this suggests that the University fundamentally misunderstands the nature of reputation laundering and the character of a kleptocratic environment such as Azerbaijan. It is typical in such a place for key businesspeople to act on behalf of the kleptocratic elite, as a nominee or third party, to launder their money and their reputations. Reputation laundering of the state and society is also a benefit to the elite."

"I really do think it's vital and ethical that universities, because they wield such great influence, tell students and the public how they are funded."

All roads lead to the CRDRF

22 years ago, a cash-for-places scandal rocked the University. A *Sunday Times* reporter, posing as a wealthy banker ready to make a £300,000 donation to Pembroke College, was told his son's application would be looked upon "extremely favourably." The Rev. John Platt, a senior fellow at the College, told the undercover reporter that his son would be given "a guaranteed entry," adding, "Tutors understand. They see the bigger picture."

The fallout was massive. Platt and another don swiftly resigned and the University opened an inquiry. Three months later, the Committee to Review Donations and Research Funding (CRDRF) was established. It aimed to ensure that all donations accepted by the University were ethical, legal, did not cause any conflicts of interest, and would not do "damage to the reputation of the collegiate University."

The University describes the CRDRF as a "robust, independent system." The Committee, made up of ten members appointed by Council, assesses all major donations (above £1m) as well as what an internal report characterises as "higher-risk" donations of any size.

In 2021/2022, the CRDRF declined 12% of potential donations. A CRDRF internal document *Cherwell* has accessed emphasises that the assessment of



funding is "complex," and much of the language employed in official documents is opaque.

Publicly available criteria against which the acceptance of funding is assessed includes guidance on donations related to illegal activity, the tobacco industry and fossil fuels. With regards to illegal activity, some considerations include that if "the University would be acquiring the proceeds of crime or be otherwise involved in money laundering activity" or "the University would be involved with terrorist financing activity," funds must be rejected. In contrast, considerations about the "wider interests of the University" include whether funds will "otherwise do harm to the reputation of the university."

An appendix of the CRDRF's annual report refers to donors with a "tarnished" reputation, without further defining what exactly is meant by tarnished. They further stipulate: that they will consider donors with tarnished reputations where "the behaviour which led to the funder's reputation being tarnished has clearly ceased."

In 2019, the University introduced a list exempting approximately 700 entities from review. All funding from these entities not over £5 million is accepted immediately. This includes a 'Pre-Approved List' of 493 entities described only as "entities with currently valid approvals" whose identity the University chooses not to share.

When asked which entities were pre-approved, the University told *Cherwell* they would not disclose the names of companies on the list of companies and groups "on the grounds of commercial interest and confidentiality."

Also not subject to review are approximately 163 'spin-out companies' (in which the

University owns a stake), as well as 107 'Gold List' entities – low-risk organisations including UK government departments and EU institutions.

A "significant minority" of major donors, which contributed about £75m between 2017 and 2022 to the University, wish to remain anonymous. For example, the name of the single donor who provided £10m to fund the Nizami Ganjavi Centre is not known. The University has sought to protect donors' requests for anonymity, stating that "the public is able to debate the pros and cons of different sources of funding to universities without knowing the precise identity of each individual donor."

The University's policies regarding funding have been criticised in the past. In communications with *Cherwell*, Professor Heathershaw described the CRDRF as "not accountable to the wider faculty, students, and alumni." Previously, the CRDRF's predecessor, the CRD, was criticised by Peter Oppenheimer, a former fellow at Christ Church, in response to Len Blavatnik's donations to the University: "Oxford's purported mechanism for verifying the ethical acceptability of money that it receives is clearly deficient, if it indeed works at all."

Why is there no transparency?

Cherwell acquired a response from the University to a request for internal review on the disclosure of the identity of the donor of £10m to the Nizami Ganjavi centre from late 2022.

It argues that: "The public interest in transparency has to be weighed against the public interest in maintaining the University's ability to attract private donations,

including from those who desire anonymity, which help to support its teaching, research and related activities, such as the provision of bursaries for poorer students

Anonymous donors make a significant minority of donations to the University's fund-raising."

It continues to say that: "fund-raising is a competitive activity. The University is competing against not only other universities (both nationally and internationally) but also other charitable institutions involved

"Oxford's purported mechanism for verifying the ethical acceptability of money that it receives is clearly deficient, if it indeed works at all."

in similar activities, such as research. Some of the University's competitors are not subject to the FOIA or similar legislation."

The University plainly recognises that it has to depend on donations to survive and maintain its global relevance, and that dependence will only increase in the coming years. It has stated that if it "were to be required to name an anonymous donor, it would deter those prospective donors who would prefer to remain anonymous." In their view, transparency is the price to pay in exchange for the University's continued growth.

Image Credit: Julia Amann.

Social media just isn't enough!



Image Credit: Rajan Manickavasagam, CC BY 2.0 via Flickr.

CHERWELL

Ebony-Coco de Lara discusses the importance of proper political education in this week's editorial.

With a general election now on the horizon, the ultimate question facing the UK is a tough one. Whose camp is the best of a bad bunch? Will it be Starmer's divided, centrist Labour or, alternatively, its recoloured form: Sunak's group of posh party-goers?

Public discontent with the political process has never seemed more apparent. Despite the fact that communication with MPs is more accessible, modern voters contend that politicians cease to represent them. Parliament appears to be a more foreign creature than ever before. Why is this the (very unfortunate) case?

The answer, undoubtedly, is insufficient political literacy. When we live in a society where those who wield the indispensable power to grant the mandate to govern do not understand the basics behind doing so, how may we call ourselves a 'democracy'?

The limited political 'literacy' that does exist in the minds of the public consists, generally, of the 'intelligent' discourse that can be found on TikTok, Twitter and Facebook. This is, quite frankly, a frightening concept.

The public's tendency to unquestioningly believe the unsubstantiated views of fellow users poses a catastrophic problem. Many are at risk of entering into echo chambers that are inherently polarised. Not the prime conditions in which to foster civil democratic conversation, it may be assumed.

A non-partisan political education, whilst unmistakably a utopian idea, is the solution to solving this crisis. If the public were to be educated on the ways in which our political system functions and the gravity of the social issues facing us today, we might be closer to achieving political legitimacy.

Oxford ball-goers first in line for media's guillotine

Krishna Gowda

A couple of days after attending Brasenose Ball with my friends, I received a surprise notification from a group chat that I had suspected would now lie dormant and untouched. I had assumed that the group chat, used to coordinate plans for the ball and upload photos, would fade into obscurity – a remnant of an unforgettable night now immortalised in both my memory and camera roll. Instead, two days later, a single, unexpected photo appeared on the chat. It came accompanied by a brief message: "You made it to the *Daily Mail*".

The photo itself isn't bad; it's quite a good photo, in fact, and more flattering than some others in the article. Just after the ball's denouement at 5am, in a concoction of drunken bliss and delirium as dawn crept in, I took a few photos of a couple of my friends outside the Rad Cam, seizing the priceless moment of a library devoid of tourists while light streamed over the building. Moments before this, I remember seeing a man with a professional camera, lingering expectantly, but I had merely passed him off as inconsequential, assuming he was a ball photographer.

With the group chat now resurrected, reaction varied considerably: amusement towards the notion of us getting papped; immense relief that it was one of the kinder photos that had been featured; scepticism towards whether he had asked us for consent to take the photos and let them be published. (Our somewhat hazy

recollections left us confused as to whether he had asked.)

The article itself wasn't entirely Oxford-centric, instead exploring the various ways that people throughout the UK had spent the bank holiday weekend in Blackpool, Birmingham, and Leeds. Nevertheless, subtext wasn't exactly required to understand the chasm that the writer was emphasising between the "casual looking groups of partygoers eating greasy late-night snacks" elsewhere and the "revellers in Oxford [...] making their way home from prestigious balls". Everything from attire to food was contrasted, depicting Oxford as a swaggering social hub, reminiscent of glittering, Gatsby-esque party scenes

"The media feeds on confining Oxford to this state of unwavering poshness"

in stark contrast to the more conventional celebrations of pub crawls and clubbing at other locations. This sort of divide was reinforced by the article's comment section, who seemed eager to stress the "dash of elegance" that tinged Oxford's events compared to the "kebab noshing on the streets" of Birmingham (when they weren't making vulgar observations about body types and sizes).

Media depictions like this, setting Oxford at odds with other universities, reinforce stereotypes of Oxford that vastly exaggerate the reality of things. Whilst I'm not denying that

going to Oxford offers privileged opportunities, other universities also hold their own black-tie events with similar attire and entertainment. Oxford students are still students and so, for the most part, clubbing, pub crawls and other less sophisticated forms of entertainment remain staples of their university life. We regularly flock to Hussain's in ritualistic fashion after a night spent at Atik – not the most *glam* venue in the world.

The media's narrative that pedestals Oxford and solely associates it with poshness and prestige is a caricature of the typical experience. It unjustly represents the majority of students who don't align with these archetypes and broader media depictions surrounding Oxford have only fuelled this fire. Movies such as *Salisbury*, released in 2023 (and which is set at Brasenose College), have contributed to these unrealistic depictions of Oxford life. Fictional elements from the film may contain kernels of realism, but for the greater part are exaggerated and embellished in order to enhance the plot and drama of the movie. 'Murder on the Dancefloor' being played at least ten times across the night further attests to this sensationalised vision of Oxford. The media feeds on confining Oxford to this state of unwavering poshness, tying its tradition, reputation, and history together to characterise rare occasions like these as routine hall-

marks of Oxford life. By doing so, it fails to recognise that most of the students here are, in actual fact, not that dissimilar from those elsewhere.

This isn't to say that glaring issues shouldn't be exposed and rectified: Pembroke ball tickets costing nearly £450 means that the ball is inaccessible for the vast majority of students. Exorbitant prices like these alienate students and generate justified outcry, whilst propagating preconceptions of Oxford's poshness and elitism. Elitist societies of the past, such as the Bullingdon Club, warranted strong condemnation for their discrimination and reprehensible behaviour. However, the media's current narrative that isolates Oxford students from typical student life by painting them all with the same brush is an inaccurate portrayal of the real Oxford experience for most, where balls and secret societies are few and far between in the academic calendar.

While others may be cringing at the state of some of the less generous photos, I find it amusing how a relatively unremarkable picture of a student taking photos of their friends constitutes the attention of national news. The *Daily Mail* making a spectacle out of normal students ironises the whole matter really; at the end of the day, at least I know that my own photography skills are clearly worthy of national fascination.

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



Laurence and Alfie go head-to-head, debating whether we should be 'patriotic' about our colleges

I wouldn't call myself a college jingoist exactly, save for my vehement distaste for our neighbours at Keble. However, I do think there is a lot to be proud of at St John's, beyond even the astute real estate investments made by the governing body in the 19th century. The college has strong welfare provision (not something you can say about all the big, rich colleges), beautiful gardens, and a variety of thriving societies - particularly in the arts. There is a large access team and the college takes slightly more UK state school students than the average (this is, of course, still far short of reflecting wider society). I think the college does a decent job of mixing old and new, tradition without intimidation, and for that I must say I am pretty proud. Of course I was happy to wear my St John's



College Running Club shirt for the Town and Gown, and while I still don't understand why anyone finds watching rowing of any interest at all, I'm glad we did well at Summer VIIIs.

I think the collegiate system is such an integral part of the Oxford experience, often for the wrong reasons, as Cherwell's recent reporting has shown. Yet these college disparities aren't going away any time soon, so I may as well lean into them, while I can, and enjoy my £4 formals.

College life preserves a vital sense of community, that is much harder to find in the university more generally. Most importantly, we have three college cats that you can actually pet - unlike the Magdalen deer. If nothing else, I should be "patriotic" about this. That, and the 'destroy Keble' society.

When applying to this university I watched a fair number of 'What's the best Oxford college?' videos. They were always really unhelpful. Every student that had a go on the microphone, stood outside the Rad Cam, championed their own college as the greatest. At the time, this didn't really make any sense to me; I assumed they would all be rather similar. After all, it was being at Oxford that really mattered - one of my many novice assumptions about the University before arriving. The college you are a member of matters, a lot. But this is also the reason why being patriotic is, largely, nonsense. Those that consider themselves 'patriotic' justify themselves on the basis that it is best suited to them and their interests. This is because to confess that your col-

lege is actually not as good as the others is a cheerless admission. Therefore, the patriotism one has for their college is a pragmatic, self-assuring decision, more than anything else.

Ultimately, what college you belong to always has some element of randomness within it. There was probably some luck in getting interviewed by tutors that liked what you had to say. However, I am aware that there's definitely some people at Oxford who argue that they were always meant to be here. Nevertheless, whilst I concede that a hint of college patriotism makes sense it should really be understood as a tactic to reassure oneself about an incredibly important, but largely arbitrary, decision made out of one's control.



'Killing' the story: Lucy Letby, the media, and the courts

Ella Stone

Lucy Letby. If you're from the UK, you've likely heard that name many times over the last few years. Her arrest, trial, and sentencing were all widely published in tabloids, Twitter, and even the BBC. While there hasn't been any comprehensive polling on what percentage of people in the UK believe that Letby is guilty, my impression is that many do. However, for those of us who aren't from the UK, this case has remained somewhat unknown. While the *Guardian* has published over 100 stories about the case, the *New York Times* has only published 4. The trial provides a good opportunity to examine the media's relationship with the courts and the damage it can cause to the judicial process. What makes the Letby case particularly interesting is a recent *New Yorker* article which has challenged not only the basis of the case, but its representation in the media.

This case has been covered extensively in the UK press. From Letby's first arrest to every day of the trial, news outlets have covered every detail of the evidence against Letby, and the general public has reacted in kind. Even early on, the public consciousness of the UK seemed to decide that Letby was guilty.

This is not an uncommon outcome for widely publicised cases. In our modern landscape of 24-hour news, social media sites allow everyone to publish every thought and form group opinions easier than ever. I personally don't agree with this sen-

sationalization of the court process, as I believe the justice system is not well designed to accommodate media outrage.

Despite this, I acknowledge that the current media environment is not likely to go away anytime soon – good trials make good television.

However, if we are going to have publicised trials - if news outlets are allowed to publish every detail of the court proceedings, arrest, and sentencing - then criticism of that process must be allowed as well. The *New Yorker* article I mentioned earlier is one such piece. The article suggests that the verdict against Letby may have been a miscarriage of justice. However, if you had searched for that article in the UK a few days ago, you'd have found nothing.

This isn't an issue on its own. The problem is that the same gag order against the *New Yorker* did nothing to prevent articles like a recent piece in the BBC, which in its opening line stated: "Child serial killer

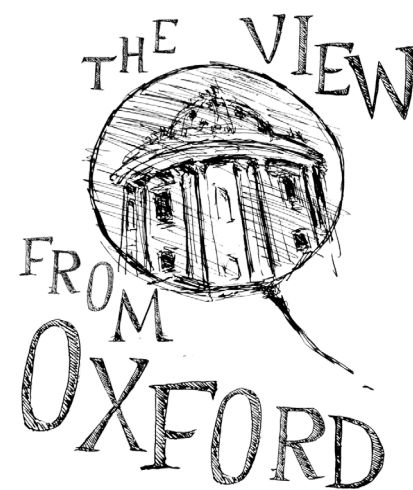
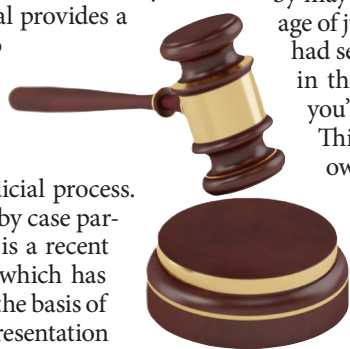
Lucy Letby has been denied permission to appeal (...)" For reference, the *New York Times*, in a similar piece, said: "The guilty verdict makes Ms. Letby the most prolific serial killer of children in modern British history." The difference is subtle, but the implications are vast: it seems that much of the UK media phrases her guilt as an unassailable fact, now bolstered by her conviction and failed appeal. On the other hand, US media bases her guilt on the court's verdict. This phrasing leaves the possibility

open that her guilt is not guaranteed if the verdict was improper. There is no justification for why UK courts allowed the BBC to discuss the case in this way while the *New Yorker* was not allowed to criticise the case in any way.

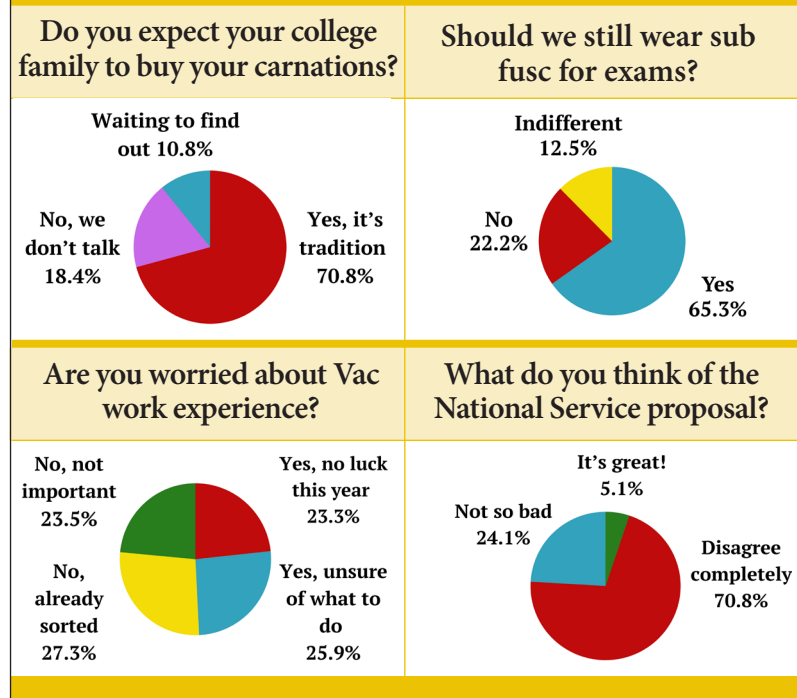
Media sensationalization of trials will always favour the prosecution. Just look at the roster of true crime podcasts to understand how much people enjoy hearing about the evil that their fellow citizens can commit. This issue quickly becomes apparent because defence cases are usually complicated and not easily put into sound bites that can be widely circulated. Prosecutions, on the other hand, can be divided cleanly into means, motive, and opportunity. This system will frequently lead to headlines about horrible allegations that gain more traction, more clicks, leading to more people believing the prosecution unequivocally and ignoring the points of the defence.

This article is not an attempt to challenge the veracity of Letby's verdict or to say that it was incorrect. The courts have made their decision, and despite powerful criticism from the *New Yorker*, that verdict has withstood an appeal. It should be considered legally sound, barring any exonerating evidence that could come to light. It is up to every person to decide for themselves whether the verdict in the case was just. However, there is no excuse in a system that prides itself on open justice and free access to the courts to block the publication of articles critical of the courts and their decisions.

*Read the full article at [Cherwell.org](#)
Image Credit: Jernej Furman / CC BY 2.0 via Wikimedia Commons.*



This week, we asked our Instagram followers...



How much do we really value free speech?

Morien Robertson

CW: Racism

The investigation into Cambridge fellow Nathan Cofnas, a self-described "race realist", has been deeply divisive, and illustrates deep and difficult questions about what freedom of speech and tolerance mean in a liberal society based on equality and mutual respect. The debate is particularly intense when it comes to academia. On the one hand, the right denounces "cancel culture" and "no-platforming", whilst on the other, academics are criticised – and even fired – for teaching critical race theory and supporting Palestine.

On 5th April, Emmanuel College, Cambridge cut ties with Cofnas, suggesting that things he had written in his blog could be considered a rejection of its Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) policies, whilst the University triggered an investigation that could lead to his dismissal. Cofnas had written in a blog post that "in a meritocracy... the number of black professors would approach 0%".

Emmanuel's decision has led to much backlash, most notably in the form of an open letter to *The Times* signed by some people very familiar to any Oxford philosopher, including Peter Singer, Roger Crisp, Amia Srinivasan, and Steven Pinker. The letter notes that Cambridge first defended Cofnas' freedom of speech, and attacks the reversal in policy. They of course don't endorse his views, however.

Whilst Cofnas' views are, I would hope, abhorrent to all readers, the point is not to suggest agreement with his work. It is that the principle of investigation, and potential firing, as a result of protest and moral disagreement, is a dangerous one. Professor Srinivasan, in an article in the *London Review of Books*, affirms her complete rejection of his racism, and emphasises the key distinction between research and teaching. Srinivasan rightly suggests that students should not have to be taught by someone who makes them feel justifiably uncomfortable.

She cites recent instances of academics having been disinvited from speaking or even suspended

as a result of supporting Palestine or teaching courses in systemic racism and gender theory. In these instances, academic institutions have exercised their power based on feelings of offence or disagreement. The danger is clear: if academic freedom is rescinded, then there is no way to challenge hegemonic viewpoints and debate vital issues. Part of what academic freedom means is "vocational liberties", which allows for the freedom to research and teach on all matters of professional interest.

