

Cherwell

Oxford's oldest independent newspaper, est. 1920

VOLUME 304, ISSUE 4

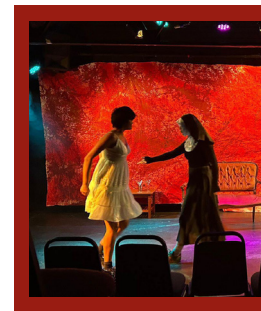
SATURDAY 31ST MAY 2025

5TH WEEK, TRINITY



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Review: Suddenly Last Summer – 'The senses feast'

Emma Heagney in
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Disciplinary action and the future of student activism at Oxford

NATASHA DRAKE

What is the point of a university like Oxford if we don't have the boldness, integrity, and confidence to think differently, to think deeply, to speak truth to power?" asked Oxford's Vice-Chancellor, Irene Tracey, in an address at her Admission Ceremony in January, 2023.

Throughout its long history, Oxford has been an important stage for student activists for a variety of causes, ranging from climate change prevention to protesting increases in rent. Universities have long served as a beacon for political and social discourse, facilitating the open debate of topics which matter to its students. But recent crackdowns on student-led protests around the world have led to universities being accused of failing to support this.

As increasing restrictions, including the Public Order Act 2023, reshape the national landscape, tensions between Oxford students and the University administration over recent demonstrations raise urgent questions – does this signal a new chapter in the institution's approach to activism?

Cherwell has gathered testimony from Oxford students involved in activism over the past year, many of whom have been met with varying degrees of disciplinary action. Due to the ongoing nature of some University investigations, students' identities have been kept anonymous. Through their accounts, *Cherwell* aims to investigate how the culture of student protest in Oxford is evolving.

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Union president no confidence row ends in tentative truce



- Indicative no confidence motion after Khan banned from Union building
- Okunde gives speech citing "deeply disturbing" incident over the weekend
- Private mediation eventually reached after war of words in media

NOAH ROBSON

President had misused her powers, passing by a margin of 12 votes to 5, with one spoiled ballot.

A war of words began between the two sides, both online and in-person. A public letter was circulated on social media calling for the President to step down, whilst in a speech to a crowd of over 100 in the Union's Goodman Library Okunde insisted she would not resign.

Eventually, following a private mediation, Okunde and Khan issued a joint statement in which both expressed regret over the issue. They said: "We hope that these events can serve as a foundation for growth, greater understanding, and stronger cooperation."

This resolution follows, however, an extraordinary week of tension within the Union. Stories reported in *Cherwell* were shared across social media by both sides. In her speech before the mediation, Okunde said: "I have been deeply disheartened by the false narratives that have emerged around a matter I had always hoped would be handled privately

and in good faith. As President, I made repeated offers to discuss the situation with the parties involved – in the evening, the morning before the Standing Committee, and immediately after the meeting. These offers were not taken up."

Okunde went on to describe a "deeply disturbing" incident that she was informed had happened over the weekend. "I was told that a member of one of the Union's committees – not the one in question today – was seen in a public bar violently stabbing a stuffed animal between the legs while saying it represented me."

"I have been in a state of shock ever since. But powered through whilst also managing physical pain and carrying out my responsibilities as President. Sadly, this is not the first time I or others have faced misogyny, threats, or discriminatory behaviour during my time at the Union."

Prior to the truce, Israr Khan told *Cherwell*: "This President is acting like an authoritarian ruler, not the head of a democratic society. She has bent the rules to suit herself and her friends, silencing voices that challenge her, and abusing her powers to manipulate outcomes."

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Exam conditions to change for languages students mid-course

POPPY LITTLER-JENNINGS and
NOAH ROBSON

Oxford University's Faculty of Medieval and Modern Languages (MML) is set to re-introduce closed-book, handwritten exams for almost all papers, to be sat in Exam Schools due to concerns surrounding plagiarism and the use of AI.

Cherwell can reveal that these changes will take effect almost immediately: students currently in their third and second years of study will now be taking handwritten and closed-book finals, as opposed to the online exams held on Inspira in recent years. This news has not yet officially been communicated to students despite several tutors informally sharing the information.

Sam Field-Gibson, a student representative on the Modern Languages Joint Consultative Committee, told *Cherwell*: "Last Monday at the Joint Consultative Committee, the Modern Languages DUS [Director of Undergraduate Studies] announced that Faculty Board had voted to make final exams closed-book, in-person, and hand-written from 2026 finals onwards. Many of us student reps raised points such as reducing knowledge simply to rote-learning and the drawbacks of implementing this change for people who have

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Chimpanzee study sheds light on healthcare origins

CALLUM STOVE

Researchers led by a team from Oxford University have expanded on the understanding of human healthcare's "cognitive and social foundations" through a study of chimpanzees in Uganda.

The new study, published in *Frontiers in Ecology and Evolution*, breaks new ground in demonstrating that medical care amongst chimpanzees, and particularly that which is not confined to close relatives, is more widespread than was originally believed.

Headed by Dr Elodie Freymann, of the University's School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnography, the work documents 41 cases of care between the chimpanzees. These include 34 cases of self-care and seven cases of care for others (prosocial care) within the two observed communities of Sonso and Waibira in the Budongo Forest.

Speaking to the University, Dr Freymann observed that of the seven instances of prosocial care, "Care wasn't preferentially given by, or provided to, one sex or age group. On four occasions, care was given to genetically unrelated individuals."

Also noted was the complexity of the care provided. Several techniques, including chewing plants and applying them to the wound, leaf-dabbing, direct wound licking and finger licking

followed by wound pressing, were observed. All chimpanzees showed a subsequent recovery from their injuries following the care.

Cases of hygiene and preventative care were similarly identified in the use of leaves to clean genitals after mating and the anus after defecation. Alongside this, many of the plants involved in these processes are understood to possess antibacterial properties that further improve the likelihood of success.

The variety of treatments reflects the causes of injuries identified by the researchers. Of the seven key occurrences of prosocial care, four were to treat unspecified wounds (possibly from fights or accidents), two involved the removal of snares and one involved helping another chimpanzee with hygiene. The team speculates that the treating of injuries may also be a reflection of the individual's personal preferences – not just the type of wound.

However, healthcare behaviour in animals is not unique to chimpanzees, occurring in elephants, lions, and other species. In a few exceptional cases these behaviours are not limited to related individuals, a habit observed in the two closest living relatives of humans: chimpanzees and bonobo monkeys.

Continue reading at Cherwell.org
Image Credit: Timon Cornelissen via Pexels



Union no con row ends in tentative truce

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A public letter signed by 11 members of TSC echoed Khan's points. They called for a written apology from the President, a review of her use of disciplinary powers, a "reaffirmation of the impartial application of procedural rules," and for the President to resign.

Other voices on TSC have spoken out in support of the President. An Ex-President, who wished to remain anonymous, told *Cherwell*: "The President has repeatedly been subjected to disrespectful, misogynistic behaviour at TSC; this performative 'No Confidence' motion is yet another attempt to intimidate her after she took action against the Ex-President [Israr Khan]."

Chris Collins, an Ex-Secretary, said: "The first black woman ever to be President of the Oxford Union was smeared, belittled, and bullied for over three hours."

In response to these claims, Khan told *Cherwell*: "These are not baseless accusations – they are part of a pattern of behaviour where power is abused, rules are bent for friends, and dissenting voices are silenced. The no-confidence motion was not about 'intimidating' the President – it was about holding her to account for these very actions."

Khan was briefly banned from Un-

ion premises under Rule 51(a), which states that "The President ... shall have the power to refuse entry into the Society's Buildings to any person if they ... are reasonably satisfied that such measures are necessary for the good order of the Society's Buildings or the best interests of the Society."

Addressing the controversy over the ban, Okunde said she had apologised for the manner in which the move took place, but claimed that no apology was given in return.

On this, Khan told *Cherwell*: "It is very unfortunate that the President, instead of offering an apology for what she in private admits to have been wrong and an abuse of her power, on Monday put her ego before the interest of the Society."

Following Okunde's speech, multiple others made statements in support of her, including ex-Treasurer Sarah Rana. She openly admitted that several people who were expressing no confidence were some of her "best friends", but added: "I think it's important that just because people are your friends, it doesn't mean you don't call them out when you think they're wrong."

Under the Union's rules, the President can only be removed from their position if a motion of no confidence is signed by 150 members, following which a poll occurs of all members.

Inclusive music venue set to open on Little Clarendon Street

AMELIA GIBBINS

A local charity is set to open a new music venue on Little Clarendon Street in July, aiming to create an inclusive space for women, transgender and non-binary people.

YWMP is a grassroots organisation that was set up 25 years ago, though its project on Little Clarendon will be the first physical hub for the group. The charity focuses on working with those aged 14-25, and the venue on Little Clarendon Street aims to fill gaps in spaces for young people in the city.

The founder of the charity, Zahra Haji Fath Ali Tehrani, told *Cherwell* that "there is a tiny youth provision in Oxford. Youth clubs have been shut down and there aren't really spaces for young people to hang out, especially those who are most marginalised in the community."

One of the inspirations behind the

project is to contribute to a healthier gig culture in Oxford. The founder of YWMP explained to *Cherwell* that the culture of live music is "one of the main reasons why we are trying to push for this. We want to disrupt how gig-going culture is so that most people feel they can show up and be supported when they see their favourite musicians play."

The venue will be on Little Clarendon Street, next to Common Ground Café, a social coworking space and community arts hub. *Cherwell* has previously reported on the University of Oxford's annexing of Common Ground for its redevelopment plans of Wellington Square buildings.

Costs for the venue have been covered for the first three years by Youth Music, a national charity that supports music-based projects. YWMP's founder told *Cherwell* that "Little Clarendon is not a choice, as we would never choose to be in North Oxford as it is a very wealthy area. We are very grateful this opportunity has



come up, but it is not a choice. We don't know how we are going to sustain this, with the pressure of the space potentially being knocked down, but our lease is until December 2026."

However, they described this as a learning opportunity: "We are not going to stop here, and we hope that it just brings people together." YWMP explained that they hope to have an impact on the rest of the wider Oxford music scene, and want to encourage other venues to work harder to be more inclusive.

Image Credit: Lucie Fellwock for Cherwell

Former Hertford College principal urges action 'to prevent genocide' in Gaza

CONOR WALSH

Tom Fletcher, the former Principal of Hertford College, addressed the United Nations (UN) Security Council on 13th May. In his new role as Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief, Fletcher urged the Council to "act – decisively – to prevent genocide" in Gaza.

As Under-Secretary-General, Fletcher leads the Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the UN body responsible for coordinating international responses to complex emergencies and natural disasters. This includes the delivery of aid to Gaza.

In his speech, Fletcher briefed the Council about the ongoing aid crisis in Gaza. He emphasised that, in the last ten weeks, little aid has entered the territory, 70% of which is either within Israeli-militarized zones or under displacement orders. As a consequence, "every single one of the 2.1 million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip face the risk of famine. One in five face starvation."

Fletcher began by asking the Council "what action we will tell future generations we each took to stop the 21st century atrocity to which we bear daily witness in Gaza." This remark has subsequently sparked an open letter by

the parent of an Oxford student who faces disciplinary action following the occupation of Vice-Chancellor Irene Tracey's office on 23rd May 2024.

The letter appealed to Fletcher to call on the Vice-Chancellor, in the same way that he appealed to the Security Council, "to consider how future generations might judge her decision to prosecute students acting on their moral indignation about events in Gaza and to terminate the university's proceedings against them."

Fletcher went on to describe the dire state of Gaza's medical system before urging the Council to let OCHA and other aid agencies resume humanitarian aid distribution. He said: "we have a plan. We have shown we can deliver, with tens of thousands of trucks reaching civilians during the ceasefire. We have life-saving supplies ready, now, at the borders. We can save hundreds of thousands of survivors. We have rigorous mechanisms to ensure our aid gets to civilians, and not to Hamas. But Israel denies us access, placing the objective of depopulating Gaza before the lives of civilians."

Fletcher also reminded the Council of Israel's obligations under humanitarian law, and drew attention to the growing violence in the West Bank where he described the situation as "the worst in decades" with "the use of heavy weaponry, military methods of war,

excessive force, forcible displacement, demolitions and movement restrictions".

In his concluding remarks, Fletcher said: "Humanity, the law and reason must prevail. This Council must prevail. Demand this ends. Stop arming it. Insist on accountability."

"To the Israeli authorities: stop killing and injuring civilians. Lift this brutal blockade. Let humanitarians save lives. To Hamas and other armed Palestinian groups: release all hostages immediately and unconditionally. Stop putting civilians at risk during military operations."

Since his address last Tuesday Fletcher has been criticised for using the term "genocide" to describe the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Gaza. In an interview with the Associated Press (AP), Fletcher defended his use of the term, saying that he wanted to "make sure that we aren't making the mistake that was made with previous massive breaches of international law, where it hasn't been called out soon enough."

He told the AP that: "I'm not a lawyer. I'm a humanitarian. My job is to get the aid in, to get the attention of the world, to help create the conditions to get that aid in and save as many lives as possible before it's too late."

Continue reading at Cherwell.org
Image Credit: UN Photo / Loey Felipe



MML exam format to change, Faculty blames AI

Continued from Page 1

already started studying for their finals.

However, we were told in response that Faculty Board had already voted for the change and that the risk of generative AI in online exams was so great that immediate change was needed. When asked if generative AI had previously been an issue, they responded that it was the principle that mattered, and that AI detection software could not accurately determine the origin of all texts, leading to the issue of false positives, such that false accusations could be levelled at students.

The majority of MML exams have been conducted online since 2020 as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, including the prelim exams taken by students whose finals will now be subject to this change in examination regulations.

Prior to this decision, a consultation on exam changes was sent to students. The results of that consultation have yet to be released publicly.

Field-Gibson told *Cherwell* that the Humanities Division had rejected a bid by the Faculty to obtain computers for exams, but that this may be subject to change in the future. He said that the JCC was told that “the current proposed curriculum reform to drop one content paper (which will take effect from 2028 at the earliest) would alleviate some of the pressure.”

In response to this news, one third-year MML student told *Cherwell*: “Current FHS students have been preparing and studying with the expectations of remote exams. In-person exams require a separate approach, and it’s quite unfair to expect students to simply adapt mid-way through their courses.

“Rather than moving backwards...the faculty should redirect their efforts towards ensuring students are aware of how to use AI responsibly and productively. This technology isn’t going anywhere and pretending it doesn’t exist just holds Oxford students back.”

Read the full article at cherwell.org

Somerville first college to speak out since Supreme Court trans ruling

LAURENCE COOKE

Somerville College affirmed its solidarity with trans students in a statement today.

The intervention makes Somerville the first Oxford college to react publicly to the Supreme Court’s April ruling on the legal definition of a woman. Only the central University had previously published an update which noted they were “carefully reviewing [our] policies and practices concerning transgender inclusion and equality... [including] existing facilities across our estate.”

Somerville’s statements highlighted that the college’s “ethos has always been and will always be to include the excluded.”

It continued: “As an inclusive com-

munity, we see trans rights and women’s rights not in opposition to each other, but as part of the same struggle for dignity, equality, and human rights that we are proud to support.”

They nonetheless recognised that “naturally [we] will always uphold the law.”

The statement comes after a motion passed by students in the newly-established Conference of Commons Rooms (CCR) urging the University not to adopt “regressive” changes to trans policies. During discussion over this motion, concerns were raised over the possibility of colleges taking different approaches from one another. Some suggested this would only exacerbate the uncertainty for trans students.

At the start of term, hundreds of students, staff, and local residents took to

the streets of Oxford to protest the Supreme Court’s decision.

The University has said it is awaiting an updated code of practice from the Equality and Human Rights Commissions (EHRC), due to be published by the end of June. Somerville acknowledged that some students would be “feeling fear and uncertainty” ahead of these new guidelines.

The College additionally promised to meet with transgender students and staff to discuss next steps for support. The statement reiterated that their commitments to championing “the rights and freedoms” of trans and non-binary would not change with the Supreme Court’s judgment.

Somerville JCR was contacted for comment.

Image Credit: David Hays for Cherwell



‘Stop the hate’: Anti-racist demonstrators in counter protest



CHERWELL NEWS

A protest by Oxford Stand Up to Racism (OSUTR) assembled in front of Carfax tower at 11am on 24th May in opposition to a ‘Great British National Strike’ called by supporters of far-right anti-Islam activist Tommy Robinson.

Around 100 OSUTR protestors were gathered at the end of Cornmarket Street, outnumbering the few dozen far-right demonstrators.

The “GBNS” was originally advertised by an anonymous organiser on TikTok, according to the New European. “On the 24th of May Great Britain will hold a national strike, the Great British National Strike. Why? Well, because Great Britain is under attack. You and I, as you watch this video, you are under attack.”

Robinson, whose real name is Stephen Yaxley-Lennon, was charged with harassment causing fear of violence on 21st May. The incidents concerned occurred between 5th and 7th August 2024, amid national Islamophobic violence.

A flyer distributed by OSUTR at the protest read: “Supporters of Britain’s most notorious Nazi Tommy Robinson have called protests in 74 towns and cities across the UK today under the slogan ‘The Great British National Strike’ – though they aren’t asking anyone to stop work and no trade union is backing them.”

This protest forms part of a national counter-demonstration against the “Great British National Strike”, as advertised on OSUTR’s Instagram, with similar movements taking place across the country.

A spokesperson from OSUTR told

Cherwell: “There’s an event called the Great British National Strike that’s been called by people who are associated with the far-right, and they’re raising various public slogans and marrying their very hard-right racist ideas to mobilise people, also to harden a sort of right wing cadre in society. “We’ve come out to oppose them, but there are known fascists in the mobilisation over there, they’ve pulled a rump of people around their racist ideas.”

A post in the Facebook group ‘The Great British National Strike’ listed “illegal immigration”, “net-zero”, “inheritance tax”, “rape gang inquiry”, “freedom of speech”, and “reversal of benefit cuts” as the objects of the demonstration. One GBNS demonstrator wore a T-shirt reading “Free Tommy Robinson”.

One of the GBNS demonstrators told *Cherwell* that she joined the movement in support of “WASPI [women against state pension inequality], pensioners, farmers”. She told *Cherwell*: “Rachel Reeves is a thief to the population of the UK.” She did not identify as being “far right” noting that she “got a Syrian refugee his British citizenship”.

In response to the claims that the GBNS group were protesting the cost of living, the OSUTR flyer read: “they are trying to use legitimate concerns over cost of living, winter fuel payments and claim to be open to all, but their twitter page is rife with uncritical support for last weekend’s fascist protests in Bristol and Birmingham.”

Reporting from Archie Johnston and Arina Makarina

Image Credit: Faye Chang for Cherwell
Read the full article at cherwell.org

NEWS SHORTS

Alpaca-lypse: A herd of welfare wonder

A small herd of alpacas took to the Rad Cam last Friday as part of the Bodleian Library’s efforts to improve wellbeing and reduce stress during exams. In a similar event last year, 500 university members queued up to meet, pet, and feed the peaceful pets. This year’s enclosure also proved a resounding success.

Jesus College buys book with rare inscription

A rare book owned by Mary Foulkes, the wife of Jesus’ former Principal Henry Foulkes, has been purchased by the college for the Fellows’ Library. The book, ‘Travels in Mesopotamia’, contains an inscription by Foulkes which college archivists say is rare evidence of women’s presence in all-male colleges during the 19th century.

No ball games, apart from croquet for Merton

With the onset of warmer weather, Merton’s DPOP reminded students of the Fellows’ Garden’s strict rules in an email to students. Whilst Merton “wholeheartedly encourages” students to use the garden, “no food or drink must be consumed” and “no games must be played” with the exception of croquet on the Chestnut Lawn, of course.

42nd Poohstick World Champion crowned

First-time poohsticker Amanda McCann was crowned the winner at the 42nd Poohstick World Championships at Stanford Lock last Sunday. McCann said that she’d “travelled from Nuneaton for a day out” and that she “hadn’t a clue” about what she was doing. The game involves contestants dropping a stick on the upstream-side of a bridge in a race to see who stick makes it to the other side first.

CROSS CAMPUS

Upsy daisy: Cambridge cows fall in river

Last Tuesday, a cow fell into the River Cam. According to Cambridge City Council, this happens two to four times a year, suggesting even the cows are desperate to get away from Cambridge students. Cows on Cambridge Commons will now be fitted with GPS collars, in a move to reduce emergency rescues and prevent the cows having to be relocated amid budget cuts.

Harvard University prevented from enrolling international students

In an escalating stand-off with the Trump administration, Harvard has been banned from enrolling international students. This ban also extends to international students currently enrolled at the University. Harvard called the move “unlawful” and expressed its commitment to hosting students from more than 140 countries who “enrich” the community “and this nation”.



New NHS hub to open in North Oxford at Murray House

ARINA MAKARINA

Murray House is a new health hub for community physical health teams that has recently opened in North Oxford. The hub, located on the Jordan Hill Business Park, will provide a range of medical services such as podiatry, children and adult specialist therapy, and specialist dental services. The district nursing teams will also be located in Murray house.

Many of the health services working from the hub, including district nurses, will have visiting teams that will be able to travel to people's homes to provide care. Services for specific health needs like dental and podiatry care will run clinics onsite.

The location will have improved public transportation links to facilitate higher accessibility of the clinics. This will include a close proximity to the Oxford Parkway Park & Ride and a range of bus stops.

According to Oxford NHS Foundation Trust, Murray House has recently "undergone a full refurbishment to meet the needs of modern health services". The ground floor includes a "well-organised" waiting area, toilets,

and vending machines, which will be coming soon.

Murray House will be one of three health hubs in Oxford; the other two will cover the centre (East Oxford Health Centre on Manzil Way) and the south of the city, for which the location is yet to be determined. The buildings in Jericho and Summer-town that previously housed the provided services will be sold.

Peter Gibson from Oxford NHS Foundation Trust said the new hub will improve recruitment and retention of the staff: "Our teams, sitting together, can actually start to talk to each in a way they just didn't before because they were located in different parts of the city."

Gibson also described Murray House as "a much, much better facility [and] easier for people to get to, with much better public transport links."

The hub began to provide care for patients from 5th May, as most of the staff had moved in by the end of April. An official opening ceremony for Murray House is also set to take place later this year.

Image credit: Seb Page for Cherwell

Charlie Kirk on trans rights, abortion, and Red Pill media at the Union

CHERWELL NEWS

Controversial American conservative activist Charlie Kirk appeared at the Oxford Union on Tuesday afternoon, speaking on issues ranging from abortion to the influence of Red Pill media.

A small gathering of protestors from Oxford Stand Up to Racism (OSUTR) gathered on St Michael's Street to oppose the event, telling *Cherwell*: "We've got to stand up to them and we're here to say you don't debate with hate. You stand up and you speak out." When asked about the protest, Kirk told *Cherwell*: "They have a right to do that. Well, I hope they have a right to do that."

During the event, Kirk was asked about his views on transgender rights, claiming that "there's something sick and awful about chopping off a 14-year-old's breasts," whilst also describing JK Rowling as a "hero". On the influence of figures such as Andrew Tate, Kirk said: "the men of the West have been infantilised for too long". When discussing *Adolescence* – the Netflix series which provoked discussion about Red Pill media – he described it as "complete fiction" which was a "mythology like *Lord of the Rings*".

Responding to questions about Adriana Smith, a brain-dead, pregnant US woman who is currently being kept alive under state abortion law until the birth of her baby, Kirk said: "Her parting gift to the world will be another life [...] that's beautiful." As part of a wider discussion about abortion later in the talk, Kirk said:

"We aim to abolish abortion the same way we abolished slavery in the 1860s... one is arguably worse."

Project 2025 – a right-wing plan to reform the US government – was another topic of discussion. Kirk praised the initiative, telling the audience that it was "going great", which led to laughter amongst some. However, Kirk admitted: "I haven't even read it all".

Speaking to *Cherwell*, OSUTR said: "We don't want to platform people whose ideology is so Islamophobic, so anti-Semitic, and we think that the Union instead of inviting him here should kick him out on the street and boot him back over the Atlantic."

Commenting after the event, Kirk told *Cherwell*: "Much better than Cambridge. Very respectful, very thoughtful – A-Plus experience."

Kirk is known for having founded Turning Point USA, an organisation that endeavours to promote conservative politics on the campuses of high schools, colleges, and universities. Later, he also spoke in a debate, opposing the motion "This House Believes Trump has gone too far".

During the debate, Kirk took issue principally with current British politics, pointing to "the dying out of the British nation" and of Christianity, which he claimed to be a result of immigration to the UK. After deeming 'Make America Great Again' a project to "return America to its British roots", he claimed that British leaders had deserted the very principles that "made them great in the first place".

Cycling group calls for blanket 20mph speed limits throughout all of Oxford in letter to councillors

STANLEY SMITH

An Oxford-based cycling charity is calling for 20mph speed limits on all Oxford roads by 2029. The charity, Cyclox, announced their "agenda for change" in a letter to newly-elected county councillors last week.

The letter welcomed councillors to their role and emphasised that there is much to do to make Oxford a safer cycling city for all. Cyclox advocated several policy proposals in addition to speed limit recommendations. These include "resurfacing Parks Road, South Parks Road and St Cross Road with wider cycle lanes", as well as "all day cycling on Queen St and Cornmarket". Contrary to common practices, cycling on Queen Street and Cornmarket is currently prohibited during certain hours.

Ian Loader, Chair of Cyclox, told *Cherwell* that the results of May's election, which saw an increase in the number of Liberal Democrat and Green councillors, show "voters have decisively supported an administration that promises to tackle Oxford's car-dependency and make it safer and easier for people to get around."

He added: "Cyclox will work constructively with the new Council to deliver this vision of Oxford's future. But we will also publicly hold them to account if they fall short."

Cycling in the city is big business with 35% of Oxford residents cycling at least once a week. Traffic collisions, however, remain a problem. In 2023, 205 cyclists were reported as casualties from traffic collisions, and in 2022 two members of Oxford University were killed whilst cycling.

Oxfordshire County Council's road safety initiative, Vision Zero, aims to eliminate all fatalities and severe injuries on Oxfordshire roads by 2050. The previous council approved a budget of £8m for the implementation of 20mph areas as a replacement for 30mph areas "where there is local support".

Green Councillor Emily Kerr has offered her support for Cyclox's policy proposals, commenting: "most things they [Cyclox] are requesting are already standard in European Cities which see much higher levels of walking and cycling than Oxford."

Not all councillors, however, are supportive of the group's policy agenda. Independent Alliance Councillor David Henwood has expressed concerns that lowering speed limits across Oxford to 20mph could have a "detrimental" impact on bus timings.

Luke Marion, the Managing Director of the Oxford Bus Company, has raised similar concerns, telling the Oxford Mail: "additional 20mph zones would make travelling to and from Oxford by bus less attractive to the public, creating more congestion which neither supports road safety or achieving environmental targets".

In response to these concerns, Cyclox told *Cherwell* that "there is no evidence that 20mph speed limits will significantly affect bus speeds – for most of the day, no buses go above 20mph".

Cyclox's Chair also told *Cherwell* that we should "focus on the bigger picture. Policies to set 20mph speed in towns and cities are today being introduced across the world. This is because social norms around traffic speed in built-up areas are changing."

Continue reading at Cherwell.org

Pro-Palestine encampment moves to Angel and Greyhound Meadow, now disbanded

CHERWELL NEWS

A pro-Palestine encampment initially established outside Magdalen College relocated to the Angel and Greyhound Meadow, and as of 28th May has now disbanded. Fences have been constructed around the front lawn of the College, with students being advised to "continue to be vigilant around College" in an email from the Bursar.

It comes after an Oxford Against Genocide (OAG) encampment was set up outside College on Friday 16th May, following a march which began at Manzil Way at 6.30pm. According to a statement on Instagram, OAG is a "new collective... dedicated to Palestinian liberation through action-driven means".

The group of around 100 protestors blocked one side of Cowley Road as they moved over Magdalen Bridge towards the College, where tents were built on the lawn to the left of the porter's lodge. Flags, including one of the Republic of Ireland, were draped over walls around the college. Some spoke through a megaphone to attendees, and chants condemned the actions of the prime minister, Sir Keir Starmer.

Protestors appeared to be part of a coalition of organisations, which included national groups such as Socialist Worker and Friends of Al-Aqsa. Oxford Action for Pal-

estine (OA4P) was not affiliated with this action, but acknowledged "shared goals and urgency" in a statement to *Cherwell*.

A senior OAG representative, who preferred not to be named, said that there were "slightly different aims" between the two organisations, but "no bad blood". Several individuals at OAG's encampment have been involved with OA4P actions in the past.

One protestor told *Cherwell*: "We cannot sit around; we need to put pressure on Oxford University and the government". Another said that "Keir Starmer has taken a side".

At around 8pm, many of the protestors left, leaving a core group which remained present at the encampment on Magdalen property. Reporters from *Cherwell* were advised by police not to enter the lawn itself, due to the risk of being considered aggravated trespassers.

When asked why the protestors had chosen a space outside Magdalen specifically, OAG cited controversial plans for a bridge which is planned in Grandpont Nature Park. They alleged to *Cherwell* that Magdalen and Oxford City Council had diverted funds intended to help alleviate the housing crisis among vulnerable people towards the construction of this bridge, and that "all it does is make it easier for researchers to go to their place of work".

They also alleged the College had not responded to some Freedom of Information requests from Oxford Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) Coalition about colleges' support for Israel.

Finally, they noted the strategic alliance between the University and the Ellison Institute of Technology. The Institute has an increasing presence in Oxford Science Park, which is part-owned by Magdalen. Larry Ellison, founder of the Institute, is an outspoken supporter of Israel.

Cherwell also understands that gates around University College were closed early on the same evening, barring the main lodge entrance, with an email to all Univ students citing "external reasons" for the closure. The side gate of Magdalen College was also chained up by porters soon after the protestors arrived.

OAG's representative told *Cherwell*: "We're gonna [sic] be here until it's physically impossible to be here".

Over the weekend, the encampment at Magdalen had been disbanded, and was found at the Angel and Greyhound Meadow. *Cherwell* understands this is property of Magdalen. By the 28th, however, it was clear that OAG had also left the field.

Oxford University and Magdalen College did not respond to request for comment.

Image Credit: Stan Smith for Cherwell



INVESTIGATIONS

‘Speaking truth to power’: Disciplinary action and the future of student activism

Continued from Page 1

University policy on demonstrations and protests

University guidance on the right to protest states: “The University supports the right to lawful protest, but actions which disrupt aspects of staff or student life for fellow members of the University, in breach of our codes of conduct, are not acceptable.”

The right of students to express opinions “without institutional censorship and without placing themselves in jeopardy of losing their jobs or privileges” is protected under the University’s Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech, if they are granted permission from the Proctors’ Office before demonstrating. The Code of Practice also states that protests will be prohibited if they pose a risk to public safety or give rise to an environment of discrimination.

The University proposed changes to Statute XI, a statute concerning University disciplinary measures, in the Trinity 2024 week eight newsletter. The proposed amendments were set for a Congregation Vote on June 11th, 2024. However, some amendments were criticised for being vaguely worded, such as the proposal that staff should have the power to ban students for up to three weeks who could be “likely” to “cause damage to property” or “significantly damage the University’s reputation among reasonable people”.

The proposed amendments to Statute XI also included modifications to punishments for sexual misconduct and harassment; an email from the University to department heads and heads of colleges stated that a “vote against the proposed statute is a vote against the introduction of the sexual misconduct reforms”.

One student who spoke to *Cherwell* accused the University of using the modified penalties for sexual harassment to enable the blanket approval of more severe punishments for all disciplinary offences, criticising the combination of what they referred to as “draconian changes to the behavioural policy with the very legitimate sexual harassment policy”.

After intense backlash from students and faculty, the amendments were withdrawn, and the Congregation vote was cancelled.

A University spokesperson told *Cherwell*: “Proposed changes to Statute XI—now under further consultation—were designed to strengthen the University’s ability to address serious misconduct, particularly in cases of sexual harassment and violence. These proposals were not intended to restrict lawful protest, which remains protected under University policy and UK law.”

A recently published UN report, which *Cherwell* has been told was written after interviews held between Oxford student protestors and the UN Special Rapporteur, has strongly condemned the growing use of disciplinary action against student activism, warning of “a deeply disturbing situation” and a worsening “atmosphere of hostility and mistrust between the students and the administration” in academic institutions worldwide.

A University spokesperson told *Cherwell* in response: “We are aware

of references to a recent report by the UN Special Rapporteur on student protest. While the report addresses global trends and includes examples from the UK, it does not name Oxford or make any specific findings about the University.

“The University of Oxford is committed to freedom of speech, the right to lawful protest, and the safety and wellbeing of our community. These values are fundamental to academic life and are supported by the University’s Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech and Guidance on Protests and Demonstrations.

“We do not discipline students for their legally held views or causes. However, when protest actions involve serious disruption, forced entry, harassment, or safety risks, we respond in accordance with University policies. Our approach is guided by fairness and a responsibility to maintain a respectful, safe, and inclusive environment for all students, staff, and visitors.”

Disciplinary action and its impact on student protestors

Just over a year ago on 23rd May 2024, 17 members of Oxford Action for Palestine (OA4P) operated a sit-in at the University’s administration offices in Wellington Square in an attempt to push for negotiations with the University. In response, the University called the Thames Valley Police (TVP) to arrest those inside and break up the students protesting outside the building.

A student who was present at the incident told *Cherwell*: “the amount of people that were injured... was kind of astonishing. People were being dragged and pushed around for no reason, there was simply no reason to use that amount of force, and it was with the University’s permission that that happened.”

“**The amount of people that were injured... was kind of astonishing. People were being dragged and pushed around for no reason**

One student told *Cherwell* that the University’s response to the Wellington Square incident “backfired for the University... a lot of Oxford students who saw the videos of the police acting the way they did started supporting the encampment, to be honest, (...) they felt like the University’s mistreatment of the students specifically was appalling.”

The University claimed in the newsletter following the students’ arrest, that the students involved engaged in “violent action that included forcibly overpowering the receptionist”. OA4P previously told *The Oxford Student*: “there is CCTV footage which disproves the false allegation that acts of violence took place.” In response to a Freedom of Information request for CCTV footage of the reception area, the University told *The Oxford Stu-*

dent that it was not able to provide the information requested.

TVP initially arrested one of the 17 students for assault, but later decided not to bring charges. The University then launched a Proctors’ investigation into the incident, and members of OA4P told *Cherwell* that a verdict is yet to be provided on the disciplinary actions to be taken against the students. Over a year after the incident, the Proctors’ investigation remains open.

One student who is currently under Proctors’ investigation following the Wellington Square incident told *Cherwell* that they feel as though the inconclusive nature of the disciplinary process is “being done intentionally to silence us... I am intentionally being kept on counter hooks [sic] so that I don’t do anything else.” They added that they are constantly “looking over [their] shoulder” as a result of fearing further disciplinary measures from the University.

A different student told *Cherwell* that they had experienced distress and anxiety as a result of the ongoing investigation: “Continuing to have this weight hanging over me without a sort of acknowledgement of how it could affect my studies, my life, my health... is not proper conduct from them.”

“**Continuing to have this wight hanging over me without a sort of acknowledgement of how it could affect my studies, my life, my health... is not proper conduct**

A University spokesperson told *Cherwell*: “We aim to ensure that disciplinary processes are consistently fair, clear, and proportionate. These processes are confidential and conducted independently of University leadership.”

A recent investigation by *Liberty Investigates* and *Sky News* revealed through Freedom of Information requests that the University received intelligence reports on protest activity from the private firm Horus Security Consultancy Ltd, a company which has previously been criticised for being used as surveillance to investigate student activists at Sheffield University.

One student told *Cherwell* they felt that “the surveillance was designed to

induce some kind of paranoia”. They added: “Whatever mental health impacts it has, which I can first-hand tell you are quite serious, do not even come up in theoretical conversations [with the University].”

In response to these claims, a University spokesperson told *Cherwell*: “Allegations of surveillance are also inaccurate. External security consultants are used solely to carry out safety risk assessments for public events and known protests—not to monitor individuals or political activity.”

“**The surveillance was designed to induce some kind of paranoia**

Looking to the future of student activism

On 16th May 2025, Oxford Against Genocide (OAG), which describes itself as “a new collective in Oxford who are dedicated to Palestinian liberation”, set up an encampment outside Magdalen College.

Magdalen wrote a letter to the protesters on the same day asking them to leave, and threatened court action, so the encampment was moved to the Angel and Greyhound Meadow. However, a representative told *Cherwell* that pressure from University security forced the encampment to move the following weekend.

One student involved in OAG described encampments as a “disruptive but not destructive” form of protest, and “a normal course of action for student protest in this country”.

The student compared the recent disbanding of OAG’s encampment with their involvement in the OA4P encampments last Trinity: “Last year, the University tried to kind of wait it out... This time round the response has been a lot more harsh. Their tolerance for hearing protest... has decreased.”

Following the recent dismantling of OAG’s encampment, tensions between protestors and University administration raise questions about what the future of Oxford’s student activism will look like.

Several students who spoke to *Cherwell* reported feeling that the disciplinary action taken by the University resulted in fear surrounding the potential consequences of participating in future demonstrations. One student stated: “They’re very interested in creating an atmosphere in which

Image Credit: David Hays for Cherwell
protest is very uncomfortable and impractical.”

Another student cited the Vice-Chancellor’s speech about “speaking truth to power” to argue that the University pays “lip service towards the idea of student democracy and student action... When you actually do it, you’re faced with this massive bureaucratic wall.”

A University spokesperson told *Cherwell*: “In both the 2023 and 2024 National Student Surveys (NSS), Oxford students reported among the highest levels of freedom of expression in the country—with 90.8% and 89.9% respectively responding positively to how free they felt to express their ideas, opinions, and beliefs. In 2024, 1,749 Oxford students responded to this question, offering a strong and representative picture of student experience.”