The other key element is that whilst the protection is expansive, content-based speech discrimination is permissible, even foundational. There are disciplinary standards and a level of rigour required of all researchers, which means there is an "inequality of ideas". If an academic is clearly producing work which fails to conform to the minimum methodological standards, then it is unworthy of discussion, as it fails to contribute to the search for truth and understanding which is the whole point of academia. For this reason, it is not a violation of freedom for a climate change denier whose work

is based of false empirical claims to be denied the right to speak at a conference. It would, however, be a violation if an economist, whose work is agreed to be rigorous and sound, is fired as a result of disagreeing with progressive welfare systems, due to e.g. student protests.

Peter Singer, in his rebuttal to Cofnas' investigation, suggests that: "at Emmanuel College, freedom of expression does not include the freedom to challenge its DEI policies, and that challenging them may be grounds for dismissal." Of course, though, these policies represent beliefs which are practically axiomatic amongst most people in this country, and are values which many think of as fundamental to who they are. Equal rights and basic equality are the result of centuries of struggle, pain, and suffering. Speech which undermines this struggle is understandably seen as outrageous.

But there is a major risk of any widespread and popular belief becoming institutionalised, transforming from something which has majority support to an unquestionable monolith. But in

fact, especially in the domain of philosophy, nothing is obvious, and nothing unquestionable. Emotions and passions are not the right way to deal with academic inquiry. It is methodology and rigour which are important, not one's emotional or moral opposition.

That is to say, you can vehemently disagree with someone, but in dealing with academic research, the basis for these critiques should be 'this is why you are wrong,' rather than 'I don't like what you are saying.' This is far from saying that Cofnas is remotely right: works he cites such as *The Bell Curve* have been roundly attacked as simply wrong. Cofnas holds a philosophical position, and it should be attacked as such. The danger when we allow universities to arbitrarily decide that some research area is 'immoral' or 'illegitimate' is that we are left speechless when they designate something we truly believe in to be outside the scope of research. Freedom comes with costs, of course, but the danger of doing otherwise is greater.

Read the full article at [Cherwell.org](#)

‘There’s a seat at the table for everyone’: An interview with Daisy Maskell

Seraphina Evans speaks with Daisy Maskell about press junkets, investigative stunts, and breaking into the media industry.

Daisy Maskell is, in short, a multimedia superwoman. Her documentaries have aired on BBC and Channel 4, she is the youngest breakfast show host in radio history (just 23 when she got the gig), and she recently featured on the Forbes ‘30 Under 30’ list. As if she wasn’t busy enough, Daisy produces her own documentaries too.

Daisy’s entrance into the industry came about through what can only be described as hard graft. She made her own showreel using B&Q wallpaper samples as backgrounds and holding microphones that connected to nothing. Then, she handed a USB stick round to receptionists at media companies. Through this, Daisy got a foot in the door at 4Music leading to a twice weekly live presenting slot and “things sort of snowballed from there.”

However, Daisy has noticed big changes in the industry since then, noting: “I think I was probably the last person through the door at 4Music,” and that “those sorts of opportunities don’t really exist anymore, at least from a broadcast TV perspective, which is such a shame.”

On the topic of interview tips and tricks, we get onto Daisy’s interview with Dwayne ‘The Rock’ Johnson, which she cites as the favourite of her career so far. “As I was walking into the hotel to do the interview, my heel broke... I hobbled through the Corinthia Hotel lobby up to the room and I thought well, he’s not going to know because I’m going to be sat. Then when he came into the room, I thought well I have to stand up to greet him! He’s a tall guy anyway, so I was already six inches smaller and one of my heels was broken. So that was a really good icebreaker.”

This could have felt like a disaster, but Daisy took it in her stride and turned it into a n o p - p o r - t u n i t y for connection. In fact, Daisy’s top interview tip is to have a personal anecdote or ice-

breaker to begin the interview on a note of personal connection. In doing this, you are recognising that the interviewee is just another human. I think I managed to take that advice, in a meta sort of way, using her Dwayne Johnson icebreaker as our icebreaker.

Daisy praises press junkets like the one with Dwayne Johnson as “a very, very unique experience. The first interview I ever did was a junket, it was with *Queer Eye*, I remember. It was a really good training ground for me to learn how to do interviews because it’s super, super stressful. It’s more time sensitive as well, because you’re just being pushed in and out, and you only have a small amount of time to cap-

‘It’s important that we all work together to be able to create spaces that feel welcoming and are diverse as well.’

ture what you need. Whereas, when I do interviews on the radio we are welcoming someone into our studio, into our space and it’s just a little bit less of a stressful situation.”

As well as both TV and radio presenting, Daisy works behind the scenes as producer on her documentaries, including the BBC’s *Daisy Maskell: Insomnia & Me*, and multiple episodes for Channel 4’s *Untold* series. The latter is aptly named, as Daisy categorises the topics that appeal to her as “anything where I feel as though it has a perspective we haven’t explored or seen yet, so anything with an untold, unheard or unseen angle or perspective is always super interesting.” In reference to her hands-on investigative style that led to her getting spiked on camera (under medical supervision) and advertising her virginity for sale online, Daisy said “I love a stunt as well. If there’s any way t h a t w e

can wrap a stunt into a film or into the style of investigation, I really enjoy that... with spiking, for example, we obviously went really radical with it and we did a live spike on camera. I find if there’s a subject area where we can really hammer home a new perspective or dangers, then that really draws me to explore a topic.”

I ask Daisy about what it means, practically and in an everyday sense, to be a producer. It turns out the role is as diverse as the somewhat nebulous title suggests. It involves “over-seeing visually what you want the project to look like... dealing with the day-to-day technical ways of actually making that shoot happen,” including the big questions like “how am I going to execute that? What is the style that you’re going for? For factual [i.e documentaries], it’s finding contributors. And there’s also a huge duty of care to consider with producing, too.” Additionally, there’s the administrative side of “what filming permit do we need to be able to shoot the things that we need to capture? Sometimes it’s sorting out accommodation and sorting out flights. So there’s so much that goes into it and I think it really depends on the project.”

Despite the demanding nature of the job, Daisy speaks with unwavering enthusiasm and clearly finds the work massively rewarding: “I think that’s always an amazing process. When I think about the films that we’ve made from the ideas that I’ve come up with in my bed at 3am, to then see them air on TV and get the response from viewers. It is a really special experience. You really do see the impact of your work, which I think is what it’s all about really.”

“I love collaboration. When you have a team of people that you love and you respect, it’s so nice to be able to collaborate. It’s really important to be able to acknowledge that, whilst you have this idea, and you may have this vision going into it... there’s a seat at the table for everyone, especially in factual, everyone has a new and different perspective on any topic that you’re investigating. Which I think makes a better film, as well.”

Of course, being a young woman in male dominated spaces comes with challenges. Issues such as imposter syndrome, self criticism and having your opinion pushed aside by others all factor in. Particularly for people struggling with this earlier in their careers, Daisy says, “it’s really important to never have your worth stripped... because being in those situations, it can really, really beat you down. And it can make you second guess yourself.”

“Oftentimes, [this behaviour is] through insecurity, or the other

person is projecting those feelings onto you. It’s nothing to do with you and it’s everything to do with someone else. It’s not that you aren’t worthy. It’s not that you don’t deserve a place at the table. And I think you have to have that mindset to push that feeling of inferiority and that feeling of imposter syndrome aside, I would say it’s really about believing in yourself.” She also emphasises the importance of having a strong support system to check in with and help you find the strength to persevere.

Finally, she underlines the importance of flagging up these situations, despite fear of the backlash that is especially prevalent in the media industry. “If you ever go through anything, please, please, please find those people to speak up to. It’s not okay to be in any workplace and feel as though you are being silenced or you aren’t being heard or you’re being undervalued. It’s important that we all work together to be able to create spaces that feel welcoming and are diverse as well. No matter your age, no matter your race, no matter your gender. That is super important.”

“I really do hope in the next ten to 15 years, we do start to see a massive shift in the way that people are treated in the workplace because we spend so much time at work. So we deserve to be happy and we deserve to be supported by our employers, too. We give so much and we deserve that respect back.”

In terms of career progression, Daisy advises that: “it’s always worth checking in with yourself and realising that if there’s an area or role in that industry that you enjoy, or you want to learn more about, you have the opportunity to do so. I don’t think you have to have it all locked in and figured out and be in that position for the rest of your life. I think whatever makes you happy, and makes you feel like you’re growing and brings you fulfilment, it’s always worth exploring.” Daisy certainly doesn’t shy away from new areas and roles, leading to her diverse portfolio of achievements.

Her advice for those looking to break into the industry given the shifting landscape? “Talk about what you love, showcase your talent on the platforms that you have available to you, because there are people watching and that really feels like a space where people are hiring from now... it’s really exciting to see new people breaking through as well. I love to be able to track the journey of other young people that are rising right now. It’s super, super, super exciting.”

[Read the full article at Cherwell.org.](#)

Image Credit: Kiran Gidda.

OXFORD SPOTLIGHT

Out of all the societies at Oxford, Oxford University Taylor Swift Society is one of the biggest, with around 2000 members. Seraphina Evans chats to Lola Milton-Jenkins, the Swift Soc President, about all things Taylor, fandom, and girlhood.

How did you become a Swiftie?

I didn’t become a Swiftie until 2017 when *Reputation* came out, when I heard ‘... Ready For It?’ on the radio. I got into the ‘Look What You Made Me Do’ music video, with all the lore and all the different eras. I was trapped immediately and here I am now. In my head, I’m a newer Swiftie but I guess not really – it’s been seven years!

What does being part of a fan community mean to you?

The best part about Swift Soc for me is the fact that it is a community. It’s so big but also it’s so tight-knit. It’s similar to Oxford in general. It is a big place, but you have your own little communities. There’s a certain type of person who’s a Swiftie: who maybe likes similar things to you, or you appreciate similar lyrics or have similar values. So it’s really easy to meet people. I think especially with the pressure in Oxford, just having an escape is really important. On the new album, Taylor sings “I hate it here so I will go to secret gardens in my mind.” I kind of like to think that that’s what we do at Swift Soc. It’s nothing academic at all, and we lean into the fact it’s somewhere to escape to.

Do you see the Swiftie community as reclaiming girlhood?

There’s definitely been a lot of misogyny in music and politics in general. So I think, for so much of last year, to be really focused on girlhood and being able to embrace that feminine side, which people have sometimes felt that they need to put away to get on with life, I think it was really, really exciting. They went hand in hand, things like Taylor and the *Barbie* movie.

What is your favourite Taylor Swift song at the moment?

I always say ‘August’. I live in Somerset and love getting to drive about through the hills and just screaming ‘August’ with the sun setting, that’s my happy place.

Image courtesy of Lola Milton-Jenkins.



In conversation with Steven Pifer, former US ambassador to Ukraine

Ben Hayes speaks to Steven Pifer, former American ambassador to Ukraine, about his on-the-ground observations of the Russia-Ukraine war, informal 'Track II' negotiations, and nuclear disarmament.

Steven Pifer greets me at the door with a limp. He'd broken his kneecap en route to Kyiv three weeks ago, and scrambling for hotel bomb shelters in the wee hours of the morning hadn't done his injury any favours.

"The nice thing about this," he jokes about his injury, "is I got dispensation to use the elevator."

Pifer was the American ambassador to Ukraine from 1998 to 2000. His house reflects it. Blue-and-yellow flags, Oval Office photos with Bill Clinton, and a ceremonial mace from Kyiv decorate his home in Morgan Hill, California, where he settled down after serving 27 years in Washington and abroad. Pifer enjoys the change of scenery. "Walk twelve minutes that way," he says, "and I'm out in vineyards and in orchards. I like it here."

The former ambassador, though, is anything but retired in the larger sense. It's because of his ongoing involvement in Ukrainian affairs that Morgan Hill Life publisher Marty Cheek and I are here for an interview.

Pifer's time in the State Department began in 1978. He served his probationary years under Carter, managed the arms control portfolio at the Moscow embassy during the Reagan administration, and was a deputy assistant secretary of state in the Bush Jr. years. It was in the Clinton administration that he found Washington-Moscow diplomacy to be particularly effective: it had the unusual setup of bringing all the people on US-Russia issues into one room.

Pifer hasn't stopped trying to get people together for productive dialogue more than twenty years later. Track IIs (non-governmental conversations between former officials and academics) afford him the chance to continue engaging Russia in discussions in the present day. "I still take part in some Track IIs," he tells us, "both on arms control and on Russia and Ukraine. For the arms control things we have to go to Istanbul because that's one of the few places that Russians can get to." Given the current tension between

Washington and Moscow, Pifer reflects, nuclear arms negotiations may not go very far. Though 'unofficial', Track IIs may provide a window of opportunity for meaningful engagements while the war continues. "The State Department, they encourage these kind of discussions," Pifer explains, "particularly because there's no official Track I conversations going on. Having the Track II conversations at least maybe keeps some ideas going back and forth... When I was managing Track IIs, we would always set up times to go and brief somebody at State, at the NSC, 'This is what we're hearing.' Sometimes we'd actually suggest some ideas. I'm happy to have a couple ideas that found their way into U.S. positions."

As Pifer had related at the door, he was fresh off his latest trip back

"I think [the Russians] seriously thought they would be welcomed as liberators."

to Ukraine. Knee propped up on a couch cushion, he talks us through his time there earlier in March. "Kyiv looked pretty normal," he begins, "with a couple of exceptions. One was you saw more guys in uniform on the streets than I ever remember. In the building we got into, we had a chance to go and get a briefing from military intelligence. The buildings would be protected by sandbags or pill boxes. There were heavier guards there. When you would drive around, you'd see these tank barriers that were there in case they had to pull them in the street. Then there was the

air raid. I'd never been in an air raid before. They said it was the worst that Kyiv had been hit with in six or seven weeks. 31 missiles."

He takes a second to set the scene: 3:15 am, officials ushering guests into a shelter under the hotel. "We had one guy with us who was British—he was kind of our facilitator. He basically was plugged in. They would send us reports. He

said, 'OK, the Ukrainians reported that the bombers left such and such air base,' and so that gives you an approximate time, by the time they get to their launch points, when the missiles come in... He goes, 'Yeah, the cruise missiles now are all reportedly turned towards Kyiv,' and then I think we heard about five or six explosions which we assumed were the air defences engaging overhead."

He worries for those who have undergone the violence for two years now. "I remember talking to a former Ukrainian colleague at the embassy—this was early on in the war," he recalls. "And she said one day she'd had to go to the bomb shelter five times in the night. That's just got to be really draining."

This visit was not a one-time event. Early in the interview, Pifer speculates on Zelensky's reasons for passing up a consensus national government, based on a conversation in Kyiv he had "about three weeks before the major Russian invasion." I have to stop him there. "You were there three weeks before February 24th?" I ask incredulously. "January 30th to February 2nd," he replies in stride.

He notes that during his trip, most Ukrainians didn't believe there would be a major Russian attack, and something must have changed shortly after his departure. "A lot of the targets that the Russians originally hit were empty warehouses, things like that, because the Ukrainians had moved out." The Russians, according to Pifer, were less prepared. "A lot of parts of the Russian military, I think, only learned that they were going in at the last minute. There were reports that the Ukrainians had captured some Russian soldiers who had been in the initial invasion force heading forward to Kyiv, and they said they thought they were in Belarus on an exercise. At 9 pm, they were rousted out and told to suit up, before being given weapons and informed the operation would start at 4 am." After a few sentences of reflection, he draws his conclusion: "I think they [the Russians] seriously thought they would be welcomed as liberators."

Over two years into the war, Russia's "liberation" has stalled thanks to fierce Ukrainian counter-offensives in 2022 and a gruelling stalemate thereafter. This wasn't anticipated—Pifer recalls that at the start of the conflict, Ukrainians forces had opened up one of the Russian trucks they had shot down. "It was full of brand new dress uniforms, which [the Ukrainians] assumed was for the [Russian] victory parade." Even so, doubt as to Ukraine's ability to continue the war effort indefinitely is growing. Pifer's view of the conflict's end is more hopeful. "At some point I think the number of what the Rus-



sians call 'Cargo 200' [transport aircraft or trucks bringing back the remains of soldiers who have been killed in action]— does that number become so high that people are going to think this is not worth it?"

Pifer's on-the-ground observations, though, allow him to bring this disparity to bear on an analysis of the war overall. "When I was in Ukraine," he shares, "one of the Ukrainians said, 'If you ever got to a point where, to keep the war going, Putin had to begin drafting people from big cities, especially Moscow

lition [on] helping Ukraine prevail. This is very much in the national interest, setting aside my feelings about Ukraine."

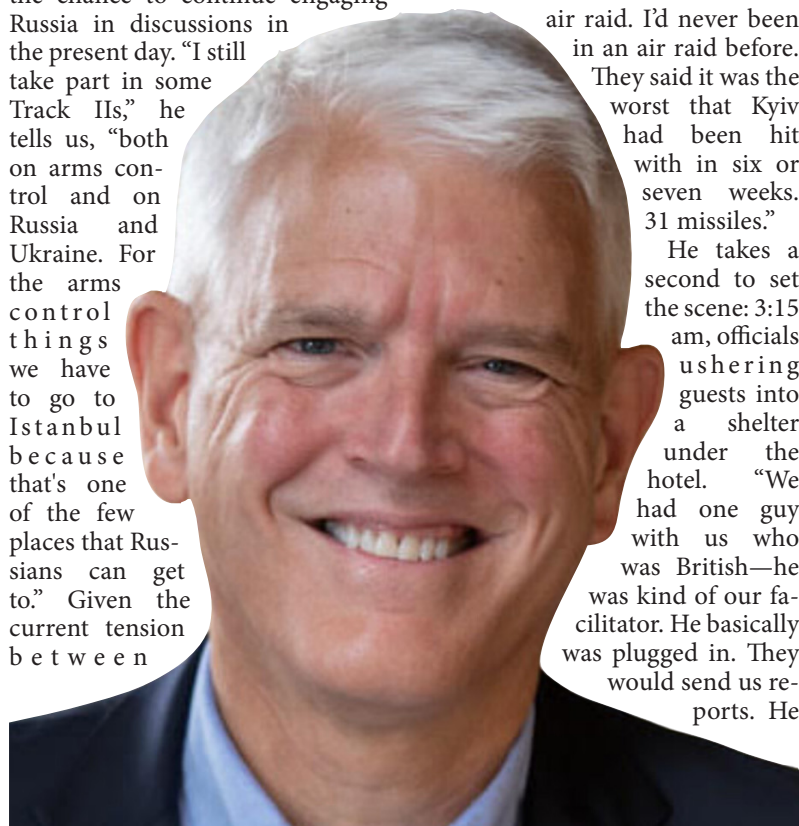
There's a fraction of a pause as he collects his thoughts. "There's also kind of a personal reason. Back in the 1990s, I was involved in the negotiations with Ukraine where they gave up what was at the time the world's third largest nuclear arsenal." Part of the deal, Pifer details, was that Russia committed to respect Ukraine's sovereignty and not use force against Ukraine. "We told the Ukrainians that if the Russians tried something, we would be supportive."

Pifer caveats his message by clarifying that no official deals were made, but returns quickly to his decades-ago commitment. "We said we would do things," he states firmly. He believes the United States is now living up to that commitment by providing Ukraine arms and other support. He notes that in the early 1990s, "there was a collective failure. Both we in Washington, but also our Ukrainian counterparts in Kyiv, we didn't foresee what would happen in 2014 or 2022." He stops just long enough for me to throw out a quick affirmation as I add to my notes. "But that's kind of secondary," he says briskly. "The main reason is there's an American interest there, and that Europe becomes a much more dangerous place if the Ukrainians lose."

Pifer has a Zoom meeting with the Council on Foreign Relations to attend, so after a generous hour and a half of questions, he shows us out. The door swings shut as the former ambassador limps back to his study to catch the call. Two decades after leaving the foreign service, Steven Pifer hasn't slowed down in his commitment to the people of Ukraine.

Image Credit: Damian M. Marhefka.

Both images courtesy of Steven Pifer.



CHERBADLY

Oxford Union and Oxford SU to showdown in boxing match

In a rather shocking turn of events, that has left both academics, pseudo-academics and geographers bewildered, the Oxford Union has recently agreed to compete in a boxing match against the Student Union. Although seemingly unprovoked, Cherwell understands that the spat began last week; jabs were thrown, digs were exchanged, and socks were pulled up as a tense argument and then a 'rap battle' broke out between various members of each committee. Cherwell understands that the fracas initially broke out after a certain member of the Oxford Union claimed their organisation was "more useless than the SU", leaving representatives of that ever so important student body outraged that anybody could think such a thing.