“**They’re very interested in creating an atmosphere in which protest is very uncomfortable and impractical... the University pays lip service towards the idea of student democracy and student action... When you actually do it, you’re faced with this bureaucratic wall**

“As a global institution, Oxford thrives on challenge and critical thought. We are proud to remain a space where robust debate and diverse voices are not only protected but valued.”

Student demonstrations over the past year signal that the landscape of Oxford’s student activism is constantly evolving, raising questions about the boundaries of protest, the roles of universities in fostering independent thought, and the extent to which institutions are willing to support, or suppress, student voices. If there is belief that tangible change can be achieved through activism as it has done before, students in Oxford and beyond will continue to speak out about the causes which matter to them, influence progress, and challenge those in power for decades to come.



OPINION

It's okay to hate tourism in Oxford

OSCAR WHITTLE

Tourists are as much a feature of life as a student at this University as tutorials, Summer Eights, or getting unfathomably hammered next to your tutors at subject dinners. They are also considerably less fun to experience than any of these three staples, and it is regrettable that we are so constantly subjected to their effects. While tourism to this city and its colleges brings in considerable revenue not just for the University, but for the local and national economy too, are we really so shallow as to value something simply because of its commercial value? I'd hope not.

Before this term, I had really only suffered bumping into large groups of distinctly lost looking tourists in the usual hotspots: Cornmarket, the Martyrs Memorial, etc. – I am sure we are all familiar. As of this term, however, my tutorials have been at Christ Church, and I am now tortured far more frequently and far less avoidably.

Walking to the damned college is bad enough, as I am not only subjected to the overcrowdedness of many of the aforementioned hot spots, but subjected to them on a Friday of all days, which comes second only to the weekend in managing to bring the hoards out of the woodwork. Having got there and negotiated hard with the Porters to let me in (their suspicion of visitors is remarkable

– seemingly another negative externality brought about by their subjection to hundreds of lost tourists every day) Tom Quad brings a brief moment of respite. Alas, it is a Trojan Horse. Walking around the corner towards Peck can feel like being suddenly launched head-first into rapids and told to swim against the current. Having made it through my tutorial, I then have the delightful task of repeating this challenge in reverse.

It is true, of course, that tourism is an important part of Oxford's economy. In the 2018/19 financial year alone, tourism to the University generated a whopping £611 million. On an annual basis, tourism to the city generates an even more impressive £780 million. However, one cannot help but wonder which businesses this sizeable revenue supports. Is it the quaint independent bookshops or cafés? Or is it the unremarkable, copy-and-paste tourist traps that plague Cornmarket? I have a feeling it is rather more the latter. It is worth asking whether we really want to see this as beneficial to the city's culture. Unlike the strong arguments for immigration that stand on the dividends of cultural diversity, tourism simply cannot do the same. Mass tourism, involving shipping large numbers of visitors to the city arriving on buses that crowd St Giles', brings little but constant and annoying obstacles that residents are subjected to on a daily basis. I pity the poor students who live in ground-floor rooms in St John's front quad – I cannot count the number of times I have seen tourists wandering into staircases or having their picture taken in front of the large windows. I also cannot help but wonder about how many embarrassing or intimate moments have been caught in the background of these inappropriately-taken photos.

Colleges, and this city in general, should not feel like a minefield, nor an obstacle course, but rather a place to live and enjoy without

constant observation. It is sadly indicative that one of the first memories I made here is being photographed by persistent groups of tourists on my matriculation day, which made me feel more like a caged animal than a budding undergraduate, and certainly undermined what otherwise should have been a memorable moment. While tourism brings in money to the city and the University, I cannot help but wonder if financial gain alone is enough to justify those of us who live here being constantly subjected to this annoyance.

Of course, even if you concur with this assessment, the question that emerges from all of this is what are we to do? As much as scheming about how to deal with these pesterances has amused me, the more practical solutions seem rather harsh – even in the opinion of this generally unforgiving author. Limiting tourist visiting hours or demarcating no-go zones seem more like the machinations of some deranged dictator than viable policies. It is important to note, however, that many of the issues caused by the visiting hoards are the result of a general lack of awareness rather than deliberate ignorance. For instance, the seemingly simple (and, dare I say, common sense) notion that when walking as part of a large group, one should not stand side-by-side as some sort of tribute to the Iron Curtain, seems to have been missed in the *Tourists' Handbook to Oxford* (if this is yet to be written, please consider this article my formal declaration of intent to do so). Ultimately, as much as we can loathe the tourists and be pestered by their genuinely impressive capacity to always be standing in the most inconvenient places possible, maybe we as hosts – albeit rather unwilling ones – should try and do better to inform and explain rather than scoff and judge. After all, one day we might be playing the role of the annoying visitors in some strange and interesting land.

Letters to the Editors:

Readers of *Cherwell* respond to articles from throughout Trinity term

Hague isn't fit to be Chancellor

SIR AND MADAM - Emily Henson (17/05) mentions Oxford's improved record vis-à-vis state school admissions in recent years. Though a comforting story, attentive commentators have noticed that it's mostly untrue.

The widely cited increase in the proportion of state-educated undergrads stems from a sharp fall in independent school admissions and a corresponding rise in international places. Overseas students are not counted in 'school type' statistics, and Oxford does not release data on whether these students attended fee-paying schools abroad.

In 2003, Oxford admitted 1,539 pupils from state schools. By 2023, that number had risen modestly to 1,662. But coupled with an increase in applications, the success rate for state applicants actually fell from 27% to 16% over the same period.

So next time you hear the vaunted success of state school admissions to Oxford, bear in mind it's largely creative accounting.

Stanislaus Huepfl

MPhil Political Theory, Balliol

Oxford's death trap – the semi-pedestrianised nightmare

SIR AND MADAM - I thoroughly enjoyed reading Oscar Whittle's article about Oxford's "semi-pedestrianised nightmare", but I do believe he has misdiagnosed the cause of the city's current predicament. I relate to his experiences of vacant-minded cyclists, but we must recognise that the city was built-up long before cars became predominant, and recent experiments across the country to bring in fully pedestrianised zones have been very successful. One need only look at, for example, Winchester, London and Bristol, whose reforms have brought great economic success for the cities.

Urban planning is not only an economic tool, but also one to encourage the preservation of local culture. The unfortunate prevalence of tourist traps on Cornmarket, which attract what appears to be an strange parody of Hogwarts students fresh from a visit to Diagon Alley, hurts local businesses who play a big part in making Oxford a unique city to live, study and work in. By introducing wide-scale pedestrianisation of the city centre, it would allow for more niche, unique shops to open in their place, supported by an increase in foot traffic and safety.

Anish Kumar

History and Politics, Christ Church

LinkedIn is a Faustian bargain

SIR AND MADAM - While I enjoyed Lloyd Doré-Green's article, I disagree with his conclusion that LinkedIn is essential to career prospects. One has to question how many employers enjoy a collection of grovelling posts about 'excellent opportunities' at a consultancy firm – likely making coffee and shredding paper for two weeks. I, for one, would despair at hiring someone if they are anything like their LinkedIn posts. It serves as a way to show how truly dry someone is. If you find significant joy in embracing a tight lip and somewhat abandoning morals, power to you. It is hard to tell whether someone has genuinely gone off the deep end into a world of grey suits, or they have simply acquired an online sheen, but are still somewhat functioning and fun underneath.

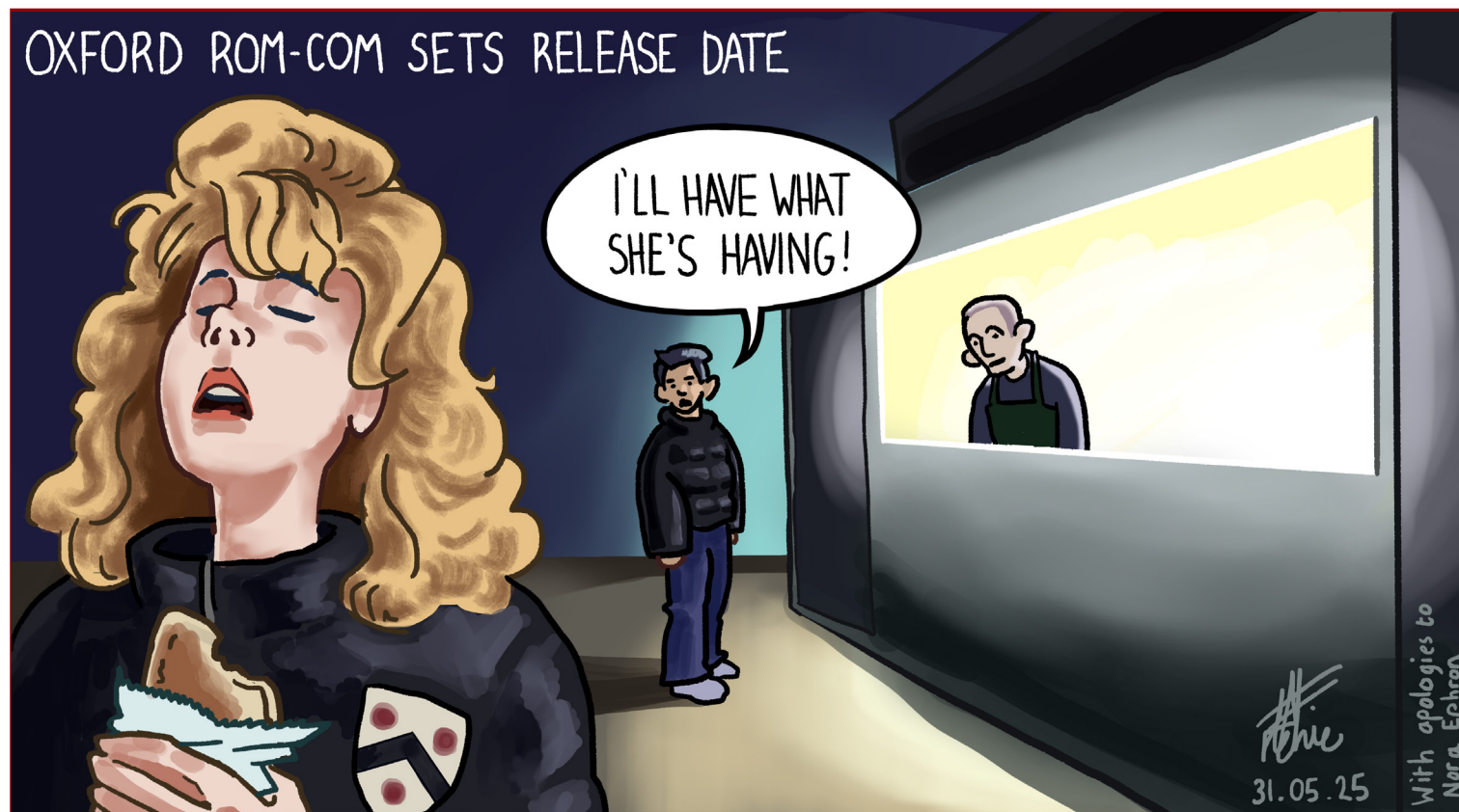
LinkedIn can undoubtedly be harmful for mental health, seeing your estranged college mother or former society position rival completing an internship you couldn't even interview for is twisting the knife in a wound. But at least we are safe in the knowledge that the internship and its interns are completing their journey towards becoming smoothed over corporate cogs. LinkedIn is unfortunate, however its main benefit is reminding you that some people really are rather dull.

Anonymous

A note from the Editors-in-Chief:

Lloyd Doré-Green should note that a response, defending *The Verdict*, will appear next time.

Got an opinion on this print's Opinion?
Submit a Letter to the Editor via:
comment@cherwell.org



Democracy by pie chart

LLOYD DORÉ-GREEN

If this article makes it past the keen eyes of *Cherwell's* Editors-in-Chief – and if you are fortunate enough to be holding a printed copy – then you will find it accompanied by *The Verdict*, a few polls on Oxford's most important issues. Perhaps you were a respondent, lucky enough to have your opinion eloquently represented by a sliver of ink on a meaningless pie chart, and to be able to call yourself a contributor to *Cherwell* on your LinkedIn. Or perhaps you are merely a reader, ready to be enlightened by the supposed wisdom of crowds. As to the actual point of *The Verdict*, however, I remain none the wiser.

A recent *Verdict* asked respondents if they were worried about the rise of Reform UK: 7% said they were not. Are these people unworried because they think that Farage is the greatest leader since Richard the Lionheart or because they think that Starmer will defeat him with his reliably unremarkable charisma? We will never know. Polls give us nothing: no reasoning, no justification, no way of understanding how people have come to the opinions they claim to hold. And so, unless you base your positions on the fickle

whims of public opinion, they are about as useful to you as a bottle of seawater is to a castaway.

Beyond simply being useless, polls are also actively harmful because they encourage people to judge first and understand later – or never. You read the question, plonk down your instinctual response, click submit and never think about it

“
why should we care
what the majority thinks
on every conceivable
subject?”


again. They reduce complex political problems to simple emotional ones. Then, by their very format, they turn the complex nuances of public opinion to resolute certainties which are, by necessity, false. That this would have negative effects on politics and reasoned debate is hardly surprising. No wonder that 'pollster' was first coined to be

an echo of 'huckster'.

I can already hear you scribbling a Letter to the Editor. "You're missing the point of polls, you fool. They're not meant to educate us on a topic; they're meant to educate us on what people think about a topic. And they may not be perfect but they're the best tool we've got." Fair enough. But whose opinion is *The Verdict* enlightening us about? It's an Instagram poll, not a statistically representative cross-section of the Oxford population. And, more importantly, why should we care what the majority thinks on every conceivable subject? Public sentiment is no substitute for facts or reasoned argument.

So why have polls? Because the argument against them was lost as early as the 1950s and, since then, they have increasingly polluted newspapers, television and radio, replacing real facts and expert analysis with a false proxy for public opinion. Over time, they have been allowed to become an empty symbol of democracy. But it is an illusion, a false choice far removed from the actual levers of power, and, worst still, one which damages the very nuance which makes politics possible. To equate democracy with opinion polling is a terrible mistake – but it is a mistake made all too often.

THE VERDICT



Do you support Starmer's UK-EU deal?

No (16%)

Yes (84%)

Thoughts on the 'Confer-ence of Common Rooms'?

Bad for the SU (10%)

Good for the SU (36%)

What is that? (54%)

Your involvement with Summer Eights?

Row-ing (11%)

No in-terest (40%)

Spectat-ing (42%)

Have you ever had a Najars?

No (25%)

Yes (75%)

*According to 500 Instagram respondents

Collier in Oxford: Prodigy or fad?

DONOVAN LOCK

As you may have heard from your local music theory nerd, Jacob Collier recently descended upon Oxford to grace us with performances, an interview, and an attempt at personality. For those of you who aren't aware, Collier is often deemed this generation's Stravinsky, pushing the boundaries of musical harmony in a way that is (supposedly) accessible, such that listeners of all musical abilities can appreciate his work. But, after hearing how he chooses to discuss music, it's clear that Jacob's attempts at appearing flashy or quirky completely overpower any attempts at making music understandable for his audience – given the disastrous inaccessibility of musical education, this qualifies as exceptionally poor taste.

Few school subjects epitomise educational inequality quite like music. In the UK, an average independent school spends 4.6 times more on its music department than an average academy. This link between wealth and musical education is everywhere, evidenced by the many private school advertisements you'll find at classical music concerts, or the appallingly low proportion of working-class music students at Oxford, or (perhaps most abhorrently) the gentrification of punk. The shortage of music among state schools is certainly one of the most unfortunate consequences of our education system, and a worsening one: since 2010, the number of A-Level music students at state schools has shrunk by 41%.

The real tragedy is that this partitions the population into two camps: those who were fortunate enough to receive a good musical education, and those who were not. Just pause and consider how significantly music contributes to your average day, your memories, your identity, your emotions, or your social connections. Knowing that your musical access and education can be so predetermined by financial status should direly frustrate you, dear reader. Music is one of life's most widespread pleasures and art forms, yet the majority of people will never be taught how to compose, or how to proficiently play an instrument. We are watching a cultural rift emerge in real time.

With this in mind, picture Jacob Collier strutting into the Union's chamber wearing a Hawaiian shirt and crocs. Upon being asked to explain negative harmony, he quizzes his audience: "How many of you know what a perfect cadence is?" When roughly thirty percent of the audience raises a hand, he sees this as an excellent opportunity to teach his listeners some basic music

theory, scurrying over to the piano. And then, rather bizarrely, he instead glosses over this question and talks in great depth about meaningless abstractions, like how different chords remind him of distinct emotions or colours, or how he could never confine himself to a single genre of music.

If you're the sort of spectator who is entertained by 30-year-old men trying to come across as quirky, maybe you'd find this endearing. For the remaining readers, allow me to spell out how immensely disappointing I found Jacob Collier as a personality within music. In front of him was a genuinely enthusiastic audience, eager to learn from this seemingly prodigal musician. And instead of explaining music theory, especially with musical education being so scarce, he chose to mystify it, repeatedly. By the end of his ramble, I would wager money that not a single viewer had actually learnt what a perfect cadence is.

Rather than bridge the gap in musical access, Jacob Collier chooses to widen it. It's not difficult to see why – by allowing music theory to remain a murky, impenetrable field, he enables himself to come across as some sort of genius or musical savant, which happens to be a key part of his image. Of course, I imagine it's not too difficult to appear musically talented when you've attended Britain's oldest private music school and descended from a line of respected violinists and fellows of the Royal Academy of Music. Quelle surprise, yet another artistic 'prodigy' who just happens to stem from a first-class background.

My music teacher always hated Jacob Collier, and I unreservedly thank her for having such sharp foresight. One can't help but wonder why Collier is hailed as a music theory genius: listeners who happen to have musical backgrounds can see right through his twaddle, and listeners who don't will never learn a thing from him.

This is all likely to sound harsh, but I'm afraid that this is what it means to love music. It means recognising characters like Collier as misleaders, polluting musical discourse. For an undeniably skilled showman and performer, it's severely disappointing to see that he perpetuates barriers in musical education, all while enjoying superb opportunities himself. Indeed, I'm no Grammy winner like Collier – just a humble commentator with a mere apprenticeship in musical composition – but I firmly believe that we should think twice before throwing such grifters into the limelight. The music industry needs better role models and fewer fads, otherwise hardworking musicians will continue to be overshadowed.

Academic imperialism and the war on Oxford

For centuries Oxford has balanced town and gown, but increasing college acquisitions are jepordising its very essence

BENEDICT MASTERS

Oxford's historic charm is being reshaped. Not by the hands of time, but by the relentless expansion of its own University. For decades, colleges have played a cutthroat game of Monopoly, gobbling up properties, bulldozing community spaces, and transforming neighbourhoods into sterile academic annexes. Students, just passing through this ancient city, barely notice the metamorphosis. But beyond the libraries and quads, a quieter crisis unfolds: Oxford's soul is being hollowed out. Independent shops shutter, beloved venues vanish, and rents skyrocket to absurd heights, ignored as collateral damage in the University's imperial march for growth. This isn't mere NIMBY (not in my back yard) whining; it's a slow suffocation of our city's heartbeat.

A quick glance at any local Facebook page will tell you a very consistent story. Locals are fed up with us for what seems to be the University's expansion into their neighbourhoods. What once were community spaces are now cut-and-paste accommodation and offices, which in turn makes Oxford less liveable for someone who has no need for either.

The thing is, as a student here, I'd like to dismiss this as NIMBYism, but it's the truth. Does anybody here remember the Warehouse nightclub? It was before my time, personally. It sat on 42 Park End Street. On the off-chance that the Nuffield College administration reads *Cherwell*, they'd recognise it as their administrative offices and a few rooms for the sociology department. The rest of us, however, wouldn't recognise it. Why would we? What was once for everyone, is now a building for a few dozen people.

On Cornmarket Street, businesses have come and gone, shutting within mere years of opening. Burger King disappeared in 2020, LEON in 2024

– the list goes on. Naturally, we should not shed a tear for multi-million-pound fast food chains. However, Burger King explicitly pointed to Jesus College's rent prices as the reason for their closure, and similar rumours surfaced on LEON's closure. How high the rent must be, that a billion-dollar company can be priced out, boggles the mind.

“
Clubs, restaurants, and cafes simply cannot exist if colleges continue their rent-hike tirades and aggressive acquisitions

Worse still is Magdalen College's property empire. They own the Oxford Science Park, which is a business park outside of town. This is, in itself, harmless – more business here is probably a good thing. What very much is not, is their decision, using this clout, to close the Hollywood Bowl and Vue cinema, also just outside of town. The plan is to replace them with more science labs. Magdalen College is one of the richest in Oxford, and yet their primary solution to not having enough science labs, is to sacrifice the city's communal spaces, and not to build elsewhere. But I take



it, that because students don't frequent there, nobody will notice them gone, right?

Enough examples – you've got the picture. Many of us have seen our own high streets and social areas at home die off in the wake of COVID, and the same thing is happening to Oxford five years later, courtesy of the University. Their rationale seems to be as follows. The more people who get the chance to study in Oxford, the better, and the more resources Colleges have at their disposal, the better. This sounds good; after all, life here is so good, you'd want to share it with as many people as possible, right? The logic falls apart rather quickly, however. Oxford is what it is, not because of office blocks, but because of the spaces both Town and Gown may enjoy. Clubs, restaurants, cafes, simply cannot exist if colleges continue their rent-hike tirades and aggressive acquisitions.

A final thought. It feels downright evil to close spaces students probably won't have heard of to expand the University's resources, when its impact directly harms the roughly 160,000 people already living here. Most of us students will live in Oxford for three years, then pay it an occasional visit following graduation. We don't have to treat it like our forever-home, and so we have no regard for places we'd have no need for. This makes us complacent, whilst the University's colleges rid the city of the few social spaces for both Town and Gown still here. We should be living together with Oxford's residents, not separated and locked in a war for control over the city.

Image Credit: Emily Henson for Cherwell



BIG NAMES ON CAMPUS 2025

Behold, the highest fliers of our generation!

Allen Ginsberg worried that the best minds of his generation were ruined by madness. If anything, Gen Z might have the opposite problem. Many of our most ambitious people cluster in a couple of societies, and then a couple of industries, that may not make as much of a difference to the world as we think. Of course, any ranking of BNOCs at Oxford that contains a kernel of truth will have lots of people from the most high-profile societies. I am pleased, though, that there is some diversity among this year's BNOCs: writers and rowers; entz reps who aspire to better parties, and those who aspire to lead political parties. As with all high-fliers, the line between their sincere commitments and their personal ambitions can be blurry. Their impenetrably complex Union fights and sometimes eye-roll-

inducing Instagram stories might seem silly now, but the great and the good listed here will have real power as taste-setters and change-makers. On page ten, I reflect more on Gen Z's top talent, and how the privilege of education conveys responsibility to use it for the public good. May all of us – BNOC or not – use our time and talents well.

- Satchel Walton, Deputy Editor-in-Chief, Features

Actors, photographers, and frogs...

Before the responses started to flow in, I was ready to grit my teeth and include masses of Union hacks, who have undoubtedly been dreaming about BNOCood since the day their offer came in. It is true that, as ever, the hacks make up a large section of the list. In fairness, they are some of the most well-known people in

Oxford. However, what's exciting is how many names made the final list for reasons far beyond student politics. There are actors, DJs, writers, athletes, social media personalities, and even frogs. Yes, frogs. Many on this list are familiar faces, returning once again to BNOC fame (for some, it is their 3rd feature). Some of them are actually just famous for being a BNOC at this point. Sifting through nearly 2,500 nominations, I quickly realised how few people in Oxford I actually know (turns out spending all my time editing *Cherwell* hasn't done wonders for my wider social life). Still, we hope that this list captures something of Oxford in all its strange, brilliant, sometimes chaotic variety. Having made their mark on this city, some in just their first year, who knows what these names will go on to do. Whether you love them, hate them, or have no idea who they are, these are the names that people are talking about.

- Phoebe Davies, Editor-in-Chief

Lets talk logistics.

Above all, the BNOC list is actually a tiring logistical operation. A huge amount of longlisting emails were sent, numbers were crunched, more 'serious' editorial responsibilities ignored, until we arrived here. Whether you agree or disagree with this year's ordering, just know that we've basically been guided by two principles: i). democracy (the more nominations, the higher you placed) and ii). not making the list entirely Union people. With 23% of nominations coming in for people whose main claim to fame was the Union, and a further 28% from the 'Other' category (which seems to have been used for 'Union + other things'), we've tried to reflect the profile of nominations as accurately as possible in our final list. It isn't easy, though, especially when you have to sift real nominations from spam. Spam entries were present in most of the top ten, so it's safe to assume either they themselves were desperate to be on the list, or they have very enthusiastic friends. Also, to all those who received a longlisting email but didn't make the final cut: sorry!

- Laurence Cooke, Editor-in-Chief



3rd Year, Univ

In last year's list, he told us "here for at least another year – watch this space". That prediction turned out to be correct for the admin of some prominent Instagram accounts, SU President, and professional Malta-trip-hater.



3rd Year, Magdalen

Union president this Trinity, Anita describes herself as "full-time wokerati" thanks to *The Telegraph* and additional reporting by a certain someone. She also enjoys photographing "Oxford's coolest events".



3rd Year, Regent's Park

Israr admits he's probably a BNOC (because we weren't sure) as he's done "everything at Oxford" except his DPhil. That includes an uneventful term as Union President in Hilary.



MSc, Wolfson

Also known as Josh Nguyen, Oxford Kermit runs an incredibly successful Instagram page. He shares relatable updates of his daily life around Oxford, seemingly never free of his situationship.



2nd Year, Univ

Described by one voter as "the only genuine hack", George is probably best known for ACS, HipHopsoc, and the Union. You might also recognise him as 'headphone guy'.



2nd Year, Christ Church

Known for her many OUDS appearances, Catty has made it her mission to be in as many plays as possible until they kick her out of her degree. You may know her from *Dangerous Liaisons*, *Closer*, or just the show posters pinned up everywhere around Oxford.



MPhil, Balliol

Moosa was elected to be the next president of the Union, but with the current chaos at Frewin Court he might be there sooner than expected. We can only hope that he will be a #bridge to fiscal solvency.



2nd Year, St John's

Current Union Librarian (vice president, vice president!) and a competitive debater who's also been involved in student media, one nomination said that Anya "follows everyone, including on LinkedIn. Congrats on the training contract btw".



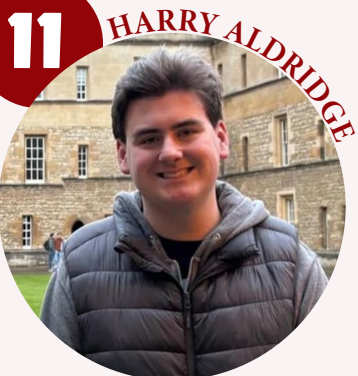
1st Year, Balliol

Samyul claims to be well-known for running the freshers group chat, but our sources tell us that he is primarily known for spamming that chat asking people to nominate him for this list. Fair play, Samyul, BNOC behaviour indeed.



2nd Year, Worcester

Ethan Penny and Nahom Lemma have taken the Oxford music scene by storm, and can be found DJing bops, club nights, and events all over the city. In their own words: "we just put on great nights at Bully".



11 HARRY ALDRIDGE

1st Year, New

One nominator called him a “working class hero” for his work as the president of the 93% Club. You’ll probably know him for being everywhere, including on right-wing television.



12 SELINA CHEN

2nd Year, Corpus Christi

A former *Cherwell* editor who knows too many OUCA people, Selina has been the driving force behind the paper’s recent success. We also felt obliged to put her on here as she did the illustration for this article.



13 REUBEN MELLER

2nd Year, LMH

Seen doing a backflip off a bridge, AI aficionado Reuben is the man behind the notoriously humble Presidents Summit. He also claims to own the film rights for Peter Mandelson’s Chancellor campaign. That confused us.



14 SUSIE WEIDMANN

3rd Year, Brasenose

Susie is best known for her OUDS appearances and student journalism. Although, she told us that her biggest achievement was winning ‘Most BDE’ at Finalist Drinks.



15 BRAYDEN LEE

1st Year, Christ Church

First elected member of TSC in his first year, Brayden is surely a Union rising star. One source tells us that while he is a hack, he also “sends weirdly intimate voice notes instead of messages”. Hot.



16 BENEDICT MASTERS

2nd Year, New

One nominator called him a “socially acceptable Boris Johnson [sic]”. We’re not quite sure on his views of Balkan geopolitics, but whatever they are, they are held with great conviction. We hope to see more from a classic Tory BNO.



17 CHRIS COLLINS

4th Year, Corpus Christi

OUCA pres last term, Chris has also featured in Union presidential elections. A finalist, we just wonder where he finds the time, and wish him the best of luck with his Classics exams.



18 DARCEY MCALLISTER

1st Year, St Hilda's

Darcey is best known as president of LGBTQ+ Society. “More importantly” (her words), she’ll be running Hilda’s bar. She made us promise we’d mention that she will be found with a double pink gin, never in a lecture hall.



19 CHLOE POMERET

2nd Year, St Catz

Chloe is perhaps best known for her TikTok, where she discusses her Oxford experience as a working class and care experienced student. She has also been involved in cheerleading, Class Act, and the 93% club.



20 EDMUND SMITH

2nd Year, Corpus Christi

Corpus organ scholar and OUCA guy, Edmund told us: “people have probably met me at P&P or the Union bar”. With the number of views on *that* Lord Dominic Johnson Instagram reel, he’s one of the most famous here.



21 OCHO CHO

3rd Year, Keble

Olivia is a photographer, probably best known for hiding in the corner of balls, society events, and various launches, all while getting amazing pics.



22 CONNIE HILTON

2nd Year, Keble

Connie is a Park End rep, meaning you probably will see her sporting their massive sunglasses, waving their infamous flag, or all over their Instagram page.



23 BEE BARNETT

2nd Year, Hilda's

Bee Barnett is known for their alternative fashion videos and Oxford content, amassing a massive 693.4k followers on TikTok (@bumblephii). Bee has also written for various student publications, and religiously attends Oxford’s goth and emo nights.



24 LUCA BURGESS

3rd Year, LMH

Luca is best known for Martian Moves, the largest student-run electronic music night, Oxford’s very own ‘Intergalactic Boogie Service’. He has also launched a career in graphic design, photography, and DJing.



25 ELLA BOLLAND

3rd Year, Trinity

Ella is the ex-entz rep for Trinity, fondly known as ‘loud American’. You can always spot this short queen with her 6’8 boyfriend.



26 ROXANA RUSU

2nd Year, St Anne's

JCR president, keen rower, and RoSOC VP, Roxi sent in her submission late due to “rent negotiations” and “dj-ing latin party at Bridge”. Adhering to a self-described “intense” lifestyle, she told *Cherwell*: “in the words of Shakira, TRY EVERYTHING”.



27 MICHAEL LESLIE

2nd Year, Corpus Christi

A self-described “washed OUCA and Union hack searching for a grade above a 2.2” and Corpus JCR pres, Michael is just trying to live a quiet life. He spends his time avoiding Frewin court and keeping his relationship with Edmund Smith a secret (see 20).



28 MATCHBOX PRODUCTIONS

4th Years, Exeter

Sonya Luchanskaya and Vasco Faria have set a new bar for OUDS. Staging six sell-out shows, they foreground fresh student writing and experimental techniques. Outside of theatre, Sonya spends her time DJing. Vasco acts and finds time to be a double rugby blue.



29 CHERWELL EDITORS

2nd Years, Balliol and St John's

Taking *Cherwell* by storm, Phoebe and Laurence have brought unprecedented success to the paper. In their own words, “*Cherwell* has never had it so good”. In the words of their underling, “BNOChood is all about tooting your own horn, isn’t it?”



30 THE ISIS EDITORS

2nd Years, Balliol and New

Unwillingly bound together by our parent company, we present our awkward artsy cousin, *The Isis*. We’re sure with their obsession with being “cool and indie”, Joseph and Lina are outraged at their inclusion. But really, there is nothing *The Isis* loves more than attention.

Talented people are solving problems that don't matter

Many of Oxford's brightest and most ambitious people are fiercely competing for jobs that don't matter. As AI rewires the job market, what's the point of being smart if you're not doing anything meaningful?

SATCHEL WALTON

A little past 9pm, a recent Oxford graduate got home from work and called me. Long day at the office? Not particularly, he said – he gets in at 6.30am. 14-hour days weren't unusual. He fine-tunes AI models for high-frequency trading, trying to profit millionths of the value of a high number of trades. Making 10 pence of profit on a bunch of £100,000 trades would be a success.

Studying physics and maths, he wrote a thesis on deep learning applications and spent much of his time trying unsuccessfully to get access to the high-powered computers he needed to run his experiments. Now, he has access to a much wider array of resources, but can't work on the problems that innately interest him.

"I put an extraordinarily large amount of effort over decades into becoming a really, really good physicist, and there's no reason for the progression of my future or my career or my bank account to ever look at any of those books again," he said. He finds the problems he works on now stimulating to solve, but says "they aren't meaningful, and they don't matter – like, at all."

The majority of recent Oxford graduates in the workforce feel that their work is meaningful and important to them – 81% in the most recent Graduate Outcomes survey. But there is a large group who end up in lucrative industries with dubious propositions for how they add value to society. The most prestigious institutions in the world are taking high-achievers, and sending them into roles whose social value is at best abstract, and perhaps nonexistent.

Rutger Bregman thinks these people are wasting their lives. His recent book, *Moral Ambition*, encourages the highly-motivated strivers of the world to completely reorient their aspirations. Ditch the well-trodden path from Oxford to the City; forget the grad schemes and internships at the Big Four accounting firms. Instead, address the biggest problems in the world, from factory farming to nuclear security.

Bregman told *Cherwell*: "The most important question is not how hard you work, or how talented you are, or what your grades were in university. No – the most important question is what are you actually going to work on? Will you work at one of those boring banks? Will you work on rich people's

problems in rich countries, or will you take on one of those really neglected global problems, such as preventing the next pandemic, or taking on malaria?"

Shifting moral values

Bregman is generally an optimist. One of his books was subtitled "A Hopeful History". But he recognises that there used to be more people on his side here.

In the 1960s, an annual survey of American college students showed that around 40% considered "being very well off financially" to be "essential" or "very important". Even as the world around them has gotten richer and more comfortable, around 85% have said the same recently.

Britain's old elite had a sense of noblesse oblige – that their privilege could only be justified by service to society. Today, many of those privileged to an Oxford education feel that they have earned their spot through merit, so can pursue their private interests and prestige above all else.

The author Bill Bryson, upon visiting Oxford in the 1990s, wrote that it's "not entirely clear what it's for, now that Britain no longer needs colonial administrators who can quip in Latin." Much of that purpose now seems to be creating account managers to go down the M40 to the City of London. In recent years there has been even more competition among top talent for jobs in finance, consulting, and corporate law.

Those three industries are what Simon van Teutem, a DPhil student at Nuffield College, calls "the Bermuda Triangle of talent" in a recent book. He has seen many of his peers from his undergraduate and master's years at Oxford get lost in the triangle.

"In freshers' week I met all these brilliant people way more ambitious than me, way smarter than me with amazing dreams that they had already jotted down in their personal statements – politicians who wanted world peace, medics who wanted to cure cancer," Van Teutem said. "And then five years later most of my peers were not working for Doctors Without Borders, or a cool startup, or government, but were all at places like Morgan Stanley or Goldman Sachs or McKinsey."

And so was he. Van Teutem spent three summers working at banks and one at McKinsey. When he got a full-time offer there, he knew the 'prestige escalator' of higher positions might become his whole life.

"Everyone says 'Oh I'll just do this for two or three years and then I'll get back to my dreams' but

in reality once they're in that place, and their salary doubles every few years, and they're surrounded by people who make more money than them, and they get accustomed to a certain lifestyle and have a mortgage... They might leave one employer, but then they go work for Shell, or BP, or Unilever, or private equity."

How Oxford grads are programmed

Van Teutem interviewed 212 people for his book. He identifies them as 'insecure overachievers' who have always been hard-working, ambitious, and anxious to win markers of high-status, whatever they may be. They are indecisive about careers, and consulting firms tell them that a job there doesn't close any doors.

Elite universities are packed with them. An annual survey run by the Harvard Crimson show that in recent years, about 40% of graduates from America's most prestigious university who go directly into the workforce take jobs in finance or consulting. The last few years, consulting hiring directly from Oxford has collapsed as the business model of having 22-year-olds tell other people how to run their businesses has come under question. Still, recent stats show that 12% of Oxford grads go directly into finance or insurance.

Van Teutem said: "You have to understand how Oxford grads are programmed. Between 12 and 21, all they are doing is striving to jump through the next big hoop, reaching the next level. If you've been doing that for ten years, your natural impulse is like, 'What's the honours programme after the honours programme? What's the Oxford after Oxford?'"

The student who makes AI models for high-frequency trading, anonymous to discuss employment, met a lot of highly-motivated and hard-working people at Oxford. They largely went down a few career paths.

"I know a lot of people who went into the finance industry in some capacity, and if you include law as well, it may even be most of the people I was close with at Oxford," he said.

While he said his work is "abstracted away from impact" he doesn't think it is a totally 'bullshit job'. If no one were to do it, investment would be more difficult and the economy wouldn't work as well.

Bregman was unimpressed by that argument. He said market makers, like strategy consultants and corporate lawyers and the like, usually do provide some sort of value to the world. The tragedy is in the lost opportunities, which he tries to harness in the School for Moral Ambition.