Quickly, leading members of each side arranged a social media ceasefire as they decided to meet in Common Ground to arrange the details of the bout. The Student Union initially offered to host the meeting in the President's Office, but some last minute 'tech-

nical problems' with the room's computer prevented any such engagement from happening. In a global exclusive, Cherwell exclusively reports on the details of the event:

Such an important event demands an important venue. As such, both parties have agreed to stage the bout in the Radcam with a coin flip at the start of the match to decide on which floor the scuffle will take place. A tribute from each union will be selected to fight until one receives a minor head injury. While the Student Union had no problems selecting a fighter, the Oxford Union went through three different candidates who were all disqualified for seemingly ridiculous and falsified reasons before finding their fighter.

The fight will be one for the ages, and has already been dubbed by many as the 'fumble in the jungle'. Excitement is slowly building, as whispers of a national 'hacks varsity' title match against Cambridge have already started to circulate.

John Evelyn

5th June 2024

Ladies and Gentlemen, I introduce myself as John Evelyn the Second, taking over for the last edition of the academic year. At the beginning of term, when Cherwell voted on who should take the throne, I was distraught after losing by only a handful of votes. But that did not stop me! Once I realised that a volleyball, a turnip, a dam-building rodent, and a senile bookkeeper were on my side, I called my mates from the EDL and asked them to sit on a panel. Eventually, after thirty failed attempts, I won! John Evelyn the First was tribbed and I have seized his crown. Although he probably did nothing wrong, the thirty-first tribunal felt that 'Jev' sounded vaguely foreign. I was clearly the better candidate.

Meanwhile, at our great Union, democracy is alive and well. Because we love the democratic process so much, we recounted every ballot from last term's election, pitting Colin the Caterpillar against RONald McDonald. The Caterpillar won a barnstorming majority - clearly the people's choice! Ronald was indeed lovin' it as he lost

his 260th election in a row. Time will tell if the Caterpillar's term will be plunged into darkness the same way his Hilary ball was, or if he can sprout wings and evade capture by Pontius Appellate. In Monday's meetings, the spirit of democracy was also crackling like electricity. We saw the highest turnout in a long time at both CC and Standing, a testament to how much the Union values its voting members.

This Friday we get to watch democracy in action one last time. What a star-studded lineup we have: on one side, two women appointed to their 'elected' positions, a man whose party hate him, and another whose SUpporters are non-existent. On the other, four people you've never even heard of. Clearly they've all been looking to the 45th US President for inspiration: some are claiming the election will be stolen; others claim the courts will be rigged against them. They have all managed to skirt bans against social

media campaigning, plastering pseudo-electoral pledges on Insta and reposting stories of their running mates - if the Turnip were not so tired, he'd probably be having a field day at a disciplinary committee.

We're also likely to start hearing calls of fake news. The DePressive Delinquent is yet to give a statement to anyone, even though we've now made it into the national news. We're under strict gagging orders in committee meetings. Half the candidates are rightly worried about being removed, and their opponents are desperate to convince us that they wouldn't jump for joy if it happened. It has never been clearer that the Union is indeed the Foundation of Western Democracy.

So, as the year draws to a close, John Evelyn bids you farewell. He hopes you all enjoy voting in an election where the RO already knows who will win.



Cherwell

A YEAR IN REVIEW: OUR TOP STORIES FROM EACH TERM

MICHAELMAS TERM 2023 Editors: Antelme & Bristow	HILARY TERM 2024 Editors: Dennog & Mishra	TRINITY TERM 2024 Editors: Saxon & Sandall
Over 300 protest in support of Palestine	74% of students think Oxford University is not inclusive: EDI at Oxford	SU launches groundbreaking Turnaround plan with help from University
New College student greeted by "escort" in their room amidst hotel havoc	University Chancellor Lord Patten announces retirement	Landlords will close ATIK Oxford in June
Ben Shapiro speaks at the Oxford Union	SU candidates express concern over alleged secret slate	Pro-Palestine protesters establish encampment demanding University action
Corpus Christi stalking incident sheds light on inadequate handling of harassment cases in Oxford	Corpus Christi College disaffiliates from Student Union	Students arrested during OA4P sit-in at University offices
Leo Buckley disqualified as Oxford Union President-Elect	Student Welfare and Support Service report shows increase in reported sexual assaults	All three major Union committees pass motions declaring Oxford Union is 'institutionally racist'

Cherwell Team

Editors-in-Chief

Gagging for Park End & Wants to fire you

Deputy Editors-in-Chief

"I've got a friend", Straw destroyer (Jevelyn fan), Great Spanish bakeoff, A comment editor's best mate, ATIK hurdler, ghosted, We're all alcoholics, Ahoy matey, & Our resident client journalist

News & Investigations Editors

flippin' scary, Hubble, Bubble, Missing cleats, Happy camper, Dater not debater, Chorister, & Water quality controller

Comment Editors

Worryingly early bird, Gatsby connoisseur, BNAC (Big Name At Cherwell), Not sponsored by Wordle, Somerville's public enemy #1, & Secret owner of a Derrida shrine

Profile Editors

Deadbeat BNOC, Football hooligan, Best dressed, Best surname, & Photo pending...

Features Editors

The visionary, The artiste, The activist, The veteran, & The departed

Culture Editors

Probably at rehearsals, Fashionista No.1, InDesign wizz, Fashionista No.2, Got a new laptop for *Cherwell*, The machine, InDesign avoider, *Cherwell's* ultimate introducer, Keen commissioner, Film buff, The double agent, Eager theatre-goer, Kafka enthusiast, Only here for the comps, Canva connoisseur, Gmail GOAT, Messenger ignorer, & Laptop crasher

Life Editors

Shlib enjoyer, iPad girlboss, Regents Rabbit, & Blind daTED

Food Editors

Britishi(s)ed & Iced latte connoisseur

Sports Editors

What's WordPress?, HarRAHgate, & Joan of Arc

Puzzles Editors

Persistent Reader, Anonymous puzzler, & Suguru enthusiast

Creative Team

Walking tours, Indie art pop camera girlie, The next Meryl Streep, Mrs Mysterious, Michelangelo, & The collage man

Video Team

Oxford 'aesthetic' rinser, Voila!, Beowulf, The friendly ghost, Pret warrior, The Absolute GOAT, & Sound Check

Instagram team

Questionable loyalty, Canva Minion 1, & Canva Minion 2

Cherbably

Hard drive lover

John Evelyn

"Definitely not Shermar Pryce"



Adam Saxon
Editor-in-Chief

Coming to the end of my term as Editor-in-Chief marks the perfect opportunity to reflect. So much of my University career has been centred around *Cherwell*. I've spent five terms across comment, sport, culture, and now Editor-in-Chief. My friends can verify that every term since Michaelmas I've said that the current term would be my last; it never has been.

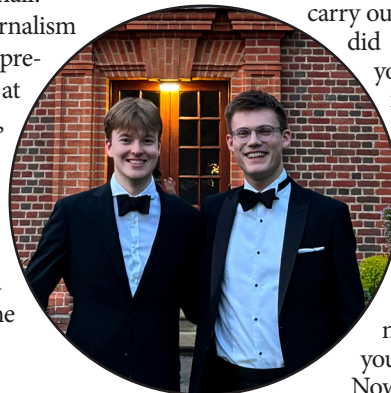
The luxury of being Editor-in-Chief is there's nowhere further to climb, which makes it a natural stopping point. With that said, the end never *really* means the end. I'll be sticking around in an advisory capacity, helping out the very capable hands of Julia and Eden, our Editors-in-Chief for MT24. I'm excited to see where they take the paper, and how it will evolve in our absence.

More than anything, I'd like to thank the people who have made this term possible. It's not been easy; we've had Union drama, the biggest protests Oxford has seen for years,

and the BNOC list, to name but a few challenges. Massive props to our team of Deputy Editors, who've had a lot to deal with. Beyond them, we have eighty-five people who work for *Cherwell*. They make the content you see possible, in print, online, and across social media. Most importantly, I'd like to thank Oli. We've spent an awful lot of time together this term, and I'm glad it was him that I was alongside when enduring our 15-hour+ biweekly lay ins.

I've seen the paper come a long way since Hilary '23. We get complaints about the 'quality of journalism' in Oxford regularly, but the complainants don't appreciate the time and effort that goes into our work. I'm proud of the position Oli and I leave the paper in. Ultimately, though, I also appreciate the excellent work done by Anuj and Binti in Hilary, and Suzanne and Thomas in Michaelmas. The success of the paper is undoubtedly a culmination of the work of many successive sets of Editors-in-Chief, and it's been such a pleasure to see the growth over the last year and a half.

Student Journalism finds itself in a precarious position at the best of times, but I do genuinely feel the work our journalists do is a positive contribution to the Oxford world. I do hope the future is bright.



Oliver Sandall
Editor-in-Chief

Before I begin with what I hope is a valuable comment on my tenure as Editor-in-Chief, let me thank a couple of important people. Thank you, firstly, to Adam. He has had to bear with me and my incessant, annoying comments for several months – I'm sure he's glad I'm bugging off to Germany soon. From being my boss in Michaelmas to being my colleague and to someone whose opinion I have come to value above all others in the student journalist world, you have been an amazing co-Editor.

Thank you also to Bintia and Anuj, the HT24 EiCs, for entrusting me to carry out this role. I hope we did you proud! Thank you to the Senior Editorial Team and to every single *Cherwell* contributor, editor, artist, or social media team member. You have been remarkable, and the paper would not function without you. Now, to my favourite

part: talking about myself. This term has been extremely formative. I have significantly developed myself professionally. At the same time, I have also come to understand the highs and lows of student journalism – and general university life.

To any students reading this not involved in a paper: please remember that we're just students trying our best. Running a student paper is not the easiest feat. Without us – and without other student newspapers – your lives at Uni might be very different.

As Adam says, the quality of journalism in Oxford is often put under the spotlight. Much progress is still to be made, but I am incredibly proud of what Adam and I have achieved this term. My personal highlights are certainly the BNOC list and our great coverage of the student protests.

On a personal note, leading a team of 80+ people has been an incredible experience. My academics have suffered immeasurably and my caffeine consumption has been through the roof, but that's the price you pay for being number 29 on the BNOC list. That being said, I have had the most incredible and rewarding term. I can honestly say I am far better for having done this. And, also, I massively respect anyone for taking on this role. In many ways, it is a very thankless job.

Thank you to everyone who has been there for me. Thank you to Nathan and Joel for being great mates and to my girlfriend, Jessi, for dealing with me week in, week out.

Julia Amann (Jesus) and Eden Kilgour (Somerville) will be your Editors-in-Chief for Michaelmas term 2024. Adam and I wish you the very best of luck. We are sure you will do an excellent job.



Éilis Mathur
Deputy Editor-in-Chief

I first met Julia at the 0th week News social in Hilary term where I'd be lying if I said we exchanged more than three words to each other. Admittedly, the social was quite awkward, made worse by someone ordering shrimp (whatever happened to a pint?) and being questioned about my previous term at *The Oxford Blue*. But I did find Julia friendly and was looking forward to getting to know her more that term. Yet other than a few back-and-forth messages to arrange interviews and occasional laughs at News meetings, this never really happened. It was only when we became Deputy Editors to-

gether at the start of this term that our friendship truly blossomed...

I quickly found – once I felt comfortable enough to voice my inner monologue – that we usually shared the same thoughts on editors, articles, and *Cherwell* in general, and while this began with rushed debriefs over messages, it's now reached a point where I can tell what Julia is thinking from behind a closed 'Choffice' (*Cherwell* office) door. Our friendship has even extended beyond the world of articles and editing, and at every *Cherwell* social, you can find me in possession of many many straws, prepared to hand them over to Julia once

she's chewed her current one into some soggy mushy pulp.

It's true, we've definitely become close and the thought of having even a single day without message her does unsettle me. Whether you want to put that down to trauma bonding over InDesign or the frankly alarming number of hours we've spent covering breaking news this term, I'd still confidently say we've become very good friends. I've had a lot of fun running News and Investigations this term and Julia has been an essential and wonderful part of it, that I definitely could not have done it without.



Julia Amann
Deputy Editor-in-Chief

The last few months of student journalism have been busy, both for Éilis and me leading News in Oxford and at universities around the world. Covering Oxford's reaction to the War in the Gaza Strip has required a standard of accuracy in reporting that has sometimes proven difficult to uphold. News is supposed to translate human events – which are fundamentally personal, and often emotional – to something that is factual and fair. Perspective might, for example, change our understanding of the 'fact' of a protest: if a speech is impassioned, perhaps it is also inflammatory. If a protest attracts significant turnout, then probably it also causes disruption.

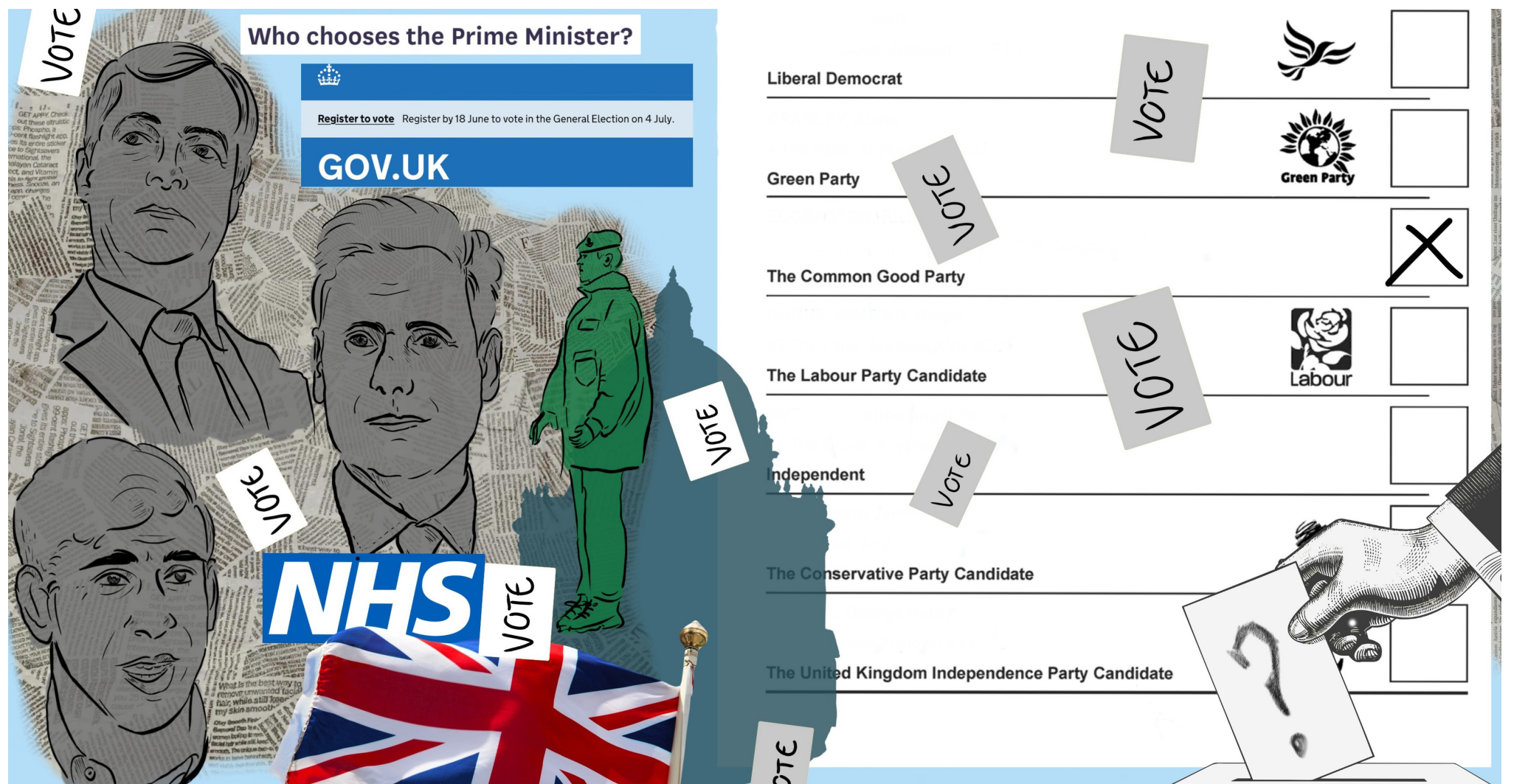
After the arrest of 17 protesters a

few weeks ago, OA4P informed our team that all protesters had been released without charges; days later, the University later told us their release, though without charges, involved conditional bail. Though either party's information was entirely wrong, our reporting ultimately relied on one source checking another.

My relationship with Éilis operates in much the same way. We agree with each other on most points. She and I both know that straws are made to be chewed; that news editors are excellent candidates to attend World Cocktail Day at the Ashmolean; and that she's funnier than me about 50% of the time. It's on greyer issues than those that we've disagreed. How many people have to show up to a protest before

it's a story? How many conflicting responses to a statement warrant an update to an article? What's funnier: or 'racket and ruckus' or 'faff and fuss'? In these cases, it's Éilis' always thoughtful pushback that makes me consider where I might be wrong.

I don't know is not more than what we (as writers or readers) get out of it. For me, that's been an appreciation for contradicting information, as well as for Éilis. As I come back to *Cherwell* next term as Editor-in-Chief, I'll very much miss Éilis while she's on her year abroad (whoever heard of personal growth from exposure to diverse perspectives?). But I'll look forward to getting something closer to fact out of all the hubbub (and hullabaloo) that Oxford churns up in Michaelmas.



General Election 2024: *Cherwell's* Political Hot Takes

Melinda Zhu, Evelyn Power, Madelina Gordon and Rufus Hall break down the data.

Oxford is a notoriously strange place with a notoriously strange populace: one which includes Union hacks who desire nothing more than to rule the world and scholarly types who get off on reading Schopenhauer deep into the night when most of their peers are... well, getting off, or something. We wouldn't know.

Anyhow, with a general election on the horizon and Keir Starmer content punishing our TikTok feeds, we wanted to test the strangeness of Oxford students in the sphere of politics.

We ran the *Cherwell* Politics Hot Takes survey for two weeks and amassed a hoard of data which we can now share with you. With side-by-side analysis of the data we received and the latest results of YouGov polls for the age group 18-24, we've been able to provide an exclusive insight into the politics of different colleges and attempt to answer the eternal question of how the average Oxford student differs from the typical voter.

Voting intentions

It is no surprise that Labour's vast lead in the polls was also reflected in the voting intentions of our respondents. When asked 'if there was a general election tomorrow, which party would you vote for?'

57.1% responded Labour, 9.2% Conservative, 14.3% Greens, and 9.2% Liberal Democrat. The rest said they wouldn't vote, or they would spoil their ballot. A wholesome four people said that they would vote for Reform UK, placing their poll far below the 12% which YouGov most recently recorded for the age group 18-24.

Amongst colleges, Hertford emerged as the Greenest. Nearly two thirds of respondents from the college said that they would vote Green in an election held tomorrow, making up nearly a fifth of all those respondents who opted for Green overall.

At the other end of the spectrum, Jesus emerged as the most right wing college: 3/4 of its respondents said they would vote for Reform UK or the Tories. Jesus only equalled rivals Corpus and New, however, with regard to the number of right wing voters it fielded. (Note that (T-)Oriel did not even make the ten colleges with the highest proportion of right wing voters. Clearly, its members were too busy getting their tweed ready for Port and Policy to respond to the survey.)

Viewing our results alongside those of YouGov, we found that our respondents expressed higher levels of voting intention for Labour and the Conservatives than the 18-24 year olds consulted by YouGov – in other words, a lower proportion

of 18–24-year-olds nationally intend to vote for the two main parties compared to Oxford students. The most underrepresented in our data were those intending to vote for the Liberal Democrats. Whilst the national average for the age group during May hovered around 15%, only 9% of our responded intended to vote for the Lib Dems. Oxford students remain polarised across the two main parties, with the Greens in a stronger position as the third party compared to the

“Hertford was the Greenest college [...] Jesus emerged as the most right wing.”

Lib Dems heading into the general election.

Notably, Oxford is in no way an exception to the gendered voting trends noted amongst the wider country. Much like YouGov's survey of the differing voting intentions of men and women, *Cherwell's* survey found that those who identified as female were slightly more likely to vote Labour than their male counterparts, though both genders favoured Labour generally, with

65% of women and 56.9% of men planning on voting for them in their polling booths. While neither gender seemed hugely keen on another term of Sunak, the prospect was more popular among male students: 14.7% of them plan to vote for the Conservatives, compared with only 3.8% of women and absolutely 0 non binary students. 20% of non-binary respondents plan to vote Labour or Lib Dem, whilst the most popular party for this group was the Green party: 60% of non-binary respondents plan to vote Green at the next general election, a number that dwarfs the 16.3% of female and 8.8% of male students who intended to vote similarly. YouGov did not collect data on this group.

Key issues

When asked what the most important issues facing the country are, it's fair to say that the priorities of Oxford students are reasonably typical of their age group. According to YouGov, the economy is one of the most important issues for all Britons aged 18-24, as it was for our respondents. In both surveys, the economy won out as the most important issue by a margin of 20%.