"We're talking about the country's best and brightest, from one of the most prestigious universities in the world. And I think the world's most ambitious people, the world's most talented people, like him, should be working on solving the world's most important problems. Is that really such a crazy thing to believe? It seems super obvious to me! If you've been given this extraordinary talent and privilege to go to one of the top universities in the world, maybe do something with it?" Bregman said.

While Bregman and Van Teutem's work is especially popular in the original Dutch, it is really tailored to an English-speaking audience. Van Teuten says that while unrestrained ambition is encouraged in Anglo-American culture, in the Netherlands, one is not pushed to stand out as much.

But finding a normal but dignified vocation can be difficult too. Over the last few decades, jobs interacting directly with people or production have declined in number. Jobs sitting in front of a computer, from where it can be more difficult to see one's impact, have become more and more common.

Of course, it's possible that all that office work is just what it takes to organise a highly complex and prosperous modern economy, even if it isn't immediately clear what everyone is contributing. But the late anthropologist David Graeber argued that a huge swathe of the world's office work had been created for essentially no overall gain, not just a small number of talented lobbyists or advertisers. Graeber thought these 'bullshit jobs', perhaps making up 40% of all work in some countries and most of the office job nonsense you hear about, are an extraordinary waste of human time and potential that could be directed toward pursuits people genuinely care about.

So, if you want to have useful work for the decades to come, what skills should you develop now?

The murky future of work

The trouble is that no one knows. On the one hand, it's easy: Bregman says that morally ambitious projects need all sorts of skills from PR and tax specialists to

software developers. But today's college graduates are facing an extra challenge: the rise of generative AI means it's less clear than ever what the future of information work will be. How are you supposed to answer a job interview question about where you see yourself in a decade if you don't know whether any of your skills will be useful then?

Fabian Stephany is a lecturer at the Oxford Internet Institute and researches the skills necessary for the future labour market. The only problem is that even he isn't quite sure what those skills will be.

He says that the most important skill is the ability to re-skill, but knows that's not very helpful, and that it's not anything new. Whereas previous waves of automation tended to disrupt manual jobs, AI is changing the labour market for recent college graduates.

Stephany told *Cherwell*: "I spoke to a partner at a law firm the other day, and he said, 'yeah, we're having problems right now justifying the costs that we're putting on the bill for our clients' because increasingly their clients say, 'why is this costing us so much? Can't this be automated? Can't this be done by ChatGPT very easily?' So the work of the paralegal, to name one of the entry positions, is under much more scrutiny than the one of an associate or a senior partner."

An Oxford student who works virtually for a law firm is already feeling the pinch. His hours were recently cut after his firm got access to a new AI-based transcription service.

He told *Cherwell*: "My job used to be transcribing

“
The most prestigious institutions in the world are taking high-achievers, and sending them into roles whose social value is at best abstract, and perhaps nonexistent

hours and hours of wire-tapped phone calls. Now, it's going through and correcting the AI's transcription, because it still makes a lot of big mistakes." He doesn't mind his hours getting cut because it has made the job so much easier.

The ChatGPT you can get for free is far too inconsistent to do the whole job of a paralegal. That model still cites legal cases that never existed and makes arguments with sometimes flimsy reasoning. But models with subscription-based services are much more powerful, and improving quickly.

Unlimited access to Deep Research, a subscription-based OpenAI product, costs \$200 (£150) a month. *The New York Times's* Ezra Klein said it can produce a research report in minutes that matches what his highly talented teams take days to make. Suddenly, \$200 a month doesn't look like much compared to the wages of a whole team of top college graduates.

STEM jobs aren't safe either. Many of today's students were told as kids to 'learn to code' – the understanding was that this would inevitably lead to a stable and well-paying career in an ever-growing industry. But hiring in software development is now collapsing, perhaps because so much of it can be automated. At Google and Microsoft, AI now writes about a third of all code, a proportion that is rising fast.

What if AI keeps improving at coding and modelling and figuring out promising routes for research, to where it's much better than any human at... AI research? Once AI development is itself largely automated, some leading researchers predict that we will create an artificial general intelligence (AGI) that rapidly soars past human abilities at every single cognitive and physical task. If they're right, all the paradigms of this discussion of integrating AI in human work would go out the window by the time today's freshers graduate.

Read the full article at cherwell.org
Image Credit: Archie Johnston for Cherwell



Cherwell

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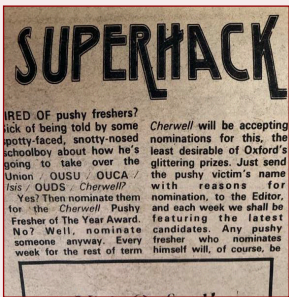
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Archives: The 1977 version of the BNOC list

It appears that the BNOC list is not an entirely novel invention. While it has existed in its current iteration for over a decade, older versions include 'Superhack' and 'The Cherwell Pushy Fresher of the Year Award'. Interesting though, is that the latter is described as 'the least desirable of Oxford's glittering prizes'. It seems attitudes have changed, with this year's longlisted candidates all clamouring to be on the list.

The article asks "Tired of pushy freshers? Sick of being told by some spotty-faced, snotty-nosed schoolboy about how he's going to take over the Union/OUSU/OUCA/Isis/OUDS/Cherwell?" Perhaps something along these lines should be our introduction to this year's list, and maybe we could scare the BNOCs away. It's all worth it in the end, though, for the prize for winning the 'Pushy Fresher of the Year Award' (whose judging committee included Union President and future Tory minister Damian Green) was a three-year subscription to *Cherwell*. Cheers. We don't offer such prizes for this year's list, unfortunately.



John Evelyn

Peace in our time! Peace in our time! Despite King Lear mostly using his speech to insult 70kg of Gammon whilst he sat a final, we have returned to our largely dysfunctional status quo.

The "Barrister", following his own track record of MAAjestic bans from the premises, appears to have been a victim of karma. His attempt to remove our Prime Minister Without Portfolio shall go down in history. For all the wrong reasons.

From the offset, the campaign was a #BRIDGE in troubled water. Hope was ablaze in the opposing camp, as rallying in PMWP's favour stood The Author and SU Gimp, together, not trying to kill each other, for the first time in their lives.

But what's this? Bipartisan support for the "Barrister"? Goneril's slate collapsing before her eyes, she blames PMWP, and to show her new-

found love for the cause, she appeared on the notoriously progressive GB News to show an even larger audience how few opinions she has. Change's following suit was certainly one of the decisions of all time.

Suffices to say, though, that hacks on board does not mean people on board. In an effort to avenge the Vipera's loss two terms ago, the "Barrister" and his team faced a generational run of abhorrent optics. But here we have it, a Jevelyn exclusive four-step guide on how to win at Union drama, the civil way.

Step one – pack CC! Wait. Woops. The PMWP and SU Gimp got there first, with a hundred eager sycophants. Step two – Uh oh! Call off the meeting! Step three consists of aimlessly yelling at The Author, which absolutely did not work. Step four? Okay, I guess we'll stop digging a hole.



Peace it is. In the aftermath, a third candidate is eyeing the keys to Frewin Court, assuming the RAAC in her college doesn't get to her first...

Let's not mince words here, you all deserve the reputation you have among the student body.

Editorial



Laurence Cooke and Phoebe Davies
Editors-in-Chief, Trinity 2025

It's week five, and somehow we're already approaching the end of Trinity. With just one edition to go after this, the end of our time as *Cherwell* editors is just around the corner. It's in a state of incredulity that we have begun the recruitment process for the Michaelmas leadership.

This week's paper includes coverage of several major news stories, not least the controversial decision to change MML exams partway through students' degrees and the dramatic events in the Union in the last few days, now hopefully resolved. In Profiles (page 12-13), Faye Chang sat down with award-winning writer Ocean Vong for a moving interview delving into the limits of writing as a medium, his experience with Buddhism, and his process as an author. On page 10, Satchel Walton (see editorial opposite) discusses the impact of AI on the job market, speaking to experts about why so many of Oxford's brightest end up in jobs that, frankly, don't seem to matter.

Meanwhile, Lifestyle has you covered with reflections on everything from the meaning of 'diva' to male hair loss. An ex-tortoise officer also tells all about this particularly weird and wonderful aspect of Oxford culture. Perhaps most anticipated of all, this week's print also includes the *Cherwell* BNOC List. This tradition has been diligently carried out each Trinity by generations of *Cherwell* editors, celebrating 30 of Oxford's most recognisable students. While the Union hacks are certainly present, we're proud to say the class of 2025 includes actors, writers, athletes, and the occasional wildcard.

Fifth week also means Summer Eights. Our tireless Sport Editor, Seb Page, has been stationed riverside, updating the live blog with all the latest bumps and blunders. You can follow the action this Saturday at cherwell.org. For more insight into Oxford rowing, head to our podcast *Cherwell Spoken*, where Juliette and Georgia sat down with the president of OUBC, Tom Mackintosh. You can find this on both Spotify and Apple Music. As always, we owe an enormous thank you to the entire team. Producing this paper every week is no small feat, and it would be impossible without the dedication of our editors, illustrators, photographers. The masthead says it all: *Cherwell* is a team effort, and we are continually awed by what this team can do. Enjoy the print.



Satchel Walton
Deputy Editor, Features

Louis MacNeice wrote in 1939 that "having once been to the University of Oxford, you can never really again believe anything that anyone says, and that of course is an asset in a world like ours." MacNeice was talking about the type of philosophy that he had picked up – deeply sceptical that the world could be directly perceived and that we could escape the prisons of our own minds.

In recent years, though, even those of us in a more pragmatic tradition of thought have had trouble agreeing on truth. You don't have to look at the shadows in Plato's Cave: just look at TikTok. Look at world leaders who are able to lie to their people with impunity. Or, soon enough if you haven't already, look at a stream of AI-generated videos indistinguishable from real ones.

I am very pleased, then, to say that this issue of *Cherwell* contains reliable information on a good number of timely events. Just as important, it also has insightful analysis and commentary to help you make sense of them. The trouble is, you already know this. Of course people in Oxford trust institutions like academia and journalism and medicine and science more than the average person: we run these things! How do we get the rest of society on a similar page?

I don't know the answer, but it has to start with the hope that we – *Cherwell* as an individual paper, and the press at large – can build enough trust that everyone can believe what's in our pages. I think you can. And, more importantly, people have to care enough to direct their attention spans away from more dopamine-inducing things that barrage our everyday lives. I think you should.

PROFILES

“If you’re always correcting, then you will always speak second.

Cherwell spoke to novelist, essayist, poet, and photographer, Ocean Vuong

FAYE CHANG

Ocean Vuong is, without a doubt, one of the greatest literary names of our age. His past works have won him numerous accolades from major publications alongside a string of prestigious prizes, including the Mark Twain American Voice in Literature award and the T.S. Eliot Prize for poetry.

However, it is not this literary acclaim that makes Vuong so revered; as a queer Vietnamese refugee who fled to America with his family, Vuong’s heartfelt portraits of American life reflect an exceptional sensitivity and nuance. So as a long-time fan of his work, the opportunity to speak to Vuong ahead of the release of his latest novel, *The Emperor of Gladness*, was not only the chance to meet one of my biggest literary inspirations, but also to understand more about the thinking and creative process that went into making his writing so lyrical, sincere, and human.

We start with discussing the influences for *The Emperor of Gladness*. Centring around the unlikely friendship between Hai, a 19-year-old Vietnamese immigrant, and Grazina Vitkus, a Lithuanian grandmother with dementia, the novel showcases all of Vuong’s signature characteristics: deftness of prose, attention to the minute details of life, and rich, sympathetic characterisation. Right away, his responses about what inspired the novel were similarly poetic: “For me, the novel is a wonderful form, because it is very forgiving of multiplicity – a poem, particularly a lyric poem, can collapse if you put too much on it. I’m always asking my novel to hold maybe too much.

“But one of the central things I was thinking about is this idea of progress that we often ask the novel to perform – to me, it’s an arbitrary mandate. This false premise of ‘change at all costs’ is so worshipped in Western narratology. I wanted to write a novel that had transformation without change: nobody gets a better job, nobody ‘improves their life’ per se, there is no escaping to a city. If you deny all of that, what

do you have? You have to have characters. You have to have people.

“I was [also] interested in the idea of reciprocal relationships and debts. What do we owe each other? What is kindness without hope? It’s easy to be kind and generous when you have so much to give, and that generosity also doesn’t impact your life substantially if you have so much. What I’ve been interested in, growing up in the working class, was how and why people are kind to each other despite the fact that their kindness does almost nothing to substantially change their lives. I don’t know the answer, but... it becomes a philosophical question that I have in all of my work: what is the function of kindness when there is no reward for it, when there is no hope for anything around it? What does it do? Does it matter? Is it futile? These are the questions that this novel particularly is interested in.”

I pointed out that this idea, of ‘transformation without change’, was not only counter to the pattern of the Western literary tradition, but also to the American mythos of meritocracy, and of the ‘immigrant narrative’ in particular. I asked whether he saw his work as opposing, or speaking back to this ideology.

“***My desire to honour [the people I respect] is stronger than my private desires as an artist.***”

Vuong rejected this idea gently: “I am very sceptical, for myself, of total opposition. One of my favorite British theorists, Raymond Williams ... puts a scepticism on work that is always in opposition to power. I know this sounds like a fantasy, but what he says is that if you’re always correcting, then you will always speak second. You will never get to launch the proposal as an artist. You’re always cleaning up the mess of power.”

Vuong’s critique of Western narratology is supported by a deep immersion within it, and a



comprehensive understanding of its concepts. While this should have no means been a surprise – Vuong is the professor in Modern Poetry and Poetics at the MFA program at New York University – what was interesting to me was how so much of his reflection on writing was grounded in literary and critical theory. Musing on the storytelling convention of catharsis, Vuong mentioned that originally, Aristotle conceptualised “narrative as a way to ameliorate the tension in the populace ... to absolve their vexation of the state or their personal lives; in other words, [to] vanquish any revolutionary feeling through catharsis.”

In another strand of the conversation, we talked about speaking to this audience. For Vuong, “literary production in the West, particularly in the Anglo-phonetic tradition, is deeply rhetorical. Whereas at the same time, [there’s] Matsuo Bashō in Japan – you see the haiku poets, the Tokugawa period – and there are almost no rhetorics. There are no rhetorical gestures, it’s all image based.

“As a child in America, I was taught [that] you need to be convincing in your writing and you’re rewarded by that. The most convincing essay, short story or poem was the one that got the best grades, was rewarded, won the prizes. I’m not interested in convincing anybody, and I didn’t know that you

could do it any other way until I started reading the Eastern poets and about how influential they were.”

This lack of desire to convince was curious to me, given Vuong’s widespread acclaim. Clearly, his works are convincing, and to a wide audience of readers. His first book, a poetry anthology called *Night Sky with Exit Wounds*, was one of the New York Times Critics’ Top Books of 2016; it also won him the T.S. Eliot Prize and Thom Gunn Award, with three of the poems within the anthology winning prizes of their own. His first novel, *On Earth We’re Briefly Gorgeous*, also saw its own slew of awards, and was named one of the best books of the year by major publications, including *The Guardian*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New Yorker*, and *The Washington Post*. Despite all of this, Vuong admitted that the fame hasn’t affected him as much as he expected.

“I was expecting that to happen: this pressure of success ... having that paralyse you. I kept waiting for it to happen and I don’t mean to gloat – I think it’s more of a mental incapacity [for me] than any talent –” Vuong laughs at himself here – “but I’ve never been swayed by public reception or success because I don’t have a strong relationship to my work.”

For Vuong, writing is an act of giving, a more selfless process than, perhaps, most writers are



capable of. This idea also extended to his more recent photography debut in 2024, in a collection titled *Sống*. I asked why he had chosen to dip into the medium; as it turned out, Vuong has been taking photos longer than he has been writing.

"I've been doing [photography] all my life, but [as] a private practice. At first it was a way to make my region and my interiority legible to my family, who were illiterate and couldn't read my work. I took photos to show them my point of view, and also to show them where we lived, because they worked brutal hours. They couldn't walk outside at 2pm unless it was a Sunday, and even then, working in nail salons, sometimes they were working on Sundays too. So I literally just went out to show them the place that they supposedly lived in, but had no phenomenological experience of."

I circled back to Vuong's idea of 'speaking first', and what he wished to say, if he could truly do so on his own terms.

"I would borrow from Walter Benjamin's 'dialectical image', where he goes against this Hegelian dialectic of conflict creating innovation... Benjamin says, in fact, that the revolutionary image or the radical image is the one that's ejected from that dialectic. It's the one that is a rupture. It's the new possible image, the new possible idea,... the

ejection from the conversation. [This] is what could potentially spark a new fire and create an upset of systems. I really believe in that.

"I can see my own life this way. I am 'ejected from' because of the Vietnam War – [ejected] from the synthesis of Vietnam. I wouldn't be alive without the war, right? I am a kind of error. And I'm interested in that, in the Benjamin-ian sense: error and errancy, circuitous lack of place as practice, as a potent site of making rather than deadness or wrongness or futility. I think the idea of being in the wrong place is actually an engine from which one can create."

Vuong's final response captured so much of what makes his writing so resonant, particularly to queer communities, to immigrants and the children of immigrants, and to anyone else on the margins. It asks to speak back to power, to reclaim some private, shared space where love, kindness, and generosity without reward prevail. It asks who we are, outside of the labels and stereotypes assigned, perpetuated, and at times violently enforced by the West. It asks, what could any one of us write, if we could also have the bravery to take on the endeavour of speaking first?

Image Credit: slowking4 from Wikimedia Commons/CC BY-SA 2.0

Ex-Student spotlight: Bridget Kendall on the Russia-Ukraine war, Putin, and her journalism career

The former BBC diplomatic correspondent Bridget Kendall speaks to Martha Gathercole

Cherwell: What's something that you had to learn living under the Soviet Union?

Kendall: From a very young age people were made to exercise doublethink. This goes for all totalitarian societies, but it's very important for understanding what Russians think about Ukraine. In Soviet Russia, people had to go into "exile in [their] head", as one man told me after protests were suppressed in 2011. People would have thoughts in their head and share them with their close family, but not with the outside world until circumstances changed – the same goes for Putin's regime.

Cherwell: Do you think this internal resistance that some people feel, as shown by [Alexei] Navalny's funeral, could be enough to overthrow Putin?

Kendall: Putin has pressed a button of fear, of oppression. The protests in 2011, and when Gorbachev lifted the lid, are telling examples of how people would speak out and would take to the streets if they had the chance. But this probably won't happen until Putin goes.

This is about history, but it's also about geography. Most people haven't been anywhere except Russia. You can access the internet, and the borders aren't completely closed unlike in Soviet times, but surprisingly, even though Putin hasn't done a complete clampdown, people feel he's done enough for them to stay silent.

Cherwell: You've interviewed Putin twice; what was that like and how did he come across?

Kendall: When he walked in you barely noticed him, he was a short man and didn't really have any presence at that point. He had been president for less than a year and hadn't yet acquired this aura of absolute authority and fear. In the interview, there were two Putins: the ex-KGB man who spoke eloquently on foreign policy and nuclear weapons, and who was pretty fierce when he'd bore you with his blue eyes, and then Putin when we asked a series of personal questions about his family life. To his credit, he answered them all, but came across not totally sure of himself.

Five years later, I was asked to conduct a similar interview. This time, there was just one Mr Putin: the tough presidential figure who felt he could control everything; a little bit cocky; a little bit annoying; a little bit heartless. This was partly because the economy had grown and he'd brought some stability. He'd been ruthless in Chechnya

and had raised state pensions, so he felt he was on a roll. It was interesting to see how he'd grown into the role: this was a man prepared to be ruthless.

Cherwell: What are you expecting from Putin in the next few weeks and months? [This interview was conducted on Monday 12th May, before Putin refused to meet with Zelensky in Turkey].

Kendall: I think he's playing for time. He doesn't want to fall out with Trump, and wants a reset of relations with the US, lifting of sanctions, and some joint collaborative deals. But on the other hand, they do definitely have the upper hand in the war, and he doesn't want to give Zelensky what he wants. What they want is a compliant leader in Ukraine so they can bring it back into Russia's orbit. The other thing is that Putin has decided that the new enemy is Europe. In the last few weeks, they've shifted their propaganda. For years Russia has portrayed the US as the big enemy who wanted to destroy Russia, with Europe weakly tagging along.

Cherwell: What is an ideal outcome for Ukraine?

Kendall: A truce to stop fighting, without the territories being recognised as Russian, with rebuilding funded by Europe and America. And living to fight another day.

The fact that Trump doesn't want to keep arming Ukraine to the hilt, the fact that they're running out of fighting men, and Putin enlisting North Korean fighters to the end means that it's hard to see that it's a good option for Ukraine to keep fighting.

Cherwell: What was your career pathway from being a student at Oxford to becoming BBC correspondent for Moscow?

Kendall: I worked for Student Radio Oxford. I then went to Moscow afterwards as a research student and I came back with quite a broad view of what was going on in society below the radar. Coming back to the UK, I was advised to apply for the BBC, and I applied to a couple of their trainee schemes. They said I was too old – I was 26. However, the head of the World Service said they thought they should have taken me. They felt so strongly about it that they'd found some money for me to do a training scheme with them. I was immediately put on current affairs programmes, having to churn out stories in six hours – it was incredibly stressful. I felt very ill-equipped, but you just stay up all night reading and try to brief yourself. After a few months I realised that I really loved this. In 1985, when Gorbachev came in, he started reaching out to the West, so I had lots of opportunities to interview Russians. Then they said they were going to enlarge their bureau, and I was made correspondent in 1989.

*Read the full article at cherwell.org
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Review: *Suddenly Last Summer* – ‘The senses feast’

STAGE

Cannibalism, love, and lobotomies come to the forefront in Tennessee Williams’ Southern Gothic drama

EMMA HEAGNEY



This week at the Burton Taylor Studio, a new rendition of Tennessee Williams’ *Suddenly Last Summer* was a feast for the eyes and the eardrums. In true Tennessee Williams fashion, all facets of the stagecraft were tuned to the atmosphere of the scene, despite the intimacy of the theatre. Music intensified as we saw Catharine Holly’s mental deterioration, lighting narrowed as her extensive monologues paced faster and faster, and maybe it was just the front row, but the stench of tobacco definitely sold the gritty feel.

A one-act play, *Suddenly Last Summer* is one of Williams’ more obscure works, yet the themes of *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* linger. With sinister threats of lobotomies and uncertainty of the truth, we are transported to a midcentury New Orleans and forced to decipher the backstories of these characters through trailing speeches and thick tension. Lead actress Céline Denis embodies the elderly Mrs Violet Venable, with her eerie facial expressions leaving the audience markedly unsure of her next word. Her fingers subtly but erratically tread over one another as she recounts the almost incestuous obsession Mrs Venable has with her cultivated yet morally corrupt son, Sebastian. Her eyes do not move, her body remains stiff in her wheelchair, until moments of rage lead her to snap. She is theatrical and over-the-top, but that is exactly what she should be. Her devilish plans to force a lobotomy on her niece are absurd, but that is exactly what we should expect from the melodrama of the Southern Gothic. Denis stands out as one of the highlights of the show, along with Hafeja Khanam as Catharine Holly, the mentally-ill niece of Mrs Venable.

Khanam dominates the final scenes of the play, with impressive monologues and exuding gripping emotion. She stands almost uncomfortably close to the audience, each twitch in



her expression is visible to us. Her highs are high (and incredibly loud), fighting Sister Felicity (Kaitlyn Walsh) for the solace of a cigarette. Her lows are also low; her voice trails off, she clings to the excellent Dr Sugar (Jem Hunter) in mental and physical agony, meticulously recalling the summer she spent with Sebastian, the summer in which he procured for homosexual men, and was then cannibalised by small children. It sounds absolutely absurd, but Khanam’s delivery is so convincing that even the most ridiculous of premises can be taken as sincere, and open our eyes to such a powerful metaphor.

When asked about her favourite symbols used in the production, Céline Denis told *Cherwell*: “I think my favourite one was the comparison Catharine makes between Sebastian and bread. It really connected the dots for me and made me realise how Tennessee Williams constructs Sebastian as an elusive Christ-like figure, especially with the symbolism of blood throughout the play.”

She also says that this is her first time acting in a university play, an impressive feat for the second-year Christ Church College art historian. “I prepared for my role by reading all my lines in a southern American accent

then transposing them back into Received Pronunciation. I was trying to find a way to channel the concept of the ‘southern belle’ through a British perspective, which was pretty interesting.”

With standout performances from Céline Denis and Hafeja Khanam, *Suddenly Last Summer* was uncomfortably thought-provoking in the best way. A highlight of Week Four, the production exemplified creative uses of space, ear-splitting wails, and gripping performances that demand your attention.

Image Credit: Jem Hunter with permission

Review: *Death of a Salesman* – ‘The inside of his head’

SANAYA NARULA

“It is the final crumbling of an old salesman whose hallucinations swallow up his reality, an allegory for the despairing individual driven to insanity when the American Dream contorts into a Sisyphean nightmare.”

To review Tiptoe Productions’ staging of *Death of a Salesman*, I must first contextualise my biases as a reviewer. By no means do I intend to offend – I believe that this performance was a promising first act for a newborn theatre company, and one which could quite easily be perfected. The cast and crew certainly had their moments of brilliance, but my experience as a spectator was perhaps skewed by the fact that hours of my life were spent rereading, highlighting, and mulling over the minutiae of this Arthur Miller play as a youthful A-level English student. With such overexposure to a play, one cannot help but form strong opinions on it.

Arthur Miller’s *Death of a Salesman* is stunning. It is tense and excruciating, it is the final crumbling

of an old salesman whose hallucinations swallow up his reality, an allegory for the despairing individual driven to insanity when the American Dream contorts into a Sisyphean nightmare. The drama is psychological: Miller’s working title for this play was ‘The Inside of his Head’, and his original concept was to have an enlarged skull on the stage with characters walking around inside it. It is significantly the tragedy of a ‘low man’ (although Miller’s pun on his tragic hero’s name, Willy Loman, was not intentional), of an ordinary mortal attempting to grasp at greatness and failing spectacularly.

I adore the precision of Arthur Miller’s stage directions; he always knows exactly how he wants his plays to look. A gloomy mist enveloped the stage when I walked into the Michael Pilch Studio, suc-

cessfully giving it “an air of the dream”, as desired by Miller. His other stage directions were not so faithfully followed: there was no “angry glow of orange” and the Loman household was not surrounded by “towering, angular shapes”.

While Miller’s instruction for the play’s set to be “partially transparent” is difficult to achieve, his lighting directions are not so fanciful, and the towering shapes (crucial to the overall sense of physical entrapment) could have been projected onto the backdrop. The Pilch, which is quite literally a stuffy black box, made up for this absence with its claustrophobic conditions, but the play’s counter-motif of natural imagery (a contrast to its urban barrenness) was under-emphasised.

Read the full article at cherwell.org

FILM AND TV

Editors' Picks

IN THEATRES



MISSION IMPOSSIBLE – THE FINAL RECKONING

The eighth and final installment in the *Mission Impossible* series. Ethan Hunt and the IMF team must find Entity, a rogue AI that can destroy mankind.

TO STREAM



COMPANION

This sci-fi thriller follows a couple on a weekend getaway with friends at a remote cabin, which unravels into chaos after a revelation that one of the guests is a companion robot.

Image Credits:
[MISSION IMPOSSIBLE] 'Tom Cruise' by Gage Skidmore via Wikimedia Commons / CC BY SA 2.0
[COMPANION] 'Sophie Thatcher' by Kevin Payravi via Wikimedia Commons / CC BY SA 4.0

HIDDEN GEM: DAISIES

ABIGAIL STYCHE

Whilst mainstream cinema more often favours the safe and the familiar, some of the most remarkable films ever made are those that dismantle the very idea of what is conventional and slip through the cracks of popular culture. Among these hidden gems, few works have pushed the boundaries of filmmaking to the extent of Věra Chytilová's *Daisies* (1966). Inventive, absurdist, and defiantly feminist, *Daisies* presents an anarchic and visually striking spectacle that epitomises the meaning of experimental film. More than a historical artefact of 1960s counterculture, *Daisies* remains relevant and radical almost sixty years later.

Daisies emerged from the artistically fertile ground of the Czech New Wave, a brief but fiercely experimental movement that dominated Czech film in the 1960s. The Czech New Wave was made possible by a period of cultural liberalisation. Following the death of Stalin, Nikita Khrushchev promoted a more moderate mode of socialism. The period became named the “Khrushchev Thaw”, allowing for greater criticism of inequality and bureaucracy as censorship became more relaxed. Filmmakers could escape the grip of Stalinist-era social realism which demanded state-approved idealised versions of life. What followed was Czech filmmakers responding to the social trauma and political inequality of the Stalinist era. During this creative opening,

Chytilová, an innovator of this movement, crafted *Daisies*, a film that would cement her place as a radical voice in world cinema. The film shattered both narrative and ideological convention; it was not merely stylistically adventurous but politically subversive.

At its core, *Daisies* is a film about female rebellion. The film follows two young women, both named Marie, as they embark on an unapologetic rampage of indulgence, mischief, and chaos. The plot resists coherence in favour of disorder, as the narrative is structured by a sequence of disjointed vignettes. The Maries flirt with and deceive men, gorge themselves

“*The Maries flirt with and deceive men, gorge themselves on extravagant meals...*”

on extravagant meals, indulge in wanton acts of destruction, and position themselves as focal points of the public eye. Indeed, they command the attention of the world around them through public disruption, their transgressions transformed into spectacle. They are often centred in the frame, breaking the fourth wall to look directly into the camera. This reinforces their agency through constructing a returned gaze with the audience, disrupting passive viewership and encouraging active

critical engagement.

Visually, the film reflects this narrative havoc: jump cuts collide with psychedelic colour filters, scenes switch abruptly between monochrome and saturated colour, and images are mirrored, reversed, or interrupted. Just as the Maries defy societal expectations of how women should behave, Chytilová defies expectations of cinematic continuity. This rebellion holds greater significance when considering that Chytilová was the first female student at the FAMU film school in Prague, paving the way for female expression in a male-dominated industry. Chytilová transforms editing from a passive mode of storytelling into a political weapon, attacking the patriarchal structures that dictate how women should behave and how films should be constructed.

The Maries are not designed to be digestible characters, nor do they conform neatly to familiar archetypes of tragic victims or righteous rebels. They are joyfully disruptive, self-serving, and unapologetically hedonistic. Therefore, it is clear that Chytilová is not offering role models to be placed on a pedestal; she instead aims to provoke the audience. The Maries are a parody of the roles which women are expected to occupy. Whereas modesty and restraint was the expectation, they are indulgent and excessive. Their transgressions challenge the limitations of a culture fixated on control, particularly over the female body.

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Barry Lyndon – Kubrick's ultimate antifilm?

RUBY TIPPLE

Barry Lyndon has always been dismissed within Kubrick's filmography. While he is a filmmaker known for his versatility across genres, *Barry Lyndon* still sits uneasily within Kubrick's wider body of work. It doesn't have the satirical bite of *Dr Strangelove*. It's not groundbreaking like *2001*. There is no rousing hero like *Spartacus*. It's not visceral and shocking to the point of censorship like *A Clockwork Orange*.

Instead, it's an austere and remarkably restrained examination of blue-blooded society, based on a Thackeray novel: a classic tale of an idealistic social climber in eighteenth-century Ireland, eventually brutalised by his own successes.

It's been discarded by many; Pauline Kael described it as a “coffee-table movie”. Others describe it as an overly-traditional stepping stone in Kubrick's career which is dull, uninspired, and ultimately eclipsed by his next and much greater film, *The Shining*. It seems almost universal among the film world that *Barry Lyndon* is so ordinary of a creation to the point where it simply doesn't warrant much attention in comparison.

Yet, in the conventionality of its subject lies the film's genius. *Barry Lyndon* doesn't make the same kinds of explosive statements which warranted mass censorship campaigns surrounding Kubrick's other films. Instead, it's the most subtle peeling back of the glacial veneer which enshrouds the aristocratic society of the past, covering its unpalatable darkness – the

most cold, detached way to use the camera in order to examine the violent and uncompromising world which young hero Barry enters into.

The whole film looks like one, long, 18th-century oil painting. In perhaps the most overt example of Kubrick's meticulous use of mise-en-scene, entire tableaux are constructed in symmetry and uncompromising detail, silent and still. To get the lighting right, whole scenes were filmed in candlelight alone and new lenses were made by NASA for Kubrick's camera. Cool, detached, and beautiful – the cinematography deliberately evokes classic beauty, straight from the work of Vermeer or Watteau.

These choices have not helped *Barry Lyndon*'s reputation in Kubrick's filmography as an overly conventional film. Perhaps a different filmmaker would have pressed further into the visceral undertones behind class progression at this time. Others would have found the grittiness of the war and duelling culture that Barry is repeatedly exposed to as a spectacular visual subject – and made a film with the silhouettes, saturation, and cinematographic darkness of a film like *Apocalypse Now*. Yet, Kubrick not only picks a conventional story, but also a conventional way of visually representing it.

Peeling back this detached visual layer ever so slightly reveals the darkness that the audience knows Kubrick can represent. There are only small moments where the artifice breaks. It comes in Act II of the film, when Barry lashes out at his step-son, beating him in-front of his guests. Kubrick follows the screams of the

surrounding women; the boy pushed to the floor by his hair; every punch that Barry lands upon his smaller teenage son. The guests form a gladiatorial circle around the scene – beauty, for a moment, is replaced by animalistic venom.

The scene lasts 40 seconds. It is still enough to break through hours of visual spectacle.

That's why *Barry Lyndon* is ultimately so worth seeing. It breaks convention by using the artifice of supposed conventionality. Underneath Kubrick's opulent tableaux lies the worst of human darkness – the primalism

which makes us beat our children in front of an audience. Humanity at its most uncompromising, placed behind a mask of social allure. He lets this mask slip just enough for it to be perceptible. Blink and you'll miss it.

Yet, this break from visual convention tells the audience all it needs to know about the sort of society that Barry inhabits, and what he is trying to break into.

Image Credit: 'Kubrick on the set of Barry Lyndon' by Warner Bros Inc via Wikimedia Commons / CC BY SA 1.0



The book the CIA stole across the Iron Curtain

Kavya Kapadia explores politicised publications, the Cold War, and the effort to publish amidst government attempts to silence writers

May it make its way around the world. You are hereby invited to watch me face the firing squad.” These were the words of Boris Pasternak as he entrusted Italian literary talent agent Sergio D’Angelo with a copy of *Doctor Zhivago*, the book which became the CIA’s secret literary weapon against the Soviet Union.

Pasternak initially hesitated in giving D’Angelo the novel, likely remembering the ugly fate of his predecessors, such as the execution and exile of Pilnyak and Zamyatin. Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, the Italian publisher for whom D’Angelo worked, would become one of the first to publish *Dr Zhivago* in Italian, despite threats from the Italian Communist party and proposals from the Soviet authorities to instead publish a censored version of the novel within the Soviet Union itself.

Soviet authorities and publishing houses had refused to publish *Doctor Zhivago*, with the KGB claiming that his work was an “estrangement from Soviet life, and a celebration of individualism.” Upon discovering the novel two years later, the CIA stated that this was an “opportunity to make Soviet citizens wonder what is wrong with their government, when a fine literary work by the man acknowledged to be the greatest living Russian writer is not even available in his own country.” In circulating the book, their goal was to contribute to the “cultural Cold War”, to undermine and challenge Soviet attitudes by propagating the idea of intellectual freedom within the Soviet Union and to foster anti-Soviet attitudes amongst the intelligentsia.

Censorship and repression visibly moulded the very shape and form of the book. When I wanted to read *Doctor Zhivago*, an internet search and a quick trip to Waterstones was all it took. The CIA, however, first read and received the book in the form of two rolls of film from MI6, with each page having been individually photographed by an unnamed British intelligence officer. Some received



their copies from a small hidden library, created in Belgium by Russian immigrant Catholics during the 1958 Brussels Universal and International Exposition.

“*The book became the CIA’s secret literary weapon against the Soviet Union*

Several young Soviets would have been showered with miniature copies of the book, the books were thrown into the Soviet buses arriving at the 1959 World Festival of Youth and Students for Peace and Friendship in Vienna. The CIA had printed these miniature copies on onion-skin paper, designed to be small enough to fit in pockets. The flood of these

was so potent that Soviet customs officials would search specifically for them in travellers’ luggage. Others read the book through the efforts of those who would remove its cover, separate the pages, and hide them in their pockets.

Two simultaneous wars were playing out: one on the battlefield and one in the publishing houses. Stalin had announced ‘socialist realism’ as the only acceptable method of writing; all depictions of reality were obliged to be related to the spirit of communism and Marx.

These writers were called upon to be the “engineers of the human soul”, helping to produce the “new Soviet man”. Censorship in the Soviet Union was often drastic, stringent, and arbitrary.

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

Image Credits: *Doctor Zhivago* (1965) by Omar Sharif & Julie Christie via Flickr / PDM 1.0

BOOKS

Sally Rooney, a Flaubert for today?

RICHARD KUEHL

Like millions of other people in recent years, I have fallen victim to the Sally Rooney craze. I liked her debut *Conversations with Friends*, but it was her 2018 *Normal People* that finally won me over. I read the book in a day during an 11-hour train ride between Italy and Germany.

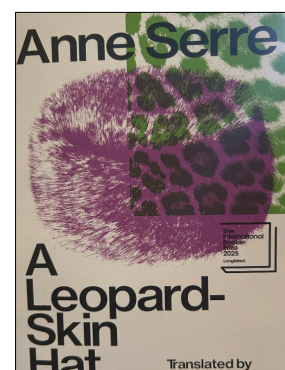
The things that attracted me to the story and its characters have been written about by countless other people over the years. It is true that Rooney’s work is outstanding. When it comes to crafting complex and relatable protagonists whilst also drawing the reader into their mundane daily lives, she is unparalleled.