Furthermore, both groups agree that the least important issue facing the country is crime. Even if *The Sun's* dubious claim from last year

that a “child crimewave is sweeping the UK” were true, neither Oxford students nor young Britons seem particularly bothered. Where the results most notably diverge concerns the environment: over half of our respondents said the issue was one of the top three most important compared to just over one fifth of respondents to the YouGov poll.

It comes as no surprise that the environment was the most important issue for those Oxford students who would vote green, with nearly 9 in 10 of those respondents selecting it as one of their top three issues. One can only speculate what is drawing the other 10% to the Green party - although Caroline Lucas' chill vibes must count for something.

The economy remains the most important issue: for both Conservative and Labour voting respondents, over 80% of each group stated it as one of their most important issues. They differed, however, in their other priorities: around half of all Conservative voters placed defence & terrorism, and immigration & asylum as one of their top three issues. For Labour voters, the legacy of Attlee's housing reforms, and Bevan's NHS on their shoulders, it was housing and health that took second and third place.

Male and female respondents were fairly similar in their priorities, save that the women of Oxford

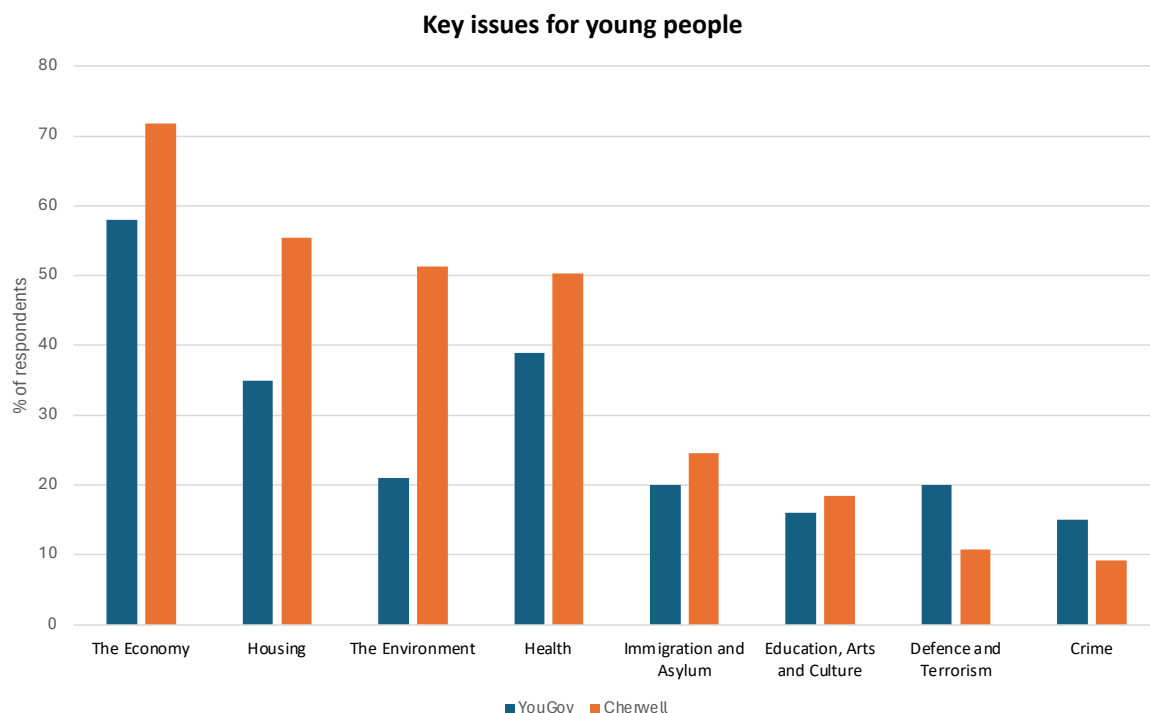


Figure 1. Respondents were asked to select their top three most significant issues from this list. The proportion of respondents who picked one issue is depicted by the height of the bar.

are over 20% more interested in health than the men, who, in a typically strong and manly fashion, find defence and terrorism and crime to be more important, by a margin of 10% in both cases, than their female counterparts. The economy took the top spot for male and female groups. On the other hand, nationally, 6% more women (of all ages) said that health was important than said that the economy was. With age bringing the prospect of ailments and frailties that the young lassies of Oxford could never conceive of, it seems only natural that widening the age range would mean that health would come out on top.

Government approval & political trust

As you might hope, Oxford students are more clued in (or at least more opinionated) than the average 18-24 yr old. According to YouGov, as of 27th May 2024, 25% of respondents in the age range did not know whether they approved of the government's record to date. Of our respondents, only 3% were so diffident. Furthermore, whilst the approval rating of the YouGov poll sits at 13%, in our survey, only 7% approved of the government's record and over 90% disapproved. All five prime ministers of the last 14 years were Oxford educated. So much for blue through and through!

Notably, no respondent who would vote Labour approved of the government's record (the disapproval rate with this group was 98.2%). On the other hand, 52.9% of Conservative voters approved of the government, leaving a sizable 35% who disapproved and would rather have a Conservative government than any alternative arrangement. The mind truly boggles.

Oxford students are also more convinced of the brokenness of the political system. When asked "How well does Britain's political system work?" over a third of respondents

said that it sometimes appears broken, with the same number saying that it is badly broken: that amounts to nearly 7 in 10 respondents saying that our political system at least appears broken, compared with under half of respondents to the YouGov poll aged between 18-24 saying the same.

The most frequently cited reason for the broken political system was, as one student wrote: "in four words, first past the post". Disillu-

"Starmer is an unprincipled opportunist, but his party will reinvest in health and alleviate poverty..."

sionment with FPTP was supplemented by a more general unhappiness with the current political system – stretching from democracy as whole: "we're descending into fascism hahaha", past the unelected house of lords, the two party system, to recent political episodes: "A system that allows Liz Truss to be in power for a month and relies on the public for slight scrutiny is sincerely broken".

Many respondents also commented on substantive political issues of the last 14 years as indicators of how broken the system is. Six respondents mentioned the NHS, nine the collapse of public services and the cost of living crisis. Immigration (particularly the Rwanda bill), genocide in Gaza, and climate crisis were mentioned by over ten students. The compounding of all these issues was reflected by several exasperated students writing un-

bashedly "literally nothing works" and "the country has gone off a cliff".

As young people, students were worried that 'the NHS was on its last legs', and that they'd never be able to afford houses (unless, someone wrote, 'they sell their soul to corporate London'). One student wrote "education, the media and news outlets have people in a chokehold", whilst another claimed 'everything is run by a consortium of rich dudes'.

Optimism about Britain's future

Given 83% of conservative voters stated they were optimistic about Britain's future, there was also an alternative justification for optimism which was in virtue of a confidence in the current system as it stands. A University college student wrote "we are the best country in the world. God save the king", whilst a Christchurchian claimed 'Britain has all the potential in the world, it is one of the most developed countries and will only grow stronger'. Uncertainty and hope for optimism also featured prominently, with several students seeing the value in optimism but unsure if it would be naïve to embrace it.

The pessimists among us blamed the decreasing faith in politics as a result of a "struggling NHS, Brexit and the xenophobic rhetoric associated with it, cost of living crisis, education system reforms that seemed to be for the sake of making a visible change rather than actual progress."

Those who manage to remain optimistic find hope in the "many talented people in all corners of society collectively making small improvements for everyone. The very culture of the place makes it stable and advancing." Similarly, another respondent encouraged us not to "let the ups and downs of the past 16 years prevent us from seeing the opportunities the future presents.

Politicians need to regain our trust - if they do so, it will be well earned and good cause for optimism."

Student attitudes towards Labour

It is extremely likely that Labour will form a majority government after the next election. Nearly 60% of our respondents said that they would vote for Labour in an election, suggesting that the party has enormous support among Oxford students. According to YouGov, Labour polls just as highly among young people across the country. However, Keir Starmer has notably managed to massively increase Labour's potential vote share in all age groups since 2019 apart from among 18-24 year olds, for whom Jeremy Corbyn was just as appealing.

That Starmer's centrist persona has the potential to disenfranchise younger voters came across in the responses to *Cherwell's* survey. One respondent wrote: "Labour is offering nothing radical in a time when people are crying out for someone to say what everything is thinking: starving children, poisoning people's blood and outing trans people to their parents is unacceptable. Keir and his gang refuse to say this, and as such, fail." Another described Starmer as having transformed the Labour party into a "proto-Tory club, which sidelines left wing MPs," a reference, presumably to controversy concerning Starmer's moves to centralise candidate selection. The same respondent felt that all of this amounted to the absence of "true socialism" in the party.

One respondent seemed thrilled at the prospect of a Labour government, but did not miss out on the opportunity to have a jab at Starmer, writing: "Starmer is an unprincipled opportunist but his party will reinvest in health, education and social care, alleviate poverty, reduce corruption and cronyism, and help to heal the ruptures in this country."

We reached out to Jack Hurrell, Co-chair of OULC (Oxford University Labour Club) for comment broadly on the issue of Keir Starmer's leadership and Labour's engagement with young people.

Hurrell emphasised that "the main challenge with young people is voter turnout. Polls consistently suggest that young people overwhelmingly support progressive change in this country, but only 43% of people aged 18-24 voted in 2019. This needs to change if we are to get a labour government."

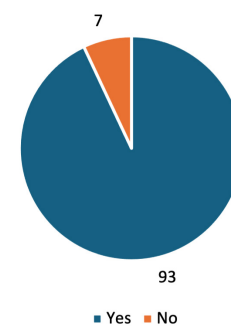
On the subject of Keir Starmer's image, Hurrell emphasised his broad popularity compared to Corbyn among voters nationally, noting that "according to YouGov Keir Starmer currently has a net approval rating of -9% compared to Corbyn's -37%, with some polling agencies showing Starmer has

a net positive approval rating, a rarity in British politics." Hurrell acknowledged that Starmer's popularity does not necessarily persist among young people, but said that "more work can be done to show Keir Starmer's strength of character, personal empathy and kindness" evident, Hurrell said, in his years of pro-bono legal work.

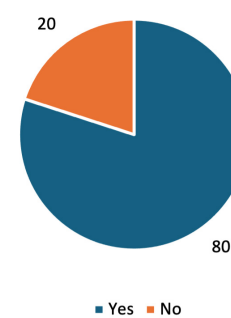
Asked whether the Labour party is still a left-wing party in light of such policy surprises as Starmer's failure to commit to ending the controversial 2 child benefit cap, Hurrell said that "Labour will always be a progressive party," highlighting the previous Labour administration's record on "reducing child poverty" and "making important civil rights gains for LGBT+ people." He went on, saying that "Keir Starmer has been clear that we want to end the two-child benefit cap when the economic situation allows and that is incredibly important to a lot of Labour members like myself."

OUCA were also approached for comment on the current state of the Conservative party; we are yet to hear their response.

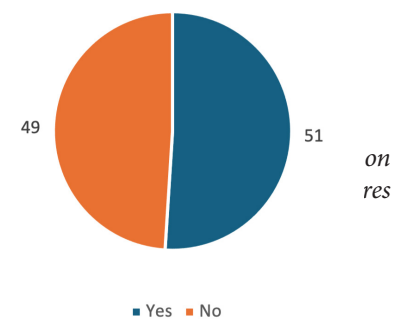
Do you have conversations about politics with friends?



Do you have strong political opinions?



Do you align with your parents politically?



Artwork by Camille Simon.
Graphics by Cherwell Features.

Oxford University and the guise of climate consciousness

Madelina Gordon sheds light on Oxford University's uncut ties to the fossil fuel industry.

Oxford University and climate action. So many stories to tell. This story concerns a crucial inconsistency in policies drafted by the University on the one hand, and its fiscal actions on the other. It is a tale exposed by student FOI requests and reams of data. It is a worrying tale, read in the context of a projected rise of global temperatures by 2.6-4.8 degrees by the end of the century.

To begin, we must go back to the university's milestone unveiling of the Oxford Martin Principles for Climate Conscious Investment (henceforth OMPs) in 2018. These were developed against the backdrop of the 2016 Paris agreement, which aimed to limit global temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels by the end of this century, which would mean a 43% reduction in annual emissions by 2030 compared to 2019 levels.

There are three OMPs: (1) commitment to 'net-zero' emissions, (2) developing a profitable net-zero business model, and (3) quantitative medium-term targets. They prescribe that companies should develop and publish a transition strategy to reach a net-zero target. For companies providing carbon intensive services or fuels with "no currently available substitutes", the principles advise "a clear plan" for developing and deploying substitutes. Furthermore, these plans all should be in the timescale of the mid-term; which in 2018 was 2030 according to the OMPs briefing document, yet there is minimal explanation for how the 'mid-term' is defined.

The function of the principles is to "provide a framework for engagement between climate conscious investors and companies across the global economy", and generate a checklist that must be met by companies looking to meet the 'climate conscious' label. According to the Oxford Martin School website, by the close of the programme's launch in November 2020, "the principles had influenced the strategies of investment management companies and institutional investors that control a combined £62.5 billion." Since 2018, the principles have also been central to Oxford University's own financial policies. In the 2022 OEF report from Oxford University Endowment Management (OUem) – the subsidiary responsible for managing the University's £6 billion endowment – it is specified that OUem "asked all investment partners to use the Oxford Martin Principles for Climate Conscious Investment". Oxford's donations and research funding guidelines specify consideration of "credible plans to achieve net zero carbon by 2050 or sooner, consistent with the Oxford Martin Principles". Moreover, the Oxford University Careers Service has introduced a set of questions for recruiters which draw on the principles.

On the most generous understanding, most of the key players in the

fossil fuel industry do not meet the standards set by the OMPs. According to evidence collated by Climate Action 100+, an initiative that assesses the extent to which the "largest corporate greenhouse gas emitters take necessary action on climate change", ExxonMobil has failed to make a commitment to GHG reduction in the medium term, Shell does not have a decarbonisation strategy to meet its medium and long term GHG reduction targets, and both BP PLC and Eni SpAs medium term targets for GHG reduction are not aligned with the global target of limiting warming to 1.5°C.

It is therefore surprising to find that, in the post-Martin Principles era, Oxford University has maintained its financial relationships with a number of these fossil fuel companies. Freedom of Information data has revealed that, since 2016, research funding in excess of £5.5 million has been provided by the likes of Shell, Eni SpA and others to the University. Moreover, the proportion of funding annually provided by these companies did not decrease with the passing of the OMPs. In 2020,

“By 2020, the OMPs had influenced the strategies of investment management companies and institutional investors that control a combined £62.5 billion.”

two years after the principles were published, the total annual funding from fossil fuel companies was 3.5% higher than in 2017. Likewise, the total donations from fossil fuel companies including Shell, ExxonMobil, Eni SpA and BP to Oxford schools or departments did not change after the introduction of the principles. Sums between £500,000–£999,999 were donated to the university in 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019. Sums of up to £500,000 were repeatedly donated between 2016 and 2023, suggesting little change as a result of the passing of the principles.

The extent of the relations between Oxford and these key fossil fuel players is illustrated by records of non-transactional interactions as well. Data from a Freedom of Information request revealed that in 2021, three years after the OMPs were first implemented, 14 meetings and conferences between directors of the Oxford Net Zero research initiative, two of whom were involved in draft-



ing the OMPs, and fossil fuel corporations including Shell, Equinor, BP and Exxon Mobil, took place. One of these supposed 'meetings' was a lunch with BP at the Hotel Du Vin in Glasgow – during COP26.

So, not only is Oxford University still tied economically to the fossil fuel industry via funding and donations, but the actors responsible for setting the industry-leading sustainability targets embedded in the OMPs are, in fact, consistently engaging with the corporations from which the principles themselves stipulate divestment and delinking from. The optimist might speculate that these meetings are the basis for constructing the conditions for achieving total delinking, or pressuring for climate action in the fossil fuel industry. However, the lack of transparency regarding the content of these meetings means we have no way of corroborating such speculation. No minutes or reports of any of these meetings are available beyond the data retrieved from the Freedom of Information inquiry.

Instead, the insufficient action of these key corporations in the fossil fuel industry to implement medium term GHG reduction targets in line with limiting emissions to 1.5°C has motivated negative speculation about Oxford University's actual intentions amongst student activists. Oxford Climate Society Presidents Flora Prideaux (current) and Guy Zilberman (former) echo such speculation, stating that "Oxford University's educational and research approach to the climate crisis is manufactured by the same individual assisting the fossil fuel industry with its 'strategy'. This coordination is actively harming students and academics in the institution, shaping the research produced by the university."

Against a backdrop of climate emergency, what should we make of all this?

There is a two-fold concern with this state of affairs. Firstly, Oxford University is not 'de-linking' from, or breaking a broad range of ties with, the fossil fuel industry. The University still receives research funding and

donations from these companies, and representatives of university subsidiary companies engage with them in regular meetings. Failure to delink diminishes the effect of divestment from fossil fuel companies because it affirms the social licence of a corporation by negating the ostracisation and diminished economic agency that ought to follow from it.

Secondly, this failure is exacerbated in virtue of the University's own OMPs. The fossil fuel companies we have a record of the University engaging with do not meet the targets set by the principles. Hence, despite the guise of rigour and due diligence in sustainability that is afforded research funding or donation guidelines, the principles are either being consistently undermined, or rather are serving to preserve existing comfortable and economically beneficial

“Since 2016, research funding in excess of £5.5 million has been provided by the likes of Shell, Eni SpA and others.”

ties that Oxford University has with major fossil fuel companies.

Furthermore, this inconsistency sets a precedent for generating half-hearted, performative climate policy, and then loosely enforcing that policy, for other corporations and higher education institutions, particularly given Oxford's position of academic and best practice exemplarity in the UK. It goes without saying that this precedent would be to the potential detriment of global efforts to deal with the climate crisis. The incentive to get fossil fuel companies to reduce their carbon emissions does not exist when these companies are still funding research, still

getting shoe-ins to personal meetings with key stakeholders, and being accorded legitimacy and kudos by leading climate research initiatives.

Students cannot sit still. The University's ties to the fossil fuel industry may still be deeply ingrained, but they are not interminable. The Oxford Martin Principles have been insufficient to eradicate such ties. More is needed and what more should be directed by students, by the next generation, by researchers not ascribing to the 'net-carbon-zero' hegemony that dominates Oxford climate research. The extent of Oxford's imbrication with the fossil fuel industry is by no means uncovered. Here is a narrative that is part of a far bigger picture, and there is an unwavering impetus to not only complete the story but do everything in our power to rewrite it.

When asked for comment, the University of Oxford told *Cherwell*:

“The University receives research funding and donations from companies and organisations from the fossil fuel sector, typically at an average of ~£3m pa in research funding (< 1% of research turnover) and ~£2m pa in philanthropic donations. These funds are used principally to support researchers and activities aimed at speeding the transition to a net zero carbon future, or to support activities not connected to fossil fuels (such as research on anti-microbial resistance).

In 2022, Council made a decision not to accept donations or research funding from companies and organisations in the extractive fossil fuel sector unless those companies had (a) a published commitment to net zero in line with the Paris Agreement; (b) a clear strategy and business model for achieving net zero; and (c) medium term metrics of progress. As of last year, the University has employed, from internal funding, a researcher, embedded in the Oxford Net Zero initiative, specifically dedicated to evaluating the net zero strategies of extractive fossil fuel companies in support of this decision.”

*Read the full article at [Cherwell.org](https://www.cherwell.org)
Artwork by Joseph Walford.*

Fashion

Screening the Regency: An exploration of historical costume design

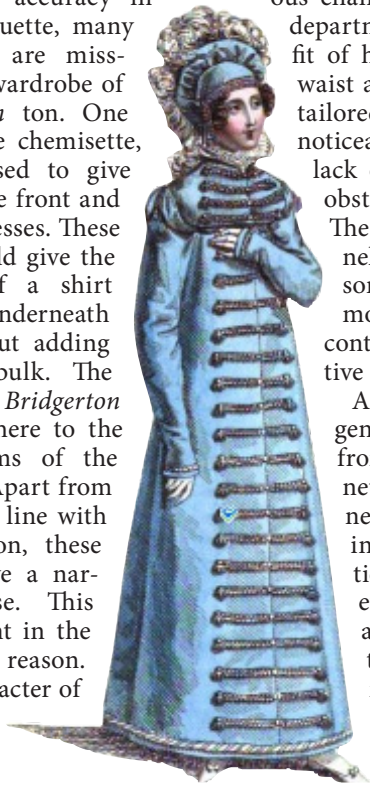
Aniya Boranbay

The recent release of the first part of hit Netflix show *Bridgerton's* third season has once again sparked discussion about its costuming and adherence (or lack thereof) to actual Regency trends. The extravagant dresses and accessories featured in the show are undoubtedly visually appealing, however, they are often not historically accurate. While the costumes are not the most era-appropriate, many argue that the show is a fantasy loosely based on history, rather than a faithful retelling, and that the costumes are meant to appeal to modern tastes. The discourse around *Bridgerton's* fashion more broadly reflects how Regency fashion is often misrepresented on screen for narrative or aesthetic reasons.