However, Rooney’s literary projects are by no means groundbreaking. As the author herself states, she draws from 19th century literature. No other work exemplifies this as much as Gustav Flaubert’s 1869 *L’Education Sentimentale*. Although arguably much larger in scope and almost twice the length of *Normal People*, it has common themes and treads along the same stylistic lines.

On the one hand, like Rooney, Flaubert aimed to remove any subjectivity from his writing, eradicating the narratorial presence from his novel. Through this, and focusing on mundane subjects, he hoped to bring the reader closer to the characters, breaking some of the artificiality attached to any work of fiction. Moreover, both novels follow the evolution of two people’s relationships over time, and the way that they are hampered by miscommunication, self-doubt, and socio-economic factors. Both novels thematicise the cultural differences between the city and countryside, and the way that the dynamics between people are shaped by class.

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What’s Oxford reading?

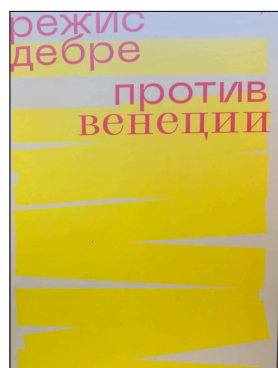


A LEOPARD- SKIN HAT Anne Serre

This French novel follows the close friendship of two childhood friends. The narrator’s friend suffers from psychological disorders, and the helpless love he feels towards her is explored through a series of poignant and tragic beautifully written scenes.

CONTRE VENISE Regis Debray

A short essay by French philosopher and journalist Debray, who has scathing thoughts to share on Italy’s canal city. Exploring the culture, the art, and the people of Venice, and all the emotions that it evokes.



Twenty-Seven Years on from The Satanic Verses

IVETT BERENYI

On 16th May, the man who stabbed author Salman Rushdie following a literary event in 2022 was sentenced to 25 years in prison. The response to Rushdie’s novel has been nothing short of extraordinary: it won the Whitbread Novel Award and was shortlisted for the Booker Prize in 1988. At the same time, Ayatollah Khomeini issued a fatwa (a ruling by an Islamic authority) against the author, following bans in seven countries in 1989. In Rushdie’s case, this was an order for execution against a bounty of \$3 million. And as already alluded to, Rushdie was eventually attacked (and ultimately lost his right eye) during a talk at the Chautauqua Institution.

Alongside works such as Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye* and *Beloved*, *The Satanic Verses* is a cornerstone example in knotty issues like the banning of books, freedom of expression, and postcolonial theory. However, Rushdie’s novel goes beyond the boundaries we are used to: the novel became indirectly embedded in British-Irani diplomacy for ten consecutive years following the 1989 fatwa.

The title is a reference to Qur’anic passages in which Muhammad appears to venerate three pagan goddesses, which sits uneasily with Islamic monotheism, and so has, controversially, been represented by scholars in the past as the product of

Satanic suggestion. This title, along with the Jahilian passages (where allusions to Satanic suggestion are played out), were the main elements triggering the fatwa. Despite the sheer wonder of the novel, it is difficult to ignore its political and religious voice. Its dazzling passages also serve as areas of contestation about the roles of the author, of governments, and of religious authorities. In approaching these connections, however, we must ask ourselves: how far should literature be allowed to infiltrate and influence global politics?

Immediate responses to the fatwa included keeping Rushdie under police protection, delaying the establishment of the British Embassy in Tehran, the official breakdown of Iranian-British relations in March 1989, and eventually the taking of hostages in Lebanon and Tehran. Though neither the hostage crisis, nor its resolution, are closely related to the text itself, the book worsened the hostility between the negotiating parties, hindering the initial bilateral efforts to establish and sustain British-Iranian relations. In this context, Penguin Books did not go ahead with the publication of *The Satanic Verses* in paperback – a clear sign that literature could and had taken on political resonance.

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

It's not who, it's how: Reframing Oxford's portraits

Saskia Maini analyses Oxford's long tradition of portraiture, discussing whether it should be viewed through an aesthetic lens rather than a political one

ART

All art is quite useless," declared Oscar Wilde in the preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. It's a provocative claim, inviting us to reconsider how we view the portraits which line Oxford's dining halls, libraries, and examination rooms. Taking Wilde's comment in all seriousness, can we learn to appreciate these paintings not simply for who is depicted, but instead, for how they are painted? In essence: can we attempt to separate the art from the subject? I believe that, with some adjustments, we can do so.

While sitting down in a formal hall in most Oxford colleges, students often find themselves under the watchful gaze of painted benefactors and alumni from long ago, robed in tradition and surrounded by crests. In Examination Schools, where portraits loom large above rows of anxious undergraduates, one might look up in search of inspiration (or distraction) and meet a face from centuries past.

These portraits have, perhaps unsurprisingly, become the subject of intense debate. Who deserves to be hanging on Oxford's walls? Who no longer belongs? Do these figures reflect the values we seek to uphold today? These are essential questions, but not ones I seek to answer here. Instead, I want to question something more aesthetic than political: can we momentarily set aside the subject and simply appreciate the portrait as art?

To be clear, these works do reflect the hierarchies, values, and exclusions of their time. A portrait which was deemed suitable in the 17th Century might not pass the same test today. Even so, there remains a case for preservation, not as an endorsement, but as a record of change. In fact, it's fun to consider



who from today's cohort would be immortalised in oil: *Cherwell* BNOs, top-class academics, Blues athletes, Union hacks, thespians? Perhaps such a list would best elucidate how our standards and symbols of success have shifted. In any case, I believe it's important to preserve historical portraits; it reflects the evolution of an institution.

But perhaps we've become over-accustomed to viewing this art predominantly through a political or institutional lens when it's also about aesthetics. Could we momentarily focus on Oxford's portraits

not for who they represent, but for how – the brushwork, light, colour, and form?

This is the approach of aesthetic formalism: a way of seeing which values composition over content. Could portraits be appreciated purely as a study in tone, mood, or technique?

Some argue no. They maintain an art's subject is intrinsically linked to its essence. In his work *Art and Illusion*, art historian Sir Ernst Gombrich suggested that our appreciation of art is deeply rooted in psychological and cultural context.

When viewing a painting, we bring knowledge and expectations with us. Extrapolating from this theory, understanding who the sitter is and what they represent is inseparable from how we experience the work.

Yet is this truly the case? In Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgement*, he emphasises the idea that beauty can be experienced disinterestedly, without needing to understand the subject. In this sense, perhaps a portrait could be appreciated in the same way we admire a flower. Not because we know its history or symbolism, but due to its visual appearance. When we look at a flower, we do not necessarily appreciate the beauty in it due to its complex biological makeup. It is simply beautiful.

In the same way, could Oxford's art not simply be art? We can appreciate the portraiture for its artistic merit and what it tells us about the evolution of portraiture itself. *L'art pour l'art* – art for art's sake.

Yet, a flower is not a former benefactor. Portraits, unlike flowers, were made to honour individuals with particular legacies. While formalism is a valuable method of seeing, it cannot be the only one.

I do agree with the viewpoint that new art can be valuable to the current collections. In particular, I value the importance of representing a diverse range of what success can look like. Above all, one notes the underrepresentation of women and ethnic minorities on college walls when compared with today's student composition.

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

Image Credit: *Tables and Chairs in Magdalen College Mess Hall* by Oleksandra Zelenia via Pexels / CC0

ARTS CALENDAR

What's On.

STAGE

The Antipodes – Pécadillo Productions (Michael Pilch Studio, 3rd-6th June)

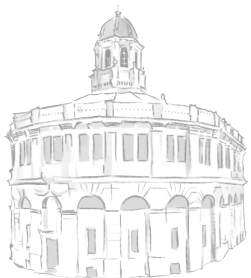
Blood Wedding – Full Moon Theatre (Oxford Playhouse, 4th-7th June)

MUSIC

Sacconi String Quartet – Oxford Coffee Concerts (Holywell Music Room, 8th June)

ART

Oxford Inverted – Worcester College (Pembroke College Art Gallery, 27th May-1st June)



The Source

A Pelican Crossing Somewhere on Green Dragon

BRIONY ARNOTT

I jolt from dreams of silence into a wakefulness of traffic. The school rush, honking and shrieking like geese outside. I forget that other people's days start before noon – the leisurely life of university – but today I join them. Wash my face in the sink, dress in black. My roots have grown out these past months. Of all the days to notice, it has to be today. I sit on the edge of my bed to catch my breath.

I can't stop for long – the train station is thirty minutes away and to tempt fate would be unwise at best, devastating at worst.

Purse, phone charger, paper tickets (what a novelty!), and keys. Enter the throng and the bustle of real life. Little year sevens flocking towards the open doors of the schools, cowering under backpacks which would put Mohammad's mountain to shame. They glance in panic and shame at the time, run with all their might to be ten minutes earlier to register. Their parents watch from a safe distance, engines on as if to disguise the fact that they will sit there, intently focused, for at least another ten minutes. I do not have the luxury to linger and watch both the past and future unfold. I don't remember being that small, that blissfully unaware, but like a bullet in the leg the truth of it embeds and will not unlodge. The passage of time is a bloodthirsty hound.

On the train I play choral covers of Radiohead songs and think about the looming deadlines which have characterised my term; the fact that I haven't received a text back from the PPE-ist at St John's I've been seeing; how one less person now remembers me as young and careless and shockingly blonde.

Tears clog in my sinuses – I feel them everywhere but my eyes. Somewhere just off the mark, just out of reach. I wish I'd brought water. I read years ago you can't cry and drink simultaneously, and though it's yet to work, it gives my mouth something to do other than tremble. Wish I'd brought food. When does one eat on days like these? My friend told me wakes often have food, but what does she know? No one she knows has ever died.

[Continue reading at cherwell.org](https://cherwell.org)

Roots and rhythm: Legacy in Dot's Funk Odyssey

Maya Rybin explores the sense of community within Oxford's staple student band

MUSIC

The first thing I am struck by as the members of Dot's Funk Odyssey (DFO) settle into a loose circle on the grass of one of Balliol College's quads, sunlight filtering through the spring canopy, is a feeling of welcoming. There's an easy warmth in the air that goes beyond the blue sky and sunshine – a settled kind of closeness, built over time and countless rehearsals. Ben, drummer and musical director, flashes a warm grin. Maisie, trumpeter, band wrangler, and chaos coordinator, moves between jokes and quiet check-ins with the easy confidence of someone who knows exactly how things run. Phoebe, one of the vocalists, sits cross-legged and glowing. Erin, trombonist and unofficial holder of the band's 'golden retriever energy' title, leans back into the light. Tom, new on guitar this year, already has his sunglasses on and is cracking jokes with Patra, a vocalist basking in the sunniest spot.

Being part of a resident band in Oxford is not like joining your average student society. DFO, born from Wadham College's Wadstock dreams and now a fixture of Oxford nightlife and ball culture, is something inherited. "It's not just a band," says Phoebe. "It's something bigger. A family, really."

Maisie nods: "It's emotional. You're contributing to something that doesn't need to be your personal brand – it's a legacy." That legacy echoed at the 20th birthday celebration, when dozens of alumni flooded back to the stage, some flying in from as far as Tennessee. "There was this incredible sense," Ben reflects, "that we're not just the 2025 DFO. We're DFO. Full stop."

And like any family, there's a lineage: whispered

stories of DFO priests, honorary cousins, DF-mums, and DF-kids. Erin, in her third year in the band, laughs: "We literally made a family tree once. We just put 'DF-' in front of everything."

There's music, of course – funk grooves that wrap around jazz progressions, silky soul vocals, and horn sections that make you dance even if you meant to be serious. Behind the setlists and soundchecks, however, lies something even deeper: joy. The band doesn't take any of their pay home, because they choose to spend the money instead on big meals after gigs, summer festivals together, and better kit. "You're not doing it for money," Maisie says. "You're doing it because you love it, and because you love each other."

Phoebe lights up at this. "It's like a sleepover every summer. It's a big holiday. Honestly, it's the thing that's kept me sane through Oxford."

The gigs, too, are memory machines. They reminisce on gigs in Jesus College's bar, soaked in nerves and neon. They reflect on Wadstock, too, with thousands of students singing back their set like a gospel choir of indie kids. "It's wild," Ben recalls. "You're used to regular shows – and then you hit that first chord, and the crowd just erupts. That sound. I'll never forget it."

Beyond the music, the band has become a school of living. "I've learnt more management and people skills from this band than I have from my degree," says Maisie, grinning. As musical director, Ben has honed the delicate art of feedback: "It's so easy to say the wrong thing to someone. Musicianship is personal. You learn when to push and when to just stop."

Phoebe adds: "You can read books, practise alone, but there's nothing like communicating through music – with your eyes, your timing, your instrument. It's the best education there is."

Each new member brings their musical world with them: Ezra Collective here, trap beats there, a polka arrangement of 'Bad Romance' lurking somewhere in Maisie's files. The setlists are as democratic as they are joyful – equal parts crowd-pleasers and surprises, tailored to whether it's a ticketed gig or a May Ball marathon.

"We're friends first, bandmates after." That's how Ben puts it, and the others all murmur in agreement. "Honestly," Tom chimes in, "this has made my Oxford life. Like, this is it for me."

Erin nods: "I want to come back for the 50th. The 100th. Freeze my brain if you have to. Just wake me

up in time."

Everyone laughs, but there's a seriousness underneath it. "If I came back in seven years and everyone in DFO looked miserable," Erin says, "I'd be like – we messed up."

They won't mess up, because they know what the secret is. They say it again and again, like a mantra passed from generation to generation of DFO: have fun. Enjoy each other and make music like it matters – because it does.

Dot's Funk Odyssey doesn't belong to one person, one year, or even one genre. It's what happens when talent, friendship, and absurd levels of joy find their groove – and never stop dancing.

Read the full article at cherwell.org

Image Credits: Maya Rybin with permission for Cherwell



Common threads: Historical fashion and its lessons for our time

CHARIS PATTERSON

When we think of historical fashion, images of towering wigs, tight-laced corsets, heavy brocades and voluminous skirts often spring to mind – ornate, impractical, and rooted firmly in the unenlightened past.

But to reduce historical dress to its stereotypes is to miss a broader, and perhaps more urgent, lesson. Beneath the showy ostentation lies a pragmatic and surprisingly progressive relationship with clothing that today's world of fast fashion would do well to revisit.

Historical fashion is a vast subject stretching

across centuries, cultures, and classes. But across the board common threads emerge: resourcefulness, a persisting respect for materials, and a slower, more deliberate pace of consumption. In an era where disposable clothing feeds insatiable consumerism, these lessons from the past may offer a model for a more sustainable future for fashion.

In a time before mass production, clothing was handmade, expensive, and often bespoke. Laborious in construction and dear in price, clothes could not be made or bought on a whim but represented a significant investment of time and money. Most people owned only a few outfits, which made each garment both precious yet frequently worn in order to justify the cost.

Acquiring clothes was a deliberate and pre-

meditated activity. That it involved parting with a substantial part of one's income meant quality, longevity, and practical use were carefully considered before making a purchase. The cost of resources and the duration of construction meant impulse buying was not an option for historical consumers. Clothes were a considerable investment, and perhaps it's time we treated them that way again.

Given the cost and labour involved in their production, clothing was expected to be durable,

“Far from being a relic of the past, this ethos of repairing rather than discarding has never felt more relevant”

lasting even a lifetime. To help ensure this, many people were versed in at least the rudimentaries of sewing in order to carry out their own repairs. Being able to make even the simplest of repairs to a garment meant that they rarely needed to be thrown away. Besides repairs, one could also tailor their own clothes. Simple modifications such as taking in seams or letting down hems enabled clothing to adapt to one's body as it changed over the course of a lifetime.

During the Second World War, with fabric in short supply, the British government issued a pamphlet titled 'Make Do and Mend'. It encouraged women on the home front to recycle worn garments, patch holes, reknit old jumpers, and even form community sewing circles. 'Make Do and Mend' became an apposite response to the crisis

FASHION



of resources, and encouraged women to return to practices that had been common currency in preceding eras when clothing was similarly scarce.

Far from being a relic of the past, this ethos of repairing rather than discarding has never felt more relevant. Learning basic sewing skills and committing to a 'make do and mend' mentality would be an apt response to stewarding materials well in light of the climate crisis.

Read the full article online at cherwell.org

Image Credit: David Hays for Cherwell and Vintage Singer sewing machine by Jorge Royan via Wikimedia Commons / CC BY-SA 3.0 Model: Alfie Edwards



Reflections from Wadham's ex-Tortoise Officer

Beatrix Arnold recalls past concerns for the racers' welfare

Amidst the high-pressure environment of Oxford, college tortoises have retained an enduring appeal as oases of calm, their quiet dignity a reassuring counterbalance to the duress of a deadline. My first-year Trinity term was spent languishing in Wadham gardens, my laptop open in an empty gesture towards the work I was ignoring, while I watched the movements of Archibald (Archie) Manshella across the lawn.

The college tortoise holds such a valued position within the community that the Wadham JCR constitution has endowed Archie with deciding power in the case of a tie (she always votes in favour of the motion because of her "radical desire for change"). Yet over the course of my tenure as Tortoise Officer, it became increasingly clear to me that Oxford is no place for the care of such a creature. Each individual college does not have the space, time, or concern to foster the right environment for a tortoise's highly specific needs, nor – in the delegation of the entire role to a single first-year student on a temporary basis – can instruction be sufficiently imparted. Years of successive Tortoise Officers did not even realise that Archie was, in fact, a girl, until a revolutionary visit to the vets (although a transgender tortoise is, perhaps, rather on brand for Wadham).

In the absence of adequate provisions for reptile care, Oxford's tortoises appear to exist primarily as a gimmick, exploited by colleges as a draw point to broadcast their quirky appeal (an example of green-washing in a quite literal sense). The role of Tortoise Officer is almost invariably mentioned with a wry smile, the whimsical absurdity of the idea obfuscating the real-life

ramifications of animal neglect. For most students, the tortoise is a non-entity, hibernating for the majority of the year, and only providing interest as an emblem of college pride at the Corpus Tortoise Fair, or as a cute cameo in a Trinity term photo dump.

Archie's poor health, the result of changeable weather and insufficient facilities available at Oxford, induced me to reconsider the ethical considerations for animal welfare involved in such a tradition. When Lincoln College made the decision to rehome their tortoise, Tortilla, in a reptile sanctuary, I persuaded Wadham to follow their example. Now thriving in her new home at the National Centre for Reptile Welfare, Archie's health is better than ever. Although there's no longer any chance of her winning any trophies in the name of Wadham, this seems a small price to pay for the overall enhanced quality of life that she now enjoys.

With the annual Corpus Tortoise Fair approaching, it would be great to see more colleges considering the benefits of rehoming their tortoises. It may be a lengthy process, but perhaps there is some wisdom in the old adage that slow and steady wins the race.