The Regency era most often refers to the time in British history between the late 1700s and the early 1800s. What *Bridgerton* gets right about fashion in this era is the silhouettes. The empire waistline was the predominant style, and this is reflected on the screen. The cropped jackets that have

become synonymous with Kate Sharma's style are also surprisingly historically accurate. These jackets are known as a Spencer and were adapted from and inspired by the menswear at the time.

Despite the accuracy in terms of silhouette, many crucial items are missing from the wardrobe of the *Bridgerton* ton. One of these is the chemisette, which was used to give coverage to the front and neckline of dresses. These garments would give the appearance of a shirt or blouse underneath a dress without adding unnecessary bulk. The necklines in *Bridgerton* would not adhere to the modesty norms of the Regency era. Apart from being more in line with modern fashion, these necklines serve a narrative purpose. This is most evident in the most recent reason. The main character of season three, Penelope



Featherington, is sidelined in seasons one and two. In season three, she reinvents herself in order to move more into the spotlight of society. One major way she does this is through her wardrobe. An obvious change that the costuming department made was to the fit of her dresses around the waist and neckline. The more tailored fit in season three is noticeable partly due to the lack of additional garments obstructing the neckline. The better tailoring of Penelope's dresses in season three makes her look more put together, thus contributing to her narrative arc for the season.

Another important Regency accessory missing from the show is the bonnet. This is the most often neglected item of clothing in on screen representations of the Regency era, even though it was such a wardrobe staple at the time. However, this makes sense for media targeted to modern audiences. Nicely styled,

glossy hair is a marker of beauty in contemporary society, and hair is better captured on camera when not obstructed by anything. While the decision to not include bonnets in the show's costuming is understandable, it is a shame as they are so paramount to Regency fashion and can be used to make outfits complete.

The colours used in the show are also far from historically accurate. Bright colours were not staples of the Regency era, yet multiple characters on the show, like the entire Featherington family, are defined by the flashy colours they wear. This too, seems like an intentional storytelling technique, rather than an oversight. The Featheringtons wear extravagant hues due to their desire to be noticed, and also as a way to distract from their poor financial stand-

ing. Each family in *Bridgerton* has their own colour scheme reflective of their personality, and this subtle symbolism would not be possible if all of the costumes used colours faithful to the Regency era.

Fictional media set in Regency England does not always need to be truly faithful to historical fashion because the time period and its silhouette is so recognisable that it can be immediately identified when seen on screen. This gives shows like *Bridgerton* room to be creative in the way they use their costuming for symbolism and propagating the plot, which has been very clearly demonstrated in the latest season of the Netflix show.

Image Credit: CharmaineZoe's Marvelous Melange / CC BY 2.0 via Flickr.



Books

Lost in translation?

Nina Naidu

As someone who is half Japanese, I've become accustomed to reading literature in different languages. Some books I've enjoyed so much that I've read them in both languages, such as Haruki Murakami's *Norwegian Wood*. Contemporary Japanese authors like Murakami are often described as being quite dry and direct, with dialogue that sometimes translates awkwardly into English. And while I understand these criticisms of translations, I often feel the essence of the original novel is able to shine through despite these flaws.

Murakami's writing style reflects his approach to the physical craft of writing. In his book *Novelist As A Vocation*, he mentions that with novels, there is a possibility that "the reader can be stifled if the screws are too tight". Murakami leaves room for some passages to be long-winded, convoluted, even, to allow the other free-flowing passages to breathe. As a result, his writing style emerges like a sphygmomanometer, constantly constricting and then relaxing to make those "tightly restricted sections achieve their full effect". This very feeling is crafted meticulously in their translated counterparts, thanks to the translators' deep understanding of the source material. Take *Scheherazade*, translated by Ted Goossen, for example: about a man who is having an affair with an older woman. In between lengthy sections of mundane, almost unnat-

ural sounding conversations about lampreys and breaking and entering, we read vivid details about the protagonist, from the way she undresses herself to the way her house is decorated. The awkward dialogue in all its glorified translated form works in creating a break between heavy sections of pure description.

However, not all translations are as fortunate – and it's not entirely the translation's fault. A few years ago, I read a book called *Snakes and Earrings* by Hitomi Kanehara, another Japanese author. I picked it up in English after seeing someone mention it on social media, piquing my curiosity due to its unconventional plot. The novel follows Rui (bizarrely named after Louis Vuitton), who develops a deep obsession in body modification after seeing her new gangster boyfriend's split tongue. She embarks on a journey to also get her tongue split and subsequently begins a violent affair with a tattoo artist.

The book is incredibly short, just over 100 pages, and was extremely slow-paced until the last fifteen pages or so. Despite receiving literary awards and high praise, I felt Kanehara's writing style was clunky, as though written by a teenager who had recently discovered smutty fanfiction. I wasn't surprised to learn that Kanehara had indeed written it at sixteen, albeit with the guidance of her father, a sociology professor.

While the pacing of *Snakes and Earrings* felt inconsistent with its abrupt, unsatisfactory finale, this was perhaps not the fault of the translator, David Karashima. The

novel did offer an interesting sociological insight into youth gang culture in Japan, but I felt let down by the literary limitations of Kanehara, who perhaps did not have the experience of the literary means to express her story in a truly impactful way. It certainly appealed to younger readers due to the simple language and shorter sentences, but of course, the subject matter felt potentially inappropriate for such an audience. Ultimately, I concluded that I may have resonated with the story more if the writing and pacing had been stronger.

Not trusting my initial judgement, however, I decided to give it another go in Japanese: could Kanehara redeem herself? Perhaps she was more articulate in Japanese and it was simply that the translator did not capture her work effectively, which

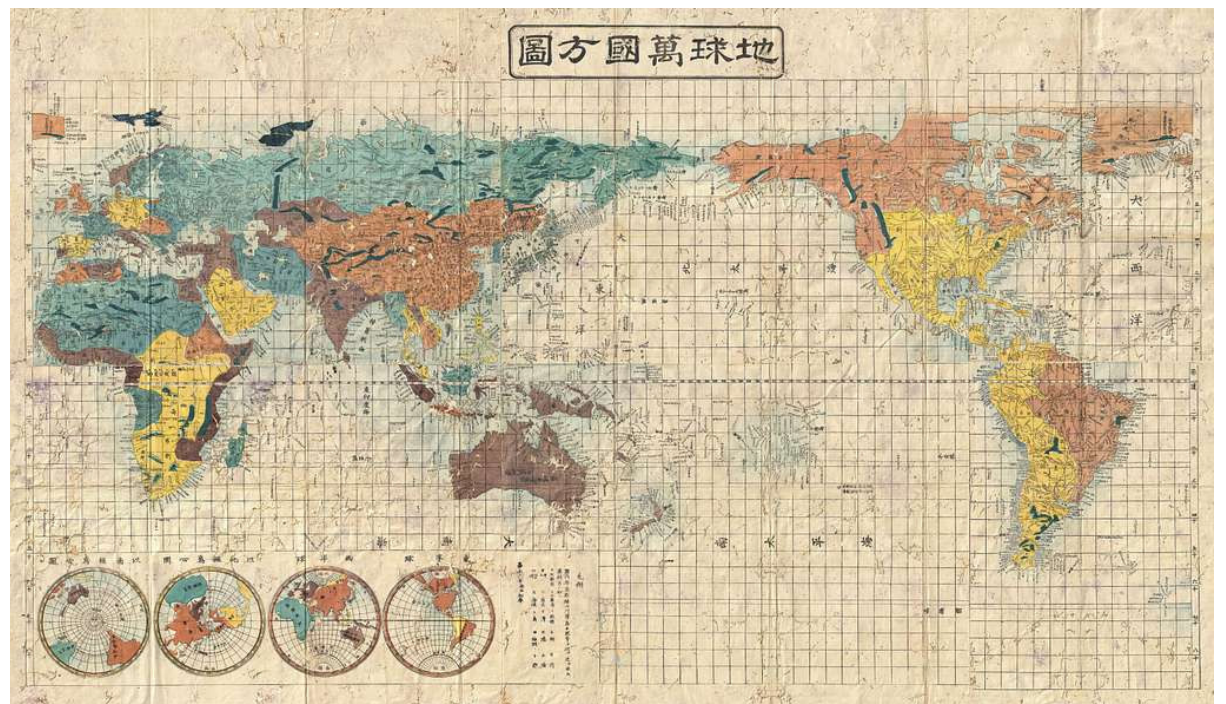
was entirely possible. But how does one wrongly translate pacing? In the end, I faced similar problems whilst tackling the original, feeling that even with my slightly lacking Japanese reading skills, the plot may have been more exciting if written in a more captivating way.

Examining translated fiction highlights the pivotal role of a translator in engaging with an entirely new literary audience. The constant decision-making required throughout translation is crucial in determining how a book will be perceived by international readers whilst simultaneously maintaining the original tone and meaning. On a smaller scale, I've come to understand this myself while studying Italian. In translation, maintaining the integrity of the text while adapting certain elements to fit more naturally

in the target language is key. However, it is not the translator's job to manipulate the text into something it's not. After a certain point, surely, we can no longer call it the same book. In the same way that Murakami's directness is reflected in the work of his translators, I can admit that Kanehara's English counterparts are also faithful to her craft. As much as I want to blame the translation, perhaps my problem lies with the original storytelling.

Now I understand that *Snakes and Earrings* in English indeed captures the heart and soul of the original, even if not up to my taste. At least it was an authentic reading experience, which perhaps means more than simply having a great book in your hands.

Image Credit: Suido Nakajima / PDM 1.0 DEED via PICRYL.



Music

Mitski's *The Land is Inhospitable* tour review: 'The artist by herself'

Faye Chang

The original title I had for this review was 'Retired from Sad, New Business in camp.' This was weeks before the actual concert itself, when my view was formed entirely by the series of videos posted on the Instagram account, @mitskiontour. From the upbeat rendering of 'I Don't Smoke', to the dead-bug poise Mitski holds in 'I Bet on Losing Dogs', these excerpts seemed to promise a campy, pick-apart-and-put-back-together of the bastion of songs of my teenage years.

Performed in the historic Eventim Apollo, I was pleasantly surprised by the deliberate reimagination of Mitski's past works on the third day of *The Land is Inhospitable* and *So Are We's* UK tour. While there were indeed joyful subversions of the genre, these were counterbalanced with the classics preserved in their original form: 'I Bet on Losing Dogs', 'First Love/Late Spring', 'Last Words of a Shooting Star', and 'Washing Machine Heart', among other well-known pieces.

This balance between honour-

ing her fanbase and still allowing for artistic experimentation is particularly commendable given Mitski's own troubled relationship with performance. In a 2021 interview with Rolling Stone's Angie Martoccio, Mitski admitted that she had effectively quit music after 'Be the Cowboy'. She spoke of the objectification fame brought: "The music industry is this super-saturated version of consumerism. You are the product being consumed, bought, and sold."

It seems that most contemporary artists exist at the extremes in terms of how they respond to this commodification: either they engineer a familiarity with their audience through a range of personable divulences, or they maintain a stoic indifference towards adoring fans.

I'm not going so far as to say Mitski has resolved this tension entirely, but her response to it demonstrates respect for herself and her audience, preserving a professional distance. During the concert, Mitski told more of the artists and band members around her than herself, sharing the spotlight in an important way.

Still, her appreciation for her listeners is not to be denied. "All of us," she says, after introducing the band members, "with all of our lives, are very happy to be here, doing this for you." At the very end of her concert, she gives a tender farewell to the audience: "I know you won't believe me when I say this, but I love you - I love you very much."

This struggle between self-preservation and exposure is exemplified in the physical arrangement of the performances itself. After entering from stage left, Mitski remains on a smaller, elevated central podium for the rest of the concert in a black A-line skirt, with marionette-like choreography to complement her songs. The stage set-up makes the artist's entrapment literal: constrained by the expectations of her audience in performance, as one might feel in love (particularly if one relates to her repertoire), Mitski rebuffs and attempts to escape from the barriers of this miniature stage. In *Geyser*, the artist runs to and is violently pushed back from the borders of the platform by some invisible force. Its lyrics transfer

across both the domains of romantic and artistic relationships: "I will be the one you need / I just can't be without you" is a promise and a plea to a lover, but also to fans.

These boundaries in the concert maintain a purposeful distance between the performer and those watching, whilst also demonstrating a close control over the artistic experience. Everything in the concert is felicitous and deeply intentional, with each step and pulse finely tuned and timed to the beating of background drums, or to the arrival of a new song.

Only at the very end does Mitski leap off the platform, breaking free from these restraints to offer something of her-

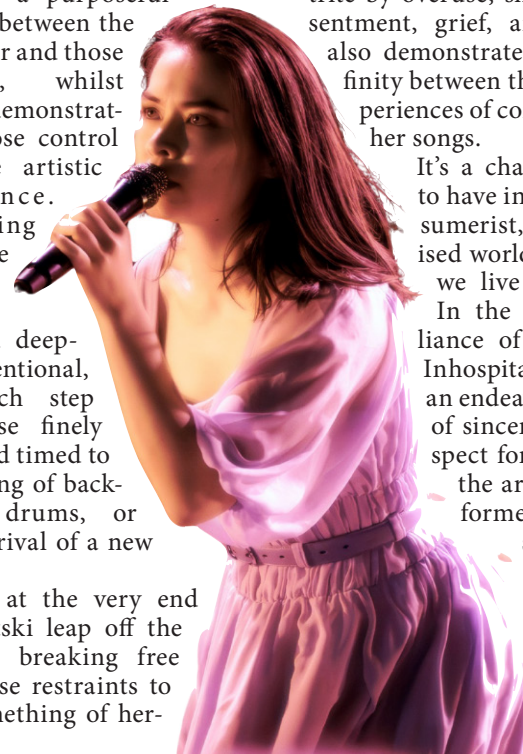
self: to give her final bows and bid us all goodbye.

This tour shows the audience a performer dedicated to her art. It reclaims interpretations of many of her most noted works - but where they might have been made trite by overuse, she reinjects resentment, grief, and vitality. It also demonstrates the deep affinity between the lives and experiences of concertgoers and her songs.

It's a challenging effect to have in the often consumerist, sensationalised world of music that we live in nowadays.

In the end, the brilliance of 'The Land is Inhospitable' is that it is an endeavour borne out of sincere love and respect for the audience, the art, and the performer, Mitski herself.

Image Credit: David Lee/ CC BY 2.0 Via Wikimedia Commons.



WHAT'S ON?

Stage: *As You Like It*
@Worcester College

12th - 15th June

Join Worcester College Buskins for their performance of Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, particularly for their gala performance on 13th June!

Music: *Easy Livin' with the Oxford Gargoyles*

@Holywell Music Room

7th June 8:30pm

Join Oxford Gargoyles joined by jazz trio Chillli Garlic Trio for a special night of summer jazz to end week 7!

Film: *The Watched*

@ODEON George St.

Looking to get your horror fix this weekend? Look no further, since *The Watched* is certainly not for the faint of heart. Based on the novel by A.M. Shine, the plot follows Mina as she becomes stranded in a forest in western Ireland.

Blue Monday: Forever a New Order

Emma Heagney

Everybody knows Joy Division, everybody knows New Order. If the former's post-punk gloom is the gateway drug for 80s bands like Bauhaus and The Cure, the latter is a divergent foray into thumping, Kraftwerk-style techno. Yet, *Blue Monday*, New Order's 1983 hit, bridged the gap between restless New York clubs and a budding gothic subculture. In a hefty seven minutes and twenty-nine seconds we hear the synths and choral samples of Kraftwerk, the rhythm of Donna Summer's *Our Love* (1979), and the same bassist that underscored many of Joy Division's most successful works.

Soon after the death of Joy Division's lead singer and eccentric dancer, Ian Curtis, New Order was born, consisting of the remaining members of the original band as well as keyboardist Gillian Gilbert. Bernard Sumner stands out in particular, as the former guitarist of Joy Division but now the frontman of the new venture. Their first album, *Movement* (1981), was joined by the single *Ceremony*, written in the weeks before Curtis' death and considered by many to be the last 'true' Joy Division song. My own father, a true music nerd and child of the 80s (as he so often likes to remind me), remembers this as his favourite song by either band.

In 1981, a visit to New York City introduced New Order to the local scene of dance music, including funk-inspired electronic beats and post-disco sounds. The wonderful

1982 track *Temptation* is a personal highlight for me, acting as the precedent for later experimentation in *Bizarre Love Triangle*, *True Faith*, and of course, *Blue Monday*.

New Order's discography up to 1983 is a thrilling experience for the ears, from the early riffs on *Movement*, laden with post-punk influences, to the techno tunes on *Power, Corruption, and Lies* (1983). Of the latter, one track is particularly noteworthy in the eventual creation of their magnum opus: 5 8 6. The drum loops and beats are almost identical to those of *Blue Monday*, and both songs are exactly the same length. Not long after, *Blue Monday* was written, recorded, and mastered.

For those of us who weren't around at the time of the song's release, we may underestimate the following it

garnered. In an era where popular music was spread either via the radio, MTV, or even word of mouth, the taken-for-granted convenience of streaming platforms was cast off as an invention for the future. To this day, *Blue Monday* is still the best-selling 12" single in British history. New Order had finally carved out their own place in music and popular culture, and the associations with Joy Division simply became a fun fact.

Why do I love *Blue Monday* so much? It isn't just the innovative direction the band took, nor the large instrumental sections that allow you to appreciate each element. For me, the appeal of the song lies in its enmeshing of different genres, borne out of the post-Joy Division context that the band found themselves in. Drawing inspiration from both the

Father of Disco, Giorgio Moroder, and the gothic basslines of Siouxsie and the Banshees (as well as several other artists and sounds), New Order successfully merged dance and rock. Perhaps they weren't the first to do so, but clean, crisp Blue Monday stands out as an encapsulation of the sound that would become 'alternative dance'.

Blue Monday didn't just define the 80s, it continues to define music. Originally finding success in not only mainstream club-goers, but also amongst goths of the time (perhaps owing to the cold, choral echoes in the background), the track is almost a crossover hit, informed by the post-punk sensibilities of the band's past and looking towards a modern, electronically inclined future. It perfectly balances the worlds of mainstream and alternative, of commercial success and critical acclaim.

Image Credit: Luke Brehony / CC BY-SA 4.0 via Wikimedia Commons.



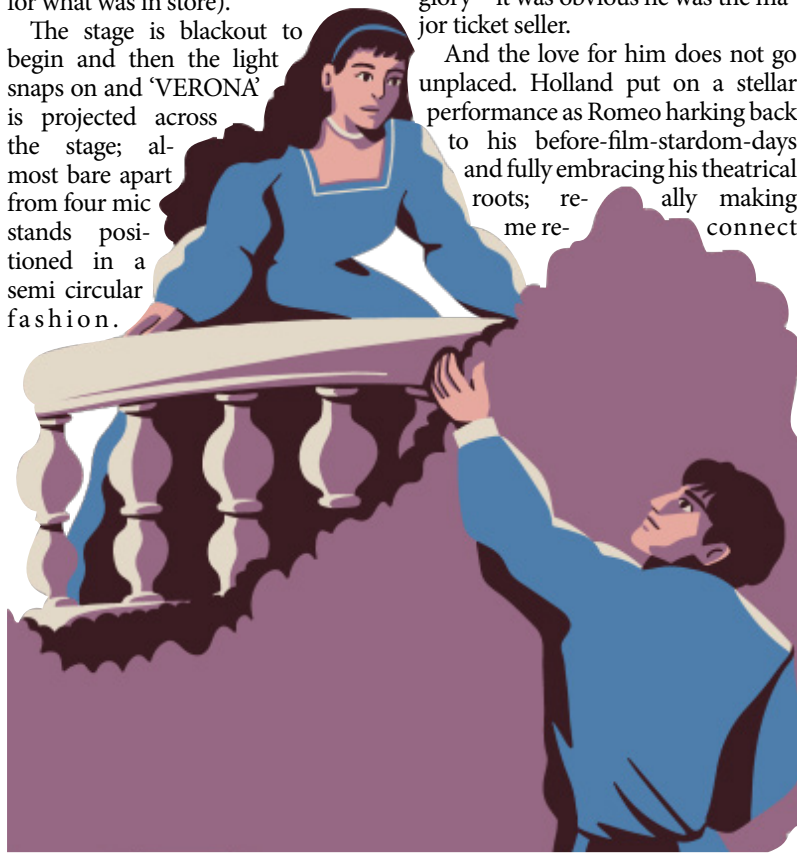
Stage

Romeo and Juliet review: 'Seamless and brilliantly acted'

Kiaya Phillips

Enter the Duke of York's Theatre to a thumping soundtrack that rattles through my bones. It feels like I've entered the beginnings of a dystopian action film, like I'm waiting for something to jump out from around the corner. If he was trying to build tension then Jamie Lloyd does it well, because I couldn't wait for the play to start. By the time I found my seat I was practically shaking with excitement (and a slight twinge of fear for what was in store).

The stage is blackout to begin and then the light snaps on and 'VERONA' is projected across the stage; almost bare apart from four mic stands positioned in a semi circular fashion.

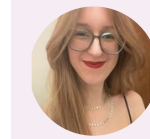


The actors used these throughout the production to allow changes in volume, right down to a whisper. It added a haunting quality to some scenes, and an intensity to others. Another interesting tech choice came from the way actors entered the stage. Romeo starts in the wings of the stage, with a camera following him as he journeys to enter the main stage; a lady somewhere beside me in the stalls shrieked with excitement as Tom Holland blesses our presence, in all his buzz cut, tight white tank and baggy jeans glory – it was obvious he was the major ticket seller.

And the love for him does not go unplaced. Holland put on a stellar performance as Romeo harking back to his before-film-stardom-days and fully embracing his theatrical roots; really making me re-connect

with a Shakespeare play I have spent years hating (GCSE trauma...). But even more striking was his acting and reacting alongside Juliet, played by Francesca Amewudah-Rivers, that reminded me of the beautiful love that truly connects the play at its base. The tension between the two actors during the infamous balcony scene was undeniable, it had me giggling and kicking my feet, and I found myself truly wanting their love to succeed against society's odds. The staging went against the conventions of the typical balcony scene, Lloyd placing the two stars beside one another centre stage rather than having Juliet on an elevated platform. Though proxemically they were close, their dialogue and facial reactions indicated that she was indeed still on a balcony above him. When they finally come together the tension mounts a notch further. They seem to be getting closer and closer and yet still not touching. When they finally do it's like that building tension is finally released - before we remember again the high stakes nature of their meeting. As the scene ends I find myself hopeful for them, even though I know the tragic end that is to come.

Another key scene in the play that was also utilised on stage was the fight, and ultimate death, scene between Tybalt and Mercutio. Lighting and tech is utilised well again here, a blackout and cacophony of sound disrupting the stage at the height of the fight, only to suddenly stop and snappily reilluminate the stage. The audience now finds Mercutio played across the floor screaming 'a plague on both your houses' with his dying



Book of the week: *Kafka on the Shore*, by Haruki Murakami
Olivia Sloan

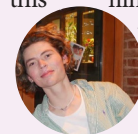
Bizarre, heartwarming and raw. Murakami combines brutal realism with an almost magical philosophy as he shifts in and out of metaphor, throwing the reader into the ambiguity that gives this novel so much charm. As is typical of Murakami, *Kafka on the Shore* embraces dark and often twisted elements of morality, taking a spin of the classic tale of *Oedipus Rex*.

Please check content warnings.



Film of the week: *The Green Ray*
Lara Machado

An ideal watch for the summer vacation, following Delphine, a lonely woman trying to deal with her anxieties over the course of the summer, Rohmer's feature is a melancholic exploration of the complicated search for true companionship. With largely improvised dialogue and beautifully shot, this film captures some of the best of Rohmer's ability to interrogate the ways in which we interact with each other.



Music of the week: *Brand New Bitch*, by Cobrah
Joseph Lomax

The trailer for Yorgos Lantimos' upcoming film, *Kinds of Kindness*, has brought this impeccable house track to my attention. Reminiscent of Slayyyter, Chase Icon, and Shygirl, Cobrah's track makes you feel like you are Emma Stone on the Cannes red carpet. In reality, I'm typing ten words a minute holed up in the library. But Cobrah's track helps me forget that, at least for a blissful three minutes.

breath, whilst he and all other characters on stage are smothered in thick red blood. The same cycle repeats except this time reilluminating the stage on Tybalt's dying body, nevertheless, we are still just as shocked and gripped by this death as we were with Mercutio's. This was also a smart way of cutting out a large choreographed fight scene that every Shakespeare fan will have seen a million times before, and still maintaining the shock factor that the text tries to convey with these

sudden and brutal deaths.

The production was seamless and brilliantly acted by every cast member. Finishing to a well deserved deafening applause and a standing ovation, Holland and Amewudah-Rivers take their final bow. "New, fresh and exciting" is a hard evaluation to achieve when doing Shakespeare, but I would deign to make that claim for this piece. If you are fortunate enough to get your hands on tickets, you are in for a wild ride.

Art

Leonardo da Vinci and his devilish... boyfriend?

Phillipe Luna

When we think of Leonardo da Vinci, the first things that come to mind are usually the Mona Lisa, The Last Supper, or his myriad inventions and anatomical sketches. But today, we're peeling back the layers of a straight-washed Renaissance to reveal a more intimate portrait of the artist and his lifelong companion.

In his lifetime, da Vinci was synonymous with artistic mastery, intellectual prowess, and a fashion sense that was the envy of Milan. With his striking looks, muscular build, and the kind of charm that could make a stoic Medici swoon, Leonardo was the ultimate Renaissance icon.

And then comes the "Little Devil" himself, Gian Giacomo Caprotti da Oreno, affectionately (or exasperatedly) known as Salai. When a curly-haired, angelic-faced boy entered Leonardo's life in 1490, he brought with him a whirlwind of chaos and charm. Leonardo's diary entries were soon filled with tales of Salai's sticky fingers and impish antics. Despite it

all, Leonardo couldn't resist the boy's allure, endearingly nicknaming him Salai, a nod to his devilish behaviour, translating to "little devil" in Italian.

Their relationship was as complex as one of Leonardo's own creations. Salai wasn't just an assistant or a pupil; he was a companion, a muse, and, quite likely, a lover in their later years. Leonardo's sketches overflow with Salai's image: a beautiful youth with cascading curls, often depicted alongside the older, more rugged figures that may have represented Leonardo himself. The contrast of beauty and age, innocence and experience, was a motif that fascinated Leonardo throughout his life.

At dinner parties, Leonardo would be the dashing and impeccably dressed maestro, while Salai, the boyish rogue with a penchant for breaking things and stealing silver styluses. They were the Renaissance's answer to eccentric bohemian royalty, turning heads and causing whispers wherever they went. Even when Salai's pranks reached new heights of audacity, Leonardo's affection never wavered. Records show an amusing blend of annoyance and indulgence, a

testament to their unique bond.

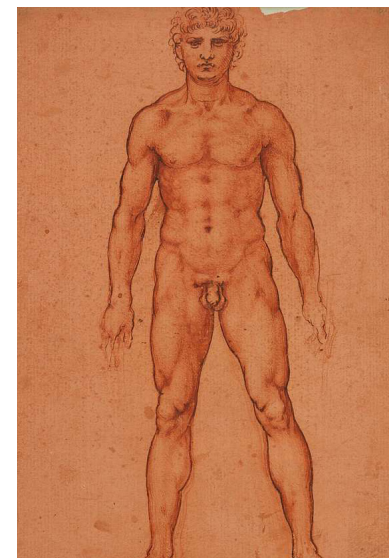
But what about their love life? Well, the evidence is tantalisingly suggestive. Lomazzo's unpublished 1560 *Book of Dreams* immerses us in a playful dialogue where Leonardo unabashedly admits to engaging in what he calls "that backside game that Florentines love so much" with Salai. While Lomazzo's account is a product of creativity, its credibility is bolstered by his ties to one of Leonardo's students. In a world where such relationships were often hidden or condemned, Leonardo's unapologetic pride is both surprising and endearing. "Among men of worth, there is scarcely greater cause for pride," he declares, championing a love that transcended societal norms.

Leonardo's devotion to Salai transcended mere affection. He indulged his young companion's love for finery, recording the costs of Salai's colourful and often extravagant attire in his notebooks. Pink was a particular favourite, reflecting both Salai's flamboyant personality and Leonardo's own penchant for vivid hues. Theirs was a relationship painted in bold strokes and vibrant colours, as daz-

zling as Leonardo's art and as enduring as his legacy.

Sure, Salai aged, but in Leonardo's eyes and sketches, he remained eternally youthful, forever the beautiful boy who had captured his heart. Even in the final years of Leonardo's life, his drawings of Salai exuded tenderness and longing, a poignant reminder of their enduring connection. The artist, grappling with the passage of time, found solace in the timeless beauty of his beloved muse.

In recounting the tale of Leonardo and Salai, it's imperative to acknowledge the tendency of historians to straight-wash the narratives of historical figures. For centuries, societal norms and biases have obscured the true nature of relationships like theirs, shrouding them in historical obscurity. By delving into the intricacies of their companionship, we not only shed light on the depth of their connection but also challenge the heteronormative lens through which history has often been viewed. It reminds us of the importance of revisiting the lives of historical figures with a critical eye, allowing us to uncover the complexities of their identities and



relationships and honour their stories in all their full, unapologetic truth.

So, next time you admire the Mona Lisa's enigmatic smile or marvel at The Last Supper's intricate details, remember the man behind these masterpieces. Leonardo da Vinci was not just a solitary genius but also a lover and a dreamer, forever entwined with his "Little Devil." Their story adds a rich, human layer to the legend of Leonardo, reminding us that even the greatest minds have room for love, laughter—and a touch of mischief.

Image Credit: Garystockbridge617/PDM 1.0 DEED via GetArchive.

Film

Film around the world: Japan's *Harakiri*

Mikela Persson Caracciolo

It is not *The Godfather* or *The Shawshank Redemption* or any Hollywood epic that is the highest rated film on the app Letterboxd (a popular film social media app). Instead, it is Masaki Kobayashi's 1962 samurai film *Harakiri* that around 100,000 critics and users have judged to be the best film ever made. There are problematic aspects of ranking one piece of art against another. Yet, as humans, we like statistics that help us quantify things. As *Harakiri* is so highly rated, I wanted to investigate what made it so special.

The first and only hurdle was actually finding somewhere to watch the film. It is very difficult to find. Amazon has some DVDs for sale, but the film is unavailable on any streaming platform. Luckily, over the vacation I managed to find a cinema showing it in London. *Harakiri* is part of the Japanese golden age of cinema. This includes realist classics like Yasujiro Ozu's *Tokyo Story* and samurai epics like Akira Kurosawa's *Sev-*

en Samurai. *Harakiri* brilliantly combines both genres to create an unromanticised samurai film that depicts the poverty and desperation of the lives of masterless Samurai, also known as ronins.

The film starts with Tsumugoro Hanshiro, a middle aged and jobless ronin, arriving at the estate of the Iyi clan. Tsumugoro asks to commit harakiri – ritual suicide through disembowelment – on the clan's estate. Before agreeing to his request, the clan elder tells him the story of the last samurai, Chijiwa Motome, who requested to do the same. The film is told through a series of flashbacks about the life of Chijiwa. Initially, I thought the film would just focus on Chijiwa's story, but what followed was better than I could have imagined. Without spoiling it, the film also explores Tsumugoro's past and critiques the Bushido Code. The Bushido Code was a code of conduct for samurais that prized bravery and honour whilst disdaining dishonour and defeat. These principles of valour remained ingrained in Japanese military culture until after the second world war.

All I can say is that the film lives

up to its acclaim. The cinematography is phenomenal. It successfully brings to life exciting action scenes, heartfelt moments, and artistic natural shots. This is accentuated by the acting. Like in a lot of classic Japanese cinema, significant emphasis is placed on close ups which draw attention acting grounded in the expressiveness of faces and eyes. The score is brilliantly menacing. Simply rewatching the trailer sends chills down my spine. This is not a short film, but it does not feel as long as it is. The ending may be slightly drawn out but it serves to heighten Kobayashi's storytelling.

Kobayashi's excellent direction perfectly captures the subjectivity of flashbacks and the re-telling of events. The audience is initially ignorant, adopting the clan's view of Chijiwa as cowardly. However, the flashbacks are presenting the clan's version of the story, not Chijiwa's. It is only later in the film, when Kobayashi reveals other flashbacks featuring Chijiwa, that we understand and sympathise with him. Yet by the end it is the clan who write and rewrite history. They have the power to sweep over any imperfections. This is

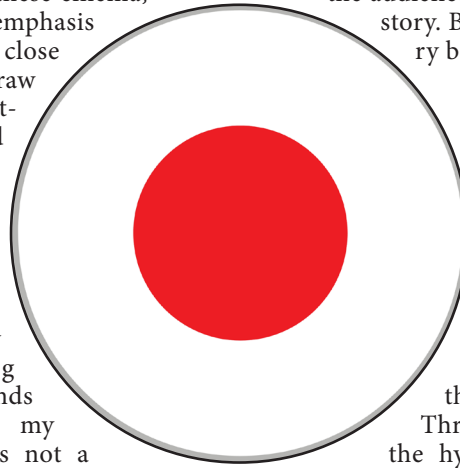
epitomised by the film beginning and ending in the same way: with a shot of the beautiful but haunting armour of the Iyi clan's ancestor. It is not Chijiwa who is the coward, but rather the clan. We, the audience, know the real story. But do the history books?

The film presents a society that is cruel to the individual, prizing elitist social convention above humanity. Honour is of greater value than life itself.

Through depicting the hypocrisy of the Iyi clan Kobayashi invites the audience to question the narrative status quo. The filmmaker was a pacifist. This is reflected in his critical portrayal of the Iyi clan. Despite being set in the Japanese Edo period; the film is relevant to modern life. It questions the historical narrative and challenges traditional value systems like the Bushido Code. They should not have had a fraction of the importance they did when they were invented – so why are they still preserved?

I recommend this film without hesitation, no one could ever replicate Kobayashi's masterful storytelling.

Image Credit: PDM BY 1.0 via STORE NORSKE LEKSIKON.



Past and future



This week, **Fay Lorient** discusses discovering her ancestral history

I've never had a close-knit family, which might be one of the reasons why, as a second generation immigrant, I've struggled to feel close to my culture. The fact that I would have to actively try to learn more about my personal history has kept me from engaging for a long time. Only in the process of writing this column have I made a small start.

There have been some stories that were passed down to me, usually in funny anecdotes told by my mother. Her two uncles (who were twins by the way) were petty criminals and were sent to jail in Russia a combined five times. Despite that, they were never labelled the black sheep of the family, in fact, they were often what held it together. 'After they both died the family just drifted apart,' my mother says.

The story she likes to tell most is her uncle Victor getting her from preschool, right after serving a jail sentence. Just imagine a moustached guy covered from head to toe in tattoos, and my mother five years old, with ribbons in her hair.

What I didn't know until deciding to explore my history is how my family ended up in Kazakhstan and Russia in the first place. My maternal family lived in Russia in a German settlement up until the Second World War, when they were drafted into labour camps and were finally forcibly displaced to Kasachstan. Even though I knew snippets of that history, I never realised that they were immigrants themselves. And when they migrated back to Germany in the 90s (after several generations) they were looked at as foreigners once again.

Understanding this history of displacement and assimilation makes it much more understandable that I've had such trouble defining my identity based on countries alone.

But let me share my favourite anecdote: My great-grandfather, who had championed the idea of the family making the move to Germany, said that on the plane he would flip off Russia and dance the Waltz in the aisle (what a badass!)

I wish I could have met him. And this leads me to the most important (though glaringly obvious) realisation. To understand myself better as a second generation immigrant I will have to talk to my family. Through drawing up a family tree, I quickly recognised that there are dozens of family members I have never even talked to, but who doubtlessly have plenty of stories to tell.

The Source

A Eulogy for Tommy

Alexander Still

Ea! It's so cold! I cried from me bed
when I pulled down the coovers an raised up me ed
to see bright rays of sunlight
stream into me room,
and fill it with joy where before there were gloom.

I pocked out a toe an pulled it back oonder
and felt our kid Jack ad made a great bloonder,
cuz outside t'were all glorious
an no cloud were in sight,
but inside t'was bloody freezing
cuz the heating were shite.

In the car, fooking ell, I won't say it were nice,
with the screen all glazed up with crystalized ice.
We turned on the wipers an one snapped in haff,
if I adn't ad cried I could ave well laughed.

But the day soon got better an I dried up me tears
when Sam bought a round for the first time in years
in the Old Speckled Hen,
what a fine poob that is,
with a slip of a barmaid named Jolly-Faced Jen.

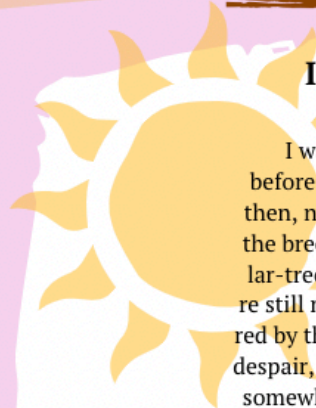
They ad a warm fire wiv coal an big logs,
and even dead Tommy could bring in is dogs
to sit by the arth
and whimper and whine
til Jolly-Faced Jen would say it were time.

Then we'd get our long coats and Bill with is scarf
wrapped round is thick ed an the dogs by the arth
would look up in blithe ope at the thought of a bone
dead Tommy might nick from a bin by is ome.

In the Beginning

Flavius Covaci

I was alone with the earth and the sun
before you came along: there was no life, not
then, not even song. My hope had been lost to
the breeze, dreams strung up on imagined pop
lar-trees. Before bees, before Ramses. You were
still nebular then, too embryonic to be captured
by the tip of my fountain pen so I was left to
despair, to beat hard ground until it yielded love
somewhere. This was before the Lord's prayer,
before Lord. And I swear I cried gold on the day
the moon broke its mould and released you. Out
of the strata of the rock and the bacteria of yet un
invented livestock, you came forth:
my new sun.



Cherwell's top tips

Our top tips to cope with that pesky exam stress...

1 *Take up wild swimming.* What will put your life into perspective more clearly than a 6 am ice-cold plunge? The exhilarating rush will be sure to power you through nine finals and four prelims like no amount of caffeine ever could. Just be sure to check for water contamination first... Land Law makes us nauseous enough as it is.

2 *Curate a crystal collection.* If swimming isn't your thing, it may be time to harness the power of crystals to ace those exams. Be sure to litter every surface of your room with rocks and stones for optimum performance. When you get a first, there's no denying that it was the jade in your pocket that did it.

3 *Live in a state of denial.* The most tempting option of them all. Simply go about your everyday life, blissfully unaware of the impending exams until it's too late to revise. Sure, you may not do as well as you were hoping, but those few weeks of guilty relaxation were worth it... right?

4 *Fuel up on Najar's.* You'll need energy to perform at your peak, and we all know that Najar's is the food of athletes, gods... and practically everyone in Oxford. Make sure you arrive in good time – we doubt you'll be allowed extenuating circumstances for an unusually long queue, and no one wants to inhale falafel. The alternative is always a cheeky post-exam wrap.

5 *Drink lots... of water.* If there's anything more important than eating well (and whispering to your crystal, of course), it's staying hydrated. We all have that one friend who interprets the reminder to drink a little differently, but H₂O is definitely the way to go. Alternatively, a pint may suit those attempting to achieve the third point on this list.

6 *Actually study?* It's all too easy to repeat the narrative of 'one last hurrah', but there does come a point when the academic grind is strictly necessary. Even for the folks living in denial or praying to their crystals, a late night cram of three years worth of content is never off the table.

The college tortoise that has taken over my life

Grace Allen

I celebrated May Day in a pretty unorthodox way this year: I adopted a tortoise. Or more accurately, I took her over – with a group of friends. Minutes after dragging myself out of bed bleary-eyed at 11 am, we were navigating corridors whilst carrying a vivarium like in a scene from *Chucklevision*. The newest resident of the annexe, carried behind us in a shoebox filled with soil, was Aristurtle (Aris to her friends), the St Peter's College pet. Matriculating in 2012, she is a Horsefield tortoise with a significant underbite, approximately 15 years old, loves raspberries, and hates baths. These were the facts I knew about Aristurtle, but there is so much more to her (and to being her custodian) than I could ever have imagined on that hungover Wednesday morning.

Aristurtle has always had an almost mystical hold over her custodians. To one former custodian, she is his "baby girl". We take her into college to roam the grass, and he soon sprints across the quad to hold and stroke her on the shell. This isn't uncommon. Our custodian group chat goes back nearly a decade. Another former custodian – who graduated four years ago – attends every Tortoise Fair. The tortoise-tortoise keeper relationship quickly becomes a fascination; it turns out that living with and caring for a surprisingly complex animal creates a bond that, although Aristurtle may be unaware of its existence, is pretty enduring.

That's not to say that caring for a tortoise is the most pleasant experience. Tortoises smell, they nip, they climb into your shoes and up the legs of your trousers. My friend Rhea,

in whose room Aris is currently resident, has accustomed herself to the noises throughout the night, but remains baffled at our girl's ability to get stuck inside shoes left lying on the floor. Worse than this, Aristurtle,

"You form part of the history of the tortoise, one in a chain of custodians stretching back through the years"

lovely as she is, is an escape artist. Left alone, she can traverse the quad in less than two minutes in search of delicious (and toxic) daisies, or cigarette butts (equally as toxic). She requires constant supervision – so good luck writing that essay in the sunshine. But she has her endearing habits. Her speed, annoying as it can be, won her the McEwen-Benatar Trophy for Racing Excellence last year at the Tortoise Fair, and made her a favourite for victory this year. And she's still small, so it's no real hardship to pick her up and carry her across the quad all the time. Plus there's the glory of the Tortoise Race.

Trinity is always a big term for Oxford's resident tortoises. The Corpus Tortoise Fair is, of course, the highlight of the testudinal calendar. Emerging as a challenge issued from Corpus Christi to Oriel, it has been 50 years since the very first Fair, a half century which has produced an impressively well-managed event. If you've been to the Tortoise Fair, you'll know exactly what I mean

– the team running the fair have capitalised on every opportunity to make it more than just a race between some (admittedly slow) reptiles; you can buy merch with custom artwork, enjoy Pimms while listening to a poem written especially for the event, and even place a bet to back your favourite tortoise. This year's Race, threatened by rain, saw a sad defeat for Aristurtle, but a heartwarming victory for the newcomer, Kale from Nuffield. Aristurtle will always have her place in tortoise racing history regardless.

Actually, perhaps this is the most rewarding aspect of being a custodian, too: the knowledge that you form part of the history of the tortoise, one in a chain of custodians stretching back through the years, with many more to come after you. I like to think that in 50 years someone will see our 2024 JCR photo, spot me holding Aristurtle in the front row, and compare her to the larger, older tortoise sitting in a big wooden box in their room. One can dream.

Image Credit: Rhea Score



Dear Cherwell, am I little more than a thief?

Dear Aunty,
One of my friends nicked a mirror I left in my room when I moved out. I stole it back at a party and now we're in a total standoff. What should I do?



Dear opportunist,
What a moral quandary! Or at least, that's a bit of a crap place to be with your friend. The world of petty thievery in Oxford is a complicated one, and I'm here to help you navigate it. Establishing a chronology in these situations is always good. It was yours. Then it was hers. Now it's yours again. I applaud you for this restoration of ownership but perhaps she assumed you didn't want it. You 'left' it when you moved out – can you blame her for a bit of 'reduce, reuse, recycle'? Second-hand is so in right now; she was just following the trend and do-

ing her part for the planet. Naturally. I understand it's a tough place to be in. Neither of you is voicing the thing you're very obviously both thinking. She thinks you stole and you think she did. While I'm all for addressing a miscarriage of justice, do you think your little Bonnie and Clyde number in her room was a good way of getting it back? Perhaps if you'd simply mentioned it instead, as your friend, they would have offered to return it. Going into someone's room and taking something without their knowledge can be quite violating, as you know all too well. Or maybe she's a bit of a tricky fish who'd deny where her dodgy goods came from. She'd certainly make it as a curator in the British Museum.

There's also a frequent overlap between 'stolen' and 'borrowed'. This agony aunt makes no standing as the beacon of moral perfection. I once cheekily 'borrowed' a drying rack from a friend's room for a spot of midnight laundry... and simply

forgot to give back until an ominous message appeared on the groupchat. To the laundry rack-less friend, it certainly appeared like it had been stolen. But once reminded, her confusion over where it was became my guilt over not having returned it. We're not perfect. Don't judge me. And in the same way, don't judge your mirror pincher! Perhaps try and find out if she has a track record of such criminal deviance. A magpie who collects shiny, reflective things. It's in her nature, can we fight that?

Frankly, the only thievery in this world is St Hilda's formal prices. And yet I still spend that delicious bodcard money, a slave to the system. Petty thievery is rife at this university. You suspect your olive oil stash secreted in the back of a cupboard has been found, or the milk is looking low. Although, if you buy milk, can you really complain? A cheeky glug here and there comes with the job. Milk-buyers must accept their fate in the realm of kitchen communism.

Ultimately, unless this is a diamond-encrusted mirror handed down across generations it's time to end the stand-off. There's no need for pistols at dawn. While that would certainly be entertaining, a friendship hangs in the balance. Are you willing to sacrifice it over a mirror that simply gives you a reflection of yourself? Seriously, so vain of you. While I wouldn't suggest returning it – the deed is done – don't let it spoil your friendship. And at the same time, DON'T LET HER STEAL IT BACK. Laugh it off. Perhaps even suggest she try. But do not let her. At all costs.

Yet inevitably I resign myself to a simple philosophy. You might as well resolve the drama before Trinity ends. There's a long summer ahead of us and that is as good an incentive as any. Don't let a bit of minor thievery get in your way. We've all mistakenly (or deliberately) done it. I'll leave that for you to decide.

Got a problem? Need some advice?

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

The problem with dating a man far more privileged than you

Cherwell Life

There is already a power imbalance in heterosexual relationships. The society and institutions in which our relationships with men are built favour men, their dominance, and their power. This attitude translates to the relationship itself and, in my experience, can doom a relationship to failure. I, a grammar-school educated, immigrant woman from some level of financial privilege, dated a very wealthy, Eton-educated, straight white male from the South of England. Our relationship lasted for most of my time at Oxford, and at the time I thought I had met the man I was going to spend the rest of my life with. Spoiler: this was not the case.

I know people say that everyone comes into a relationship with their own share of emotional baggage, but this wasn't true for us. Although I had some personal issues, it was nothing you wouldn't expect from a young woman of ethnic descent with a somewhat tense relationship with her parents. He, however, lived an idyllic life. At no point in our long-term relationship was I led to believe he experienced any kind of trauma, familial problems, insecurity, self-doubt, or loss. He is the most privileged person I have ever met, not just because of his social and financial status, but because of the lack of emotional burden he carried with him every day.

I originally thought that this was great – someone who could support me whenever I needed it, but also someone who had no restraints on the love he could give me. I realised six months in that there was a fundamental disconnect. Regardless of how minor my emotional inconvenience was, there was no way he could relate to me. I doubt his lack of emotional baggage would have been as signifi-

cant an issue if he was a woman. Although I cannot deny I have a great degree of privilege, as an immigrant woman of colour, there has always been a cap on the level of privilege I may have. I have experienced discrimination as a result of my identity. For my ex-boyfriend, this was not the case. He was and never has been an individual vulnerable to discrimination, nor has he been questioned on his skills, abilities, or dreams. Although never ill-intentioned, I do believe he enjoyed a relationship in which he was by all means socially superior. The simple reason for this: he had always felt this way, in every aspect of his life. He liked the idea of a multidimensional, emotionally intelligent woman. He could not reconcile that with the inevitable emotional difficulties and trauma a woman like that faces.

Whilst we had a wonderful time together – in which I felt truly loved and safe – I never felt understood. There was always a fear that I would be too much, inadequate to his family – or most terrifyingly, his teacher in emotional resilience. A lot of these fears came from his general inability to understand and therefore accept all aspects of my identity. He never had to consider how the world was for people who were not exactly like him. I find this to be the case with many men in his position – the world serves them so well that they never have to or want to consider the difficulties faced by others. It leads to a degree of emotional ineptness. I have memories of gentle parenting my ex-boyfriend into recognising that his behaviour was harmful. It was only when I told him to really imagine that I had acted in that way, that he would go from defensive to apologetic. I recognise that this never should have been my role. In his post-breakup message, my ex-boyfriend claimed that having

to care about someone else and their concerns was too much of a burden on him. What he failed to recognise was the emotional burden that came with me, a woman of less privilege, being in a relationship with him.

His immense privilege brought with it incredible opportunity and an admirable attitude towards the

“I would have spent the rest of my life as his teacher and... his only pillar of deep emotional support.”

future, but also an unbridled sense of self-worth and a distinct lack of emotional resilience, which became clear during our breakup. His justification for it was that the future scared him. If I had the same level of emotional resilience, I never would have entered into the relationship in the first place. This, and his handling of the breakup, were the clearest signs that there was an irreconcilable emotional incom-

patibility.

I am thankful he broke up with me. Not because I didn't love him, but because I would have spent the rest of my life as his teacher and, contrary to his understanding, his only pillar of deep emotional support. I am glad that he did not accept this life for me. I am glad that I am free to one day find someone as understanding and caring as I am and to have not resigned myself to a life less than I truly deserved – a life of teaching and never being understood. This is not to discredit his great aspects. I loved my ex-boyfriend because he was kind, intelligent, funny, and made me feel loved in a way no one else had. But the hastiness with which he disregarded any care he had for me made it clear that we are most definitely not cut from the same cloth. His life made me who he is, and my life made me who I am. I loved him more than I thought I loved myself. He loved me as much and as long as it was convenient for him. Regardless, I am proud of my ability to love and care as deeply as I do, even if I sometimes give it to people who cannot reciprocate it.

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Soul stew: The dopamine mindset

Georgia Short explores the way that eating disorders change our belief systems...

CW: *disordered eating.*

I didn't intend this column to be particularly confessional, but – perhaps inevitably – it seems to have turned out that way, so: we're ending on a high! By which I mean: we're ending on the grubbiest confession of all.

Having an eating disorder was not that hard. I do, indeed, immediately regret writing that and I am, indeed, immediately going to back-track: eating disorders are serious mental illnesses. Any type or degree of disordered eating, with or without a diagnosis, is serious: you are suffering. Most of the time, however, you are essentially unaware that you're suffering, which makes it a lot easier. You section off your own immaculate little enclave – a sort of one-person cult – in which the pur-

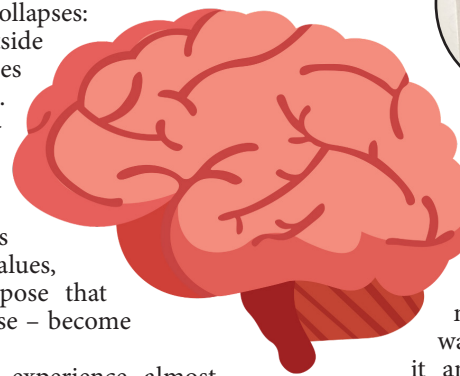
pose of existence is to eat a specific number of calories, and do a specific amount of exercise, each day (naturally, the behaviours vary from person to person). You do this, over and over again, and it is laborious and often dull, and makes unreasonable demands on your capacity for mental maths, but it's dopamine: cheap, nasty, cruddy dopamine, reminiscent of doom-scrolling on Instagram, that is so peculiarly hard to give up. It doesn't quite feel like fulfilment; I think it feels like something easier.

What makes it hard is everything else, or more precisely everyone else. The infrastructure of your one-person cult is imperishable, provided, of course, that it remains within the vacuum-sealed, climate-controlled environment of your own delusions. Release the vacuum and

everything collapses: and so, the outside world becomes threatening. Other people – with their rational thinking, with their values that are real values, and their purpose that is a real purpose – become threatening.

It's hard to experience almost every conversation you have with another person as an assault on your belief system: a revelation, or sub-revelation, that you're getting your life completely wrong, and will very probably carry on doing so, as soon as the conversation is over. But it is even harder to give up people.

This instalment was meant to be



about talking to a friend with an eating disorder; once again, it's all about me (woohoo)! I was trying to plan

it and instead ran up against a wall: beyond a (strong) caution against trying to deprogram them, I have basically no practical advice to offer. What I hope I've managed to demonstrate is that talking, in itself, is practical. It makes it harder to have an eating disorder; it even makes it much harder to want one.



Watch *The Sound of Music*. That's it.



You might be falling in love but do not be a fool in love; protect your peace, sweetie.



Geminis are notoriously two-faced, but you make me think that only two is optimistic.



Trinity is oh so nearly over. Treat yourself to some fancy cheese and wine on a punt.



Do not worry about your work, munchkin; that brain of yours contains more knowledge than there are seeds in a pumpkin.



Take a deep breath and have a long sleep. Put on a face mask if you're feeling wild.

Reflections on the life of a mature student

Nayana Juliette Syed

I think we find ourselves in a particular state of searching after finishing secondary school. Even if we have an idea of what we want to do or who we want to be, the world is suddenly splayed out; enticingly undefined and filled with endless opportunities. And we – released from a more or less fixed position in the static social infrastructure of the school – crave a new function, with new perspectives, new inputs, and new outlooks.

As a mature undergraduate student, I think back on that openness and wish I had gone to Oxford right after secondary school. It is a place abundant in perspectives, impressions and possible identity markers. Yet, through all its newness, Oxford is finetuned to the strategies of secondary school; you will find ample room for intrigue, social positioning and sporting, all mechanisms for a budding sense of self. And like secondary school, Oxford is a breeding ground for competition. With public collection prices, gowns for Firsts, BNOC spreads in Cherwell and everything going on at the Union, establishing, and perceiving yourself as part of, a student hierarchy is fairly easy.

Thus, I think Oxford must be a wonderful place to be a bit immature, arrogant and naïve, a wonderful place to think that the most important thing is to be desirable, or to know a whole bunch of people, or to be the best in your class. Youthful arrogance and naïveté come with such a distinct drive to shape yourself into a certain kind of person. And for that mentality, Oxford sets the stage. You've got the best of the best, fighting alongside you to be the brightest, the most interesting and the most dynamic person in every room.

And as I've grown older, things have grown so much more... complex. What a cliché! I remember so vividly looking at older people and thinking 'You're so boring! So defeated! Where is your hope, ambition and sense of adventure?!' I knew in my heart then, that it was all so easy. 'Just tax the rich, take to the streets and text him that he's cute!'; I'd think. Adults are fucking boring man; I've known that for ages. Yet, the older I get, the more intricate becomes the composition of true confidence, and of a good and worthy life. Nothing that remains to be fixed will be quick or easy to solve. And that pessimism, or the remnants of young impatience, makes me miss so dearly exactly the naïveté and arrogance of youth that thinks that snogging someone at Atik will make an existential problem go away or make me a certain kind of person. In a sense, I hoped my youthful rebellion would last longer. And I think that Oxford, with all its traditions, hierarchy and quirks, is the perfect place for youthful rebellion.

There are, however, a lot of aspects to student life – and life in Oxford in particular – that is hard to appreciate or even perceive if you arrive straight from secondary school. Through the lens of a couple of gap or professional years, I believe the mature Oxford experience might therefore be just as rich as the blue-eyed one.

From within, it is hard to notice the comfort of coexistence that comes with school and university life. What we experience during a day is always shared with fellow students, be that an annoying tutor, an untimely fire alarm or the stress of an upcoming exam. These experiences would be fundamentally different to process on your own, void of conversations in the hallway or shared glances of suppressed laughter in a lecture. The comfort and relief of complaining

and having the other person actually understand what you're going through is a privilege granted by the commonality of university experience. For me, it took a gap year of working and travelling to notice, miss and appreciate the comfort of that co-existence.

A related aspect of university life that might be negligible to the privileged eye is being surrounded by people who are inspired and interested. Oxford is swarming with people who share your particular interests, people who wear their passion on their sleeves and people who are at the top of their field. Here, strong beliefs come from people who know how to argue for them; people who challenge and who want to be challenged. And, without trying to sound trivial: that is so rare. Of what might be said about the 'real' world, it is full of uninterested people adverse to anything new, nuanced, or challenging. You can definitely find inspiring communities, workplaces, and hobbies elsewhere – and you probably will, after Oxford – but they are found, rather than provided.

Without experience from mundane or professional life, it is also hard to recognise that university is surely the time to make mistakes. Sure, marks matter, but at no point will you have the opportunity to experiment with topics, takes and styles like at university. At the workplace, you're performing and producing. If you submit your work late, you might be

sacked. Meanwhile, you'll never be expelled for not submitting a tutorial essay, or for delivering a poem for your International Relations analysis. I think that coming straight from school might obscure the fact that university is not the time for producing and hitting the mark, so much as for experimenting and nurturing your creativity.

Maturity, or just time away from studies, highlights the many privileges of university life, enriching the student experience. Yet the most valuable thing I bring with me from not studying is the separation of academic achievement and self-worth. Primary and secondary education is a decade-long training in striving for praise. Personally, academic achievement constituted the foundation, walls and windows of my self-worth until I was thrown into the void that is the gap year. I rebuilt it with blocks from all walks of life. I think mature students, to a larger extent, extend their self-perception beyond student life and body. Therefore, Oxford is, in a sense, less crucial to our identity. We already have lives and identities from our own post-secondary school-era elsewhere. I would love for Oxford to be my whole life, the way the impressions and intrigue of youth make a setting all-encompassing. However, as an older student, I am forced to see my time here for what it is: something so transitory, and only ever a small part of what makes me, me.

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You have had extremely high ratings this week, reviewers are saying your energy is decisively above par.

M Scorpius



Watch out! No, seriously, do – something wonderful is in store for you.

F Sagittarius



It's the end of term but the beginning of new things. There is no time like the present.

B Capricornus



It's me! The sunshine. Leave your room, leave the library – whatever crevice you have been hiding in, I want no more of it.

A Aquarius



You have been unexpectedly well behaved this week. Just remember to wear your shoes, please.

X Pisces



Look at the stars, they are shining just for you. What is a silly exam to them?

Cherpser 1 Cherpser 2

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

Meeting my date at a cozy pub, I was pleasantly surprised by his friendly smile. He was waiting at our meeting point ten minutes ahead of time, and as we entered, he was considerate from the start. We started with a couple of pints, chatting about our favorite movies and hobbies, and he even made a point to ask how I maintain my love for hiking despite how flat Oxford is, which definitely showed his interest. The highlight of the date was when, having decided to play darts, he scored a bullseye. Instant high five. The

most embarrassing moment for me was when I accidentally spilled my drink all over the table while laughing at one of his jokes. We both scrambled to clean up the mess, laughing it off with some soggy napkins. By the end of the date, my initial impression of him held true, and I felt there could be a connection between us. He even walked me back to college, which was sweet. I would definitely be interested in a second date.



I was pretty taken by my date's infectious smile and kind eyes when we met for our date. Even though I haven't been on many dates – let alone a blind one – she made me feel at ease very quickly. We settled into a corner booth, sharing stories about our recent adventures and embarrassing moments. I shared my tale of accidentally calling my tutor "Mum" at a subject social event, which had her in stitches. After a while, we decided to try our hand at a game of darts. The highlight was definitely when I hit a bullseye, and our celebrations drew some amused glances from some regulars. The most embarrassing moment for

both of us was when she knocked over her drink while laughing, causing a bit of a mess, but we ended up laughing it off together, which actually made things more relaxed. By the end of the date, I still found her to be fun-loving and sweet, and I found myself wanting to spend more time with her. We ended the night with a walk to her college, where we talked about everything we love and hate about Oxford. I then left her at the entrance, we exchanged numbers, and I gave her a hug goodbye. I would definitely like to go on a second date, and I am awaiting a response on text as we speak. Wish me luck!

Looking for love?

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

LOVE EMPIRE

The definitive Oxford smoothie review

Amanda Li

With summer comes smoothie weather, and Oxford offers a plethora of fruity delights. Coming from a place where a small smoothie is twice the price of the most expensive one here, being able to get something cold and fruity from a cafe on a hot day makes even the worst day of exam revision better. Take this article as an ode to the refreshing smoothie, and some of my favourite places to get them. There are definitely more smoothie places that remain unreviewed – go searching around on a hot day, and who knows, maybe you'll find the smoothie of your dreams.

Taylor's, 8/10

I've don't think I've had a smoothie at Taylor's since MT22 and

don't remember whether I liked the ones I had, but the Deputy Editor for Food, Gracie (shoutout), loves their passionfruit smoothie because it has no banana in it; the Tesco smoothies (which I feel look a little too powdery to seem appetising), a former love of hers, do contain banana. Important information for those who cannot eat banana. The options at Taylor's are certainly decent, and the price is not outrageous for a decent smoothie.

Joe and the Juice, 5/10

Joe and the Juice is a throwback to my NYC smoothie era. It certainly sells smoothies, but it is extremely expensive and not worth the price. Go somewhere else instead. Who goes to Westgate for a smoothie anyway?

Oxford Brunch Bar, 6/10

I had a smoothie here at my very first brunch, and it was fine. Just a normal berry smoothie. The blueberry to strawberry ratio was slightly too high, and £4.90 really is a lot for a small mug of smoothie. You may as well get two bags of frozen fruit and

blend it yourself for the same price.

Art Cafe, 6/10

Art Cafe doesn't have bad smoothies; their mango, passion fruit, and banana smoothie tastes pretty good. I've also heard good things about their kale smoothie, though I've never had it. But note: they are expensive, £5.95. For a similar price, you could buy their açai bowl instead – a decent portion size, and it'll actually fill you up!

Moo-Moo's, 9/10

Moo-Moo's is an essential stop when getting food in the Covered Market. Covered with filled-up loyalty cards and packed to the brim, you have the option to make a smoothie with quite literally anything you'd like. I like the Annabelle special (just over £4 for a large) with apple juice and mango, but have somehow only ever requested the watermelon smoothie when they're sold out – try it if you can!

Cafe Crème, 10/10

I love Cafe Crème. It is seriously the best place for smoothies in Oxford. They have a mango pear smoothie (my fave), an açai berry smoothie, and even their strawberry banana

smoothie doesn't feel too bad. Their green and fruity smoothies (combined with a good price, just £3 with a student discount) pairs amazingly with a cheap sandwich at lunchtime. And Cafe Crème has loyalty cards – I've filled up at least two. I can think of nothing wrong with this place, except that they have not yet given me a lifetime supply of free smoothies (but there's always time).

Honourable mentions: college cafes

St Anne's Coffee Shop, 8/10. I recently visited to try the mango banana smoothie. For less than £2, I got a decently sized drink, refreshing at a sip and with a taste that was not too sweet, but not too sour. Although I could still taste chunks of banana, it wasn't an issue for me. My thoughts? Underrated – and good for my chronic smoothie addiction.

Kendrew Cafe, St John's College, 7.5/10. I've only been a few times, but I always enjoy the coconut and mint smoothie. Their berry smoothies are nice and sweet, but the portion sizes are too small for £2.35. Still, as a college cafe, it's much cheaper than the scary outside world (and you get a decent drink!)



Balancing Act

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



That has a complex relationship with healthy eating; excess fat is the primary driving force for many who seek to improve their diet. It is common for those attempting to lose weight to go on low-fat diets and tightly control the sources of these fats based on what society perceives to be 'healthy' fats. This term is commonly ascribed to mono or polyunsaturated fats, with saturated and trans fats labelled 'unhealthy' fats. Long term, it is beneficial to eat more of these healthier fats and reduce the amount of industrially produced trans fats, which have no known nutritional benefits and are banned in many countries. However, this does not include the UK, where trans fats continue to be included in margarine and vegetable shortening.

Why do we need to consume fats?

Aside from being a major energy source, dietary fat is important for deriving essential fatty acids that the body cannot create. These are linoleic acid, and alpha-linolenic acid, both of which are required for the regulation of numerous body systems. These fatty acids can be found in fish, shellfish, seaweed, seeds, and seed oils.

Furthermore, a number of sensory studies have demonstrated that high-fat foods are preferentially consumed and give a greater feeling of satiety and improved taste. But it isn't all positive. Supermarket products can be misleading in their advertisement and presentation of healthy meals, which have been the subject of investigation by groups including the British Dietetic Association and Royal Society for Public Health. Healthier choices sections in stores can often relate to meat alternative products or reduced calorie meals. Individual ready meals considered to be 'healthier' (for example, meat alternatives or reduced calorie meals) have been shown to contain up to half the recommended daily intake of saturated fat in a single serving.

Familiarity with labelling requirements can be incredibly useful. Word selection in advertisement of products is stringent in the UK; products labelled 'lite', 'light' or 'lighter' must have at least 30% less fat than the original product and 'low fat' or 'reduced fat' products must have less than 3g of fat per 100g. Awareness of these advertising standards, as well as the source of the fats you consume, will ultimately lead to more informed choices, to better improve your long-term health.

Simple vegan soba

Try our recipe for a vegan noodle dish...

It's time for sun, punting, and most importantly... picnics! Vegan picnic fare is often limited to berries and hummus, but it doesn't have to be that way. The other week, I made some cold noodles (soba). They're easy to make, delicious, and a nice addition to your vegan picnic or packed lunch!

First, take your desired serving of soba (buckwheat noodles), and boil it according to the package instructions. Once they're done cooking, leave the noodles in cold water so that they cool without sticking. Blanch snap peas while ensuring they're still crunchy and similarly leave them in cold water. Thinly slice an avocado, half a cucumber, and chop up your protein of choice (this can be tofu, or another meat substitute). Put the soba in a bowl (by now, it should be cold) with the snap peas, cucumber, and protein.

For the dressing, add ½ teaspoon of sesame oil to ½ teaspoon of soy sauce. Add chili crisp if desired, and a minced clove of garlic and mix. Next, add a small squeeze of honey and the juice of half a lemon and mix. If you find that the taste is off, add ingredients to your taste until perfect (too lemony? More honey. Too much soy sauce? More honey and lemon. Too much oil? More soy sauce). Toss with the contents of the bowl. Place the avocado on top before serving with dressing drizzled on top.

Inside the Oxford wine world

Oliver Sandall

Dressing up in black tie on a Tuesday isn't too alien to an Oxford student. But, even to the Editor of Oxford's best newspaper, a Bacchus dinner is rather daunting. So is the £80 price tag. At the same time, had I bought the wines by the glass in a wine bar, I'd easily be looking at triple digits. So, how was my experience at the Trinity Term Bacchus Dinner at the Cherwell Boathouse?

The wine list, accompanied by five courses, was as follows: Cedro do Noval (2023), Lions de Suduiraut (2023), Les Griffons de Pichon Baron (2020), Château Pichon Baron (2011), Château Suduiraut Sauternes (2015), Disznókő Tokaji Aszú 5 Puttonyos (2013), and Colheita Tawny Port [Quinta do Noval] (2007).

Although it was a wine-tasting dinner, the food disappointed. The highlight of the show was the starter, an interesting combination of octopus carpaccio with oranges and chili. The courses thereafter were largely unimaginative. Whilst nothing was offensive enough to be exciting, the Cotswold chicken was uninspiring, and the two dessert courses left much to be desired and diners feeling hungry – the portions were extremely small. The braised lamb neck was, however, well cooked, and the 2011 Château Pichon Baron was the perfect pairing.

The Cherwell Boathouse is a great location, tucked away in the suburbs of North Oxford, providing a peephole to the beautiful Oxfordshire countryside. The

dinner took place in the marquee overlooking the eponymous River Cherwell. Whilst heavy rain soaked some, others – having arrived on time – were greeted by a lovely sommelier with the first wine, the apéritif. A harpist reaffirmed the ancient Greek tropes of Bacchus (the society being named after the Roman god of agriculture, wine, and fertility), and the marquee itself was well-ventilated and beautifully lit.

The wine, provided by the vineyards of AXA Millésimes, was brilliant. CEO Christian Seely presented his wines with a great deal of wit and, importantly, detail. My personal favourites were the 2011 Château Pichon Baron and the 2013 Tokaji. The former is the pinnacle of a sophisticated red; the vineyard's website describes it as "show[ing] great elegance, intensity and exceptional length on the palate." The Tokaji, on the other hand, was great fun. A sweeter, more interesting wine, Tokaji is a Hungarian dessert wine; it has strong notes of tropical fruits yet still sits with good weight on the palate. I think I'll be buying a bottle of this for my parents. If you're not much into wine yourself, you'll have likely never tried a Tokaji – it was also my first time. The Oxford Wine Café carries one Tokaji – a slightly drier one, but nonetheless also worth trying.

The Oxford University Wine Society (i.e., Bacchus) is soon to head into its 25th year of existence. There is certainly much more work to be done in making it more accessible to a wider audience – but I was positively impressed by both the committee members and regu-

lar Bacchus-goers. Having expected undiplomatic, tweed-sporting public schoolers, I was surprised by the welcoming and self-aware cohort which found itself drinking expensive vintage port on a wet Tuesday evening in May.

To those that teeter on the edge of not wanting to seem too pretentious, yet love a good glass of red, I say: go for it. To Bacchus, I say: work on making yourself more beginner-friendly. You have a great, light-hearted air about yourselves, which isn't self-evident or necessarily axiomatic for an Oxford society in this field. Whilst the food wasn't particularly memorable, the wine was excellent, and I certainly had a great evening.

Image Credits: Oliver Sandall.



Summer Eights 2024: Oriel, Christ Church stay on top

Raghav Chari

Oriel College and Christ Church College defended their positions as Head of the River for the Men's and Women's Eights Week races respectively this year. The races, which took place from the Wednesday to the Saturday of fifth week, were tightly contested in the women's first division, but all of the top five in the men's first division retained their spots from last year.

Eights Week is part of the 200-year old Oxford tradition of 'bumps' racing. Boats race single file and attempt to physically bump the boat in front of them, while avoiding being bumped by the boat behind. Crews are ranked within divisions that race each day of the four days of Summer Eights. Bumping moves a crew up in their division, while being bumped moves them down. Crews that are on top of their division then race as the 'sandwich boat' at the bottom of the next division; if they manage to bump, they are promoted to the division above them. Crews that are bumped by the sandwich boat are relegated to the division below.

'Blades' are awarded to crews that win Head of the River, or have bumped every day of the four days of the races. Similarly, 'spoons' are won by crews that have the dubious honour of being Foot of the River, or were bumped every day. Moreover, since each college often submits multiple crews, there are multiple opportunities for a college to win either blades or spoons, and sometimes even both.

Blades were won sparingly this season; only 14 out of a total of 159 crews won blades. Merton College and Green Templeton College were

the only colleges to have more than one crew win blades, with two each (Merton: W1 and W2; Green Templeton: M1 and M3). Green Templeton M3's eight-place rise represents the biggest jump this year for any crew. Hertford M2, Balliol W1, and Keble W2 are the only crews to have won blades both this year and last year.

Spoons, on the other hand, were won more plentifully, by 20 crews. Oriel's headship of the men's races obscures what has been a disappointing performance from the college overall. Out of the eight crews

submitted this year across both the men's and women's races, four (W1, W3, M3, M4) won spoons. This is well clear of other colleges; the runners-up at winning spoons were New College (M5 and W3), St Catherine's College (M1 and M2), Wolfson College (M4 and W2), St Antony's College (M1 and W2), and Lincoln College (W2 and M2), all with two crews each. The single largest fall for

a crew was by Jesus M2 and Trinity W1, both of whom fell six places.

After inclement weather on the first three days of racing, the final day was graced by some lovely sunshine. Crowds numbering in the thousands visited Boat House Island to spectate and cheer on their college's crews. Crews were dutifully doused in champagne and prosecco upon completion of their races, win or lose. And isn't that the essence of Summer Eights?

Image Credit: Oliver Sandall.



Are the tides turning for Red Bull?

Sebastian Page

After 110 races, eight P2 (2nd) positions and 15 podiums, this year's Miami Grand Prix saw Lando Norris finally take his maiden Formula 1 victory. While on a personal note, it will certainly mean the most to Lando, previously dubbed 'Lando NoWins', what does this mean for the rest of Formula 1? Last year's domination of the sport saw Max Verstappen storm to the World Drivers' Championship title, breaking practically every record available on his way to 575 championship points (121 more than the previous best). He scored 19 victories out of 22 possible races, at an 86% win rate – all the while leading over three quarters of all laps completed over the course of the season. Frankly, the broken records could be an article in itself. Those three races that Max didn't win were taken by just two other drivers, Sergio Perez (also of Red Bull) and Carlos Sainz of Ferrari. With Sainz's victory in the Melbourne Grand Prix, and Norris' win in Miami, we've already seen as many different race winners this year as last year's; coming from more constructors. With Adrian Newey, Red Bull's maestro engineer stepping away from his position in Formula 1, are the tides beginning to turn for Red Bull?

Clearly, the wider context of this season so far would demonstrate that to say the tides might be turning for Red Bull is a gross overstatement. Verstappen has won the other four races that have taken place this year: opening a 33-point lead over teammate

Perez and the rest of the pack over the course of just these six races. Comparing any season to last year's will pale in comparison due to the sheer dominance of Verstappen's driving and the power of the RB19, and yet he still appears to be well on his way to a fourth World Drivers' Championship title. While Verstappen's imperious form over the past season can be heavily attributed to his skill, others look at the car itself as a big reason for Red Bull's success.

Whereas in most sports the main determinants for what makes a good team comes down to the players or coaching, Formula 1 is unique in its engineering dimension. Having good engineers to build the car and stay up to date with league wide regulations is arguably even more important than having good drivers. Adrian Newey joined Red Bull in 2006 but has a legacy in the sport that dates back for the last 36 years. Since entering the sport in 1988, Newey-designed cars have won 12 World Constructors' Championships and 13 World Drivers' Championships – narrowly missing out on a 14th with Mika Häkkinen in 2000. These wins were spread across three different teams, and four spells of dominance. With this in mind, when Newey announced that he would be stepping away from Formula 1 at the end of the 2024 season, immediately shifting focus to the Red Bull hypercar instead, the future of the Red Bull Formula 1 team appears to be in some jeopardy.

The dominance of one team is one thing, but it's in part the responsibility of other teams to be

competitive themselves. Teams naturally go through transitional periods: taking on new, younger drivers, or adapting to league regulations, both of which can stall progress. But self-inflicted wounds via strategy have also hampered competition against Red Bull in recent years. Ferrari have notably struggled over the past few years, leading to disputes between drivers and team principals. Mismanagement of Sainz's race at the conveniently named Red Bull Ring in Austria last year led to the Spanish driver saying: 'Clearly my race was compromised by that pitstop there,' – telling his team that they 'need to analyse what we could have done.' Entering the 2025 season, Ferrari have signed seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton to take Sainz's seat, and perhaps the experience of a driver of his tenure and calibre may lead to less strategical mishaps – narrowing the gulf between Red Bull and Ferrari – the latter being the only team other than Red Bull to win a race in both the 2023 and 2024 seasons. They also ended the 2023 season comfortably second in the World Constructors' Championships, and the gap from themselves to Red Bull in first is smaller than that to McLaren in third.

Ultimately, Max Verstappen could ride a tricycle with broken wheels and probably still challenge for podiums, but these developments have called into question whether we might see more competitive seasons in the coming years, a welcome return to the drama of seasons such as 2020 and 2021, the likes of which popularised the sport for modern viewers.

Summer Eights Results

This week, we present the final standings from Summer Eights 2024 for the top five (of the seven total) divisions in the men's and women's races.

Crews in green won blades. Crews in italics won spoons.

Division	Rank	Crew	Rank	Crew
Men's Div I	1.	Oriel	1.	ChCh
	2.	ChCh	2.	Wadham
	3.	Keble	3.	Univ
	4.	Wolfson	4.	Pembroke
	5.	Pembroke	5.	Teddy
	6.	University	6.	Wolfson
	7.	Magdalen	7.	Balliol
	8.	Balliol	8.	Oriel
	9.	Teddy	9.	Keble
	10.	New	10.	John's
	11.	Wadham	11.	Magdalen
	12.	Trinity	12.	Jesus
Men's Div II	13.	LMH	13.	New
	14.	Jesus	14.	Lincoln
	15.	Merton	15.	St Anne's
	16.	Catz	16.	GTC
	17.	Hugh's	17.	Exeter
	18.	Hertford	18.	Linacre
	19.	Lincoln	19.	Hertford
	20.	Worcester	20.	Mansfield
	21.	Oriel II	21.	LMH
	22.	St John's	22.	Catz
	23.	Queens	23.	Merton
	24.	Brasenose	24.	Trinity
Men's Div III	25.	Exeter	25.	Somerville
	26.	Mansfield	26.	Peter's
	27.	Peter's	27.	Worcester
	28.	GTC	28.	Queen's
	29.	ChCh II	29.	Brasenose
	30.	Pembs II	30.	Antony's
	31.	Linacre	31.	Wolfson II
	32.	Univ II	32.	Hilda's
	33.	Corpus	33.	Corpus
	34.	Wolfson II	34.	Univ II
	35.	New II	35.	Hugh's
	36.	Somerville	36.	Pembs II
Men's Div IV	37.	St Anne's	37.	ChCh II
	38.	Balliol II	38.	Magdalen II
	39.	Keble II	39.	Oriel II
	40.	St Hilda's	40.	Linacre II
	41.	St Antony's	41.	Wadham II
	42.	Wadham II	42.	Lincoln II
	43.	Teddy II	43.	GTC II
	44.	BNC II	44.	Brasenose II
	45.	Herts II	45.	Worcester II
	46.	Magd II	46.	St John's II
	47.	Peter's II	47.	Keble II
	48.	Catz II	48.	Wolfson III
Men's Div V	49.	Merton II	49.	Hertford II
	50.	Regent's	50.	Jesus II
	51.	Exeter II	51.	Hugh's II
	52.	Reuben	52.	Teddy II
	53.	Lincoln II	53.	New II
	54.	Jesus II	54.	Reuben
	55.	Queen's II	55.	Balliol II
	56.	Worcs II	56.	Somerville II
	57.	Wolfson III	57.	Peter's II
	58.	Keble III	58.	Merton II
	59.	New III	59.	Mansfield II
	60.	Univ III	60.	Exeter II

Jane Evelyn's Diary

John Evelyn

Who's Whorrible

Wot the paupers say

Second to none

Floating votes

... and they called it yuppy lurv

I've never had someone call *Cherwell* a rag to my face. If any aspect of the paper would bring it this title, though, (a title I don't think we deserve) it would be our longest running feature, the John Evelyn column. The column has been running almost continually since 1964, and to 'celebrate' its 60th anniversary I've collected some of the 'better' columns from Jevelyn's archives for this week's column.

The intrigue surrounding Jevelyn is enhanced by its anonymity. Nobody knows who writes the column (apart from the Editors-in-Chief). I've found it hilarious this term when Union hacks come up to me asking questions about Jevelyn, clearly in an attempt to vie for any morsel of information they can get about the mystery identity of our columnist... but without any luck.

With that said though the column is significantly less brutal than it once was. In the era of Boris

& co., the columnists used to name the victims of gossip – and make rather bold accusations of the people they were writing about. Take, for example, the MT85 columnist's take on Boris Johnson's run for Union President began their article declaring that Johnson was "Balliol's blond bumshell". Other columns previously have accused people of "posing half-naked" to sell tickets to an Edinburgh Fringe show, "receiving a magnum of the fizzy stuff from 'Stripper'", and being a "meatbrain". Tame.

Nowadays, individuals are not

even properly named, instead being given nicknames by our columnists which 'secretly' allude to their identities. Additionally, while the column used to cover drama across the entirety of Oxford, it now focuses wholly on the Oxford Union (which is, in fairness, the centre of gossip in Oxford). This change is probably understandable given modern technology means the column now has to compete with quality sources like Oxfess.

Here's to sixty more years of hacks being hacks and slating each other in *Cherwell* for laughs...

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

Week 5 American Crossword answers:

Across:

- 1) Mojo 5) Grudge
- 11) Whup 12) Hurray
- 13) Assumed name
- 15) Hotline 16) Gel
- 17) Dent 18) Mate
- 19) Scene 21) Tenet
- 22) Cost 23) Chad
- 24) Abe 25) Aladdin
- 28) Mark my words
- 30) Pitied 31) Wolf
- 32) Insane 33) Spew

Down:

- 1) Mojo 2) Osho
- 3) Just deserts
- 4) Opulent 5) Ghent
- 6) Rude 7) Urn
- 8) Drag and drop
- 9) Gamete 10) Eyelet
- 14) Mine 18) Meadows
- 19) Scampi 20) Cobain
- 21) Thaw 23) Clyde
- 25) Amen 26) Idle
- 27) NSFW 29) Kia

American Crossword by Julian Xiao

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9		10	11	12	13	14
15										16				
17										18				
19					20				21			22		
23			24	25			26					27		
			28				29	30			31			
32	33	34					35				36			
37							38				39			
40					41						42			
43				44				45						
46				47			48	49			50	51	52	
53				54				55			56			
57			58				59			60	61			
62							63							
64							65							

ACROSS

- 11. Time before going out of date
- 10. Dinosaur in Mario games
- 15. Long shots?
- 16. Boy's name that sounds like a boys' school
- 17. Computer science and statistics field
- 18. Filmmaker Kurosawa
- 19. Leader of the seven dwarves
- 20. Goes in
- 22. Trippy hippie stuff
- 23. Conjunction in conjunction with "or"
- 26. Congestion cause
- 27. Hawaiian floral necklace
- 28. Word of sadness
- 30. "First of all..."
- 32. Is believable
- 36. State home to Arches National Park
- 37. It dangles on the roof of your mouth
- 38. Leaves in a bag
- 39. "Name your ___"
- 40. ___ minimum
- 41. Workplace where lots of transfers happen (US spelling)
- 43. Toy that moves on a track
- 45. Achy
- 46. Trophy
- 47. Mimicked
- 49. Publicly exposed figure?
- 53. Actress Issa
- 54. Complementary
- 56. Unprocessed
- 57. Boot-shaped country
- 59. At least something
- 62. Japanese lunchbox
- 63. Move around
- 64. German industrial city in Ruhr
- 65. Put to shame, as in a competition

Sudoku by Jack Meredith

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

DOWN

- 1. It can be found on a card or in a yard
- 2. Capital of Vietnam
- 3. Make into law
- 4. haha
- 5. Cook with grease
- 6. ___ thinking
- 7. "Sign me up"
- 8. Cold, hard stuff
- 9. Meat and potatoes
- 10. Fermenting fungi
- 11. Tree that is a symbol of strength
- 12. Continuing to work hard
- 13. Typical sports betting event
- 14. Feeling uneasy
- 21. Carrot or turnip
- 24. "To be or not to be" speaker
- 25. Popular baby name following a 2013 Disney movie
- 29. Had the best time, perhaps?
- 31. Rotated
- 32. Request from many YouTube

videos

- 33. Assesses
- 34. Poles, for example
- 35. Filling of some pens
- 39. Machu Picchu's country
- 41. Guitar device for key changes
- 42. Twist
- 44. Ravine
- 48. Gift recipient
- 50. Literary device – dramatic, situational, or verbal
- 51. Police officer rank, for short
- 52. Smart jacket material
- 55. Salty waters
- 58. 4G ___
- 60. Film with the Oscar-winning song "Naatu Naatu"
- 61. Dictator who reportedly once swam 15 km in 65 minutes