Image Credit: Beatrix Arnold for Cherwell



Okay, diva! The evolution of the kaleidoscopic label

Elizabeth Hamilton on the multivalence of "diva"

A heavenly goddess. A temperamental star. And now, anyone you like. The term "diva", derived from the Latin for goddess, became, towards the end of the 19th century, the label given to acclaimed female opera singers, recognising and celebrating their God-given talents and powerful voices. It was a term of admiration and respect, reserved for a tiny number of adored stars.

However, in the 20th century there was a shift in the word's connotations. The rise of cinema saw an increasing number of women starring in major screen roles while the development of marketing meant that models became household names. With more and more high-powered women in the public eye, their personalities began to be scrutinised more intensely than those of their male counterparts. Those deemed too assertive, capricious, or hard to please were dismissed as "divas", a warning to anyone considering working with them or aspiring to meet them.

Popular music produced superstars of a whole new kind, many of whom have also been labelled divas. At points, the narcissistic behaviour of some stars

is undeniable: Mariah Carey's husband Nick Cannon revealed that Carey played a recording of her hit song "Fantasy" as she gave birth to twins, so that they would come out "not just to a Mariah Carey song" but "to a round of applause". Yet what frustrates many women is that there is no equivalent term for men in showbiz who are demanding, self-obsessed, and difficult to work with.

It is for this reason that female celebrities, especially in music, set out to reclaim the term. Carey herself embraces the label, saying on Meghan Markle's podcast that if someone calls her a diva, "[f]or me, they mean you're a successful woman [...] but also, [...] a bitch." Beyoncé, on her 2008 album *I am... Sasha Fierce*, proclaims in the song "Diva" that a "diva is a female version of a hustla". By the 2010s, the term was generally received positively by those it referred to. Yet its previous negative connotations remained. Dolly Parton once told a reporter that, "I'm a working girl. I don't make people bend over backwards, and I don't like that in people. I'm definitely no diva."

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Image Credit: Nat Ch Villa via Flickr / CC BY 2.0

No sight of a finish line for the cult followers of running

AGASTYA RAO

My first experience with running in Oxford came on a cold Michaelmas night last October. I was in the midst of my first ever essay crisis. At 11.30pm I put on my shoes and fled the cosy Regent's College library. Little did I know that this run would not only be incredibly eventful, but would also lead me to start running at ridiculous hours during term.

I originally picked up running as a hobby during the pandemic. Cut off from school life and missing my fencing training, I began running three times a

week, usually in the morning, purely as a way to exercise. It was almost the perfect pandemic sport – all you needed was a pair of running shoes and a place to run.

But the frenetic pace and excitement of Freshers' Week and the delightful workload of a law degree left me without the time or energy to run in the first week of Michaelmas. Which brings me to the midst of a rather fiddly constitutional law essay in Week 2. I was frustrated and tired, and naturally decided to go for a run. Whether it was purely procrastination, muscle memory of happy endorphins, or quite literally me running away from my essay problem, my very first run in Oxford had a major impact on me.

It was only as I stepped out of my college that it struck me that University Parks was probably shut, and I wasn't really sure what to do. I ended up simply bolting down St Giles, past the kebab vans, all the way down to Iffley Road. This was fitting especially given the storied history of the track at Iffley, where Sir Roger Bannister ran the first sub-four-minute mile. The highlight of the night was when I ran into an incredibly drunk man named Jeff outside the Four Candles. Merry Jeff saw me running, and, being in very high spirits (pun fully intended), attempted to race me. Naturally, Jeff was in no state to run, but the fact that he attempted the impossible

despite faltering steps gave me the confidence to shake off my writer's block and finish my essay.

In a fast-paced environment like Oxford, it is difficult to ever truly feel in control of what's going on around you. Running puts you in a completely different world; one where you are almost totally in control of everything you do. The pace, the direction, and even the playlist are all under your control. The first 15 minutes of a run are generally the worst part, the one where you question why you ever bothered to put yourself through this, but the second you get into a groove, you achieve a sense of quiet.

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HOROSCOPES



Aries

Competition is sexy.



Taurus

When will you stop avoiding the truth?



Gemini

Check in with your friends.



Cancer

Press pause.



Leo

Another Tesco trip won't fix it.



Virgo

Breathe!

HOROSCOPES



Libra

When Hinge fails, try reading a spicy book in Port Meadow.



Scorpio

Compliment someone.



Sagittarius

In the words of Troy Bolton: Get ‘cha head in the game.



Capricorn

Get in touch with your college kids.



Aquarius

Nostalgia is calling this week.



Pisces

Reacquaint yourself with the college library.

When did we learn to stop yearning?

AVA DOHERTY

Somewhere between ghosting culture and a thousand unread texts, between lockdown-induced alienation and dopamine-fueled TikTok scrolling, we stopped yearning, and emotional repression became a lifestyle. We wear our indifference like a Gucci belt, which is functional, fashionable, and utterly devoid of heat. It is not just apathy; it is emotional taxidermy.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, Darcy says, “You must allow me to tell you how ardently I admire and love you.” That kind of chest-thumping, full-throated romantic idiocy would get you exiled to cringe-Tok in 2025. These days, if you tell someone how ardently you admire and love them, they block you and call you manipulative. We have mistaken detachment for depth. People, especially men, have been taught that the ability to suppress emotion is somehow a form of maturity. But that’s not maturity. That’s emotional Botox. Sure, it smooths out the mess of feeling, but it leaves you numb. Maturity is not the refusal to care but the ability to survive caring.

A collapse in communication is happening around us, and no one wants to name it. So here I am, naming it: emotional immaturity dressed in stone-cold vibes. Men, in particular, have become casualties of a culture that told them to be strong and then removed all the ways they could express strength in a healthy way. The old ‘provider’ role is dying, and nothing clear has replaced it. So they become silent, scrolling, watching, and withholding. Freud would have had a field day.

To psychoanalyse this digital frostbite, repression is no longer an accident; it’s a method that certainly protects us from heartbreak, but also from meaning. In Freudian terms, the libido has been sublimated not into works of art but seven-second videos and ironic memes. We have stopped creating catharsis and started recycling it. If yearning was the soul’s way of articulating its hunger, we have placed that hunger on a strict intermittent fasting diet. No wonder so many situationships end without ever beginning. We don’t date anymore: we merely orbit. We do not confront: we

leave on ‘read’. Silence used to be golden, and now, it’s passive-aggressive.

Before anyone asks, no, this discussion is not about me. This conversation concerns the guy who ignored you all night at Spoons because making eye contact would have revealed the gaping hole in his sense of self. This is about the group chats, where no one says how they feel until 2.41am on a Thursday, when someone finally asks “Guys, are we OK?” before deleting it two minutes later. This is about our collective refusal to yearn.

Poetry used to be written because things were hard, because yearning had nowhere else to go. People wrote about longing for someone they could never have, even while living in a world where women could not vote and men died at war. Yet there was a feeling there, a complicated, ungovernable, sincere feeling. We now have a society where gender equality has found a more secure footing, but everyone is emotionally constipated. Was it the pandemic? Or was that just a tipping point? Boys, in particular, have been socialised into this stoicism-lite for decades, and now it has metastasised. They are not allowed to

“*To yearn is to risk, yes. But it’s also when we feel most alive. We don’t write love letters anymore; we send memes*

feel, so they perform not-feeling. And the scary part is that they are getting good at it. Women, too, are catching the contagion. Why show softness when it is only ever read as weakness?

Indifference is not cool or aesthetic, it’s just sad. We’re all so busy pretending not to care that we’ve forgotten what it feels like to care deeply. To yearn is to risk, yes. But it’s also when we feel most alive. We don’t write love letters anymore; we send memes. We don’t say, “I miss you,” we say, “LOL, this reminded me of you,” and hope they hear the ache buried inside the emoji. What is tragic is not that people are single; it’s that so many are unreachable.

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CHERWELL-FED
Full steam ahead! Little Clarendon’s bougie bagels



BEATRIX ARNOLD

Little Clarendon Street is known for its string of artisanal cafes, a place where the avocado toast enthusiast is spoilt for choice. Nestled beside Gail’s, The Steamhouse fits right in, serving an array of bagels, coffees, and pastries in accordance with its millennial aesthetic. Its interior is striking, and decidedly Instagrammable. With hanging plants and LED lights, it encapsulates the Pinterest ideal of the hipster cafe, cheerfully accompanied by a soundtrack of 2010s hits.

Unfortunately, I caught them on a bad day – they’ve run out of halloumi... before 1pm. This wouldn’t be too much of an issue if it didn’t form the basis of most of their menu. In fact, halloumi seems to be the main ingredient keeping The Steamhouse afloat. Sorely mourning its loss, I go for the only vegan option available, the VLT, made up of ‘bacon’, lettuce, tomato, and black pepper ‘mayo’. The paucity of choice for vegans, and even vegetarians (with only three vegetarian options, all of which rely on halloumi), seems out of character for an eatery which projects a hipster, LA-style energy. There’s no shortage of options for meat-eaters, however. In fact, the menu almost privileges them, with an entire section dedicated to ‘deluxe’ deli meat bagels, complete with extras. The kitchen, separated from the

dining area by only a counter, appeared flustered, quickly overwhelmed around lunchtime, and it took 20 minutes for my bagel to be prepared.

Considering its price, it was a little disappointing, and could have used a more flavoursome sauce, but the bagel itself was perfectly chewy. The tater tots, on the other hand, were a highlight, with a crispy outside and pillowy interior. Regretfully, they do charge extra for sauces (even ketchup), yet the chipotle mayo had just the right kick to enhance the dish. To drink, I got the cherry iced matcha; it was delicious, not overpoweringly sweet as I had feared, although predictably overpriced.

If you have the money (and time) to spend, The Steamhouse is a great place for lunch, with tasty food and laid-back vibes. A takeaway bagel eaten in the nearby Wellington Square on a sunny day makes for a great picnic – the proximity to G&D’s for a supplementary sweet treat is an added bonus. But without a student discount, and especially during a shortage of the halloumi on which they rely so much, the aesthetic alone might not be enough to keep up the steam.

Image Credit: Beatrix Arnold for Cherwell

What I ate:
VLT Bagel (£8.50), Tater Tots (£3.00)
Cherry iced matcha (£4.95).

Agony Aunt:

Dear Agony Aunt,
I have a really intense crush on one of my friends who I’ve known for a very long time and I don’t know what to do. We are really close and I’m scared that telling them would ruin our friendship, as I don’t think they like me back. But I feel like I have to tell them because the truth would set me free and I can stop being delusional but I’m so scared of getting rejected that I just haven’t.



Sincerely,
Lovesick Undergrad

Dear Lovesick Undergrad
Don’t worry, even Rumi has been in your shoes: “I choose to love you in silence... / For in silence I find no rejection.”

You are in a complicated situation, but simply staying silent is likely to be more damaging to your friendship in the long term. Due to your closeness, if you choose not to say anything, your feelings for this person are likely to remain as they are now and – if they haven’t already – they may impact the way you behave around your friend and lead to unease or even resentment. As Rumi said, opening up about your feelings also opens the door for rejection, but it is better than staying in the limbo.

Phrase your confession carefully, let them know that you are not trying to force anything but that you feel like a concrete answer from them will enable you to either move your relationship in another direction or allow your friendship to continue without misunderstanding.

Lots of love,
Your Agony Aunt

SOCIETY

SPOTLIGHT

Corpus Tortoise Fair



Attracting more townspeople than any other college events, Corpus welcomes you to enjoy barbecues, games, arts, and more. Enter your tortoise in the race (watch out for the allegedly cannibalistic Foxe cheered on by the home crowd) or nominate a human ‘tortoise’ to join in the fun.

OXFORD

TINY LOVE

STORIES

Life in Punjab speaks of hurried crossings, lost homes, and stubborn hope. I found eerie echoes of these in the pinds (villages) I visited and the jameen (land) I walked on. Punjab’s fields are fertile not just with khanak (wheat), but with the memories of migrations, battles, prayers, and dreams. My time in Punjab taught me that history is more than just academics. It is sung, remembered, and lived in the present. Most importantly, it is carried in the memories of our families, and in the soil beneath our feet. Uthe meri pyaar – there is my love.

Hannah, Hertford

Wake of the locks: Baldness, and mourning my hair

Ben O’Brien humorously reflects on his experience of having male pattern baldness at a young age

You don’t think it will happen to you until it does. In fact, you don’t think of it at all, because you aren’t one of the men who are losing their hair. Then, one day, suddenly, you are. It’s the summer vac and you’re sitting on the sofa with the sun shining in. Your girlfriend comes in and says something to you about lunch. As you reply, you notice her looking at you with a frown that turns into a grimace. She points to a small area near your left temple where the sun is reflecting off your head in a way she swears it’s never done before. You tell her she doesn’t know what she’s talking about. But she comes closer and starts inspecting your head like if she was looking for lice. I think you’re losing your hair, she says. You’re going mad, you say. I’ve only just finished prelims – I’m in the prime of my life! Go and look in the mirror, she says.

From that day on, you can’t walk past a mirror without stopping and inspecting your head. You borrow your mum’s handheld mirror and hold it at different angles above your head whilst standing in front of the bathroom mirror, trying to get a direct look at that one little spot of thinning. Sometimes, during these mirror sessions, you convince yourself that it’s not true – your girlfriend made a mistake, it was just a trick of the light, or maybe it’s grown back. But in the end you always find that one angle that shows you it definitely is true. There’s no two ways about it: you are a man who is losing his hair.

Eventually you take the plunge and start googling hair loss. Quickly you find out it has a name: male pattern baldness. Instead of reassuring you, this only makes you feel worse. Male. Pattern. Baldness. You officially have a condition.

Google research leads you to a plethora of hair-loss clinics, which do transplants. You spend some time looking at these. Some of them have websites that look like they were designed by small children, with weird fonts and spelling mistakes. Others look shiny and professional, with pictures of smiling male doctors wearing lab coats and holding clipboards as they talk to hopeful-looking men without a hair on their head. You go to a part of the house where nobody can hear you, and dial the number. A woman with a kind voice picks up. You introduce yourself and blurt out, sounding way more upset than you intended, that you’re losing your hair. In her now-sympathetic voice the woman



says she’s sorry to hear that, and asks if she can take some details before talking you through possible treatments. But there is something about the word treatments that makes you recoil. Hang on a minute, you say, treatments? But I’m not ill – in fact I hardly have a problem at all – it was only a tiny spot on the side of my head, it’ll probably just grow back. You tell the woman about the boy at school who had large clumps of his hair fall out only for it all to grow back a few months later. I understand, the woman says, unable to mask her scepticism. Why don’t I just send you our brochure and you can have a think about it? You hang up.

Denial fully sets in. One evening, you go upstairs and scour the internet, looking for the perfect hairstyle that, you’ve decided, will mark a new beginning in your life. Eventually you come across a picture of Ryan Gosling. Here is Ryan, standing on the beach, his muscular torso exposed, his thick blonde-brown hair swept over in a stylish side-parting. This one is perfect, you say. You print the image, fold it up, and put it in your wallet, ready for your appointment at the hairdressers the next day.

The hairdresser welcomes you with her usual smiles and friendliness. She sits you in the chair and drapes the apron over you. You take out the photo of


Ryan and give it to her. She looks at it, smiles oddly, looks back at you, then back at the photo. You see her face falling. That’s not going to be possible, she says. She shakes her head as if to say it’s not worth protesting. No point denying it anymore.

When Michaelmas begins, you have a shaved head. Better to cut it off than to let it fall off, you tell yourself. You’re nervous about the comments, but, to your surprise, people are complimentary. A shaved head suits you, they say, you have the right head shape for it – maybe even you look better without hair than with. These all make you feel somewhat better. Still, you miss having hair.

And so the denial creeps back in. One day, you decide to start growing it back again. Maybe it wasn’t really that bad – after all, it was only a tiny spot that was pretty much invisible unless the sun was shining directly on your head. You let it grow. Three weeks later, you have what looks like patches of moss growing over your head. It’s not a good look. People start frowning. Why don’t you shave it all off again, someone says. Or why don’t you go to Turkey, somebody else says, I hear they do good hair transplants.

Continue reading at cherwell.org

Image Credit: Archie Johnston for Cherwell



Cherpse.

Oxford blind dating.

Miss Ahistorical:

First impression?

Gorgeous, intelligent, interesting.

Highlight?

When she wrote down the name of a book I recommended to her.

Most embarrassing moment?

I accidentally implied that torture didn’t exist before the 1940s.

Did it meet your expectations?

It exceeded them.

Describe the date in three words:

Interesting, vibrant, exciting.

Will there be a second date?

Yes!

Miss Womansplainer:

First impression?

Good vibes and easy to converse with.

Highlight?

We bonded over our love for gentrified goods (ie. M&S food)

Most embarrassing moment?

Realised I just womansplained half of my degree and my dissertation to her...

Did it meet your expectations?

Yes.

Describe the date in three words:

Spontaneous, relaxed, fun.

Will there be a second date?

Potentially.

[An afternoon at the Independent Cafe. Will they walk away hand in hand?]

SPORT

‘Lancer-lot’: Oxford pile on the points in shutout *American football team takes down Cambridge in Varsity embarrassment*

SEBASTIAN PAGE

There aren’t many sports in which 48–0 is a respectable scoreline. American Football is certainly not one of them. Scoring 40+ points is pretty great, but not necessarily that out of the ordinary – it happened a total of 36 times across the 2024 NFL season (including the playoffs). Comparatively, there were only two complete-game shutouts in that season, and the first one was the 241st game of the season. So when Cambridge came to University Parks, and lost by that 48–0 scoreline, hopefully it puts the trouncing into perspective for those of whom are (rightly) confused about the sport in general. Perhaps it gets worse still, in the knowledge that this marked an improvement for Oxford after only winning 48–3 last year, away at Cambridge.

The stage was well set as I strolled over with my friend from college. With an almost beating sun overhead, I had managed to convince him to come out to support another one of our college mates – he had been telling us about the season all year, so it only made sense to come out when the culmination of all his effort was dropped on our doorstep. Mere moments after settling down, and while discussing the rules, I’m trying to explain turnovers. Thankfully, a sprightly pick from Davis Kline gave my explanation a visual example. Formerly of Princeton’s ‘Football’ team, the Millsap Scholar, who’s studying Classics at Somerville College, took on the role of vice-president of the club this year.

From there, the game slipped further and further out of Cambridge’s grip so quickly that you would be forgiven for thinking that washing your hands with Vaseline was a weird Tab ritual. As Oxford recovered the ball, Micaiah Bell ran the ball into the end-zone with the very first play of the game for Oxford’s offence. Bell is the other



Millsap Scholar, having previously played at Harrison Hoya High and Harvard, before bringing his talents to the mighty Uni Parks. It’s only a slight step down from the 30,323 seater Harvard Stadium to the raked temporary seating that held only the most diehard of fans. It certainly wasn’t a step down in performance from Bell though.

Kline would continue to dominate the offensive side of the ball, racking up multiple passing and rushing touchdowns before the half was even over, but his defensive efforts were picked up by other contributors to make his life just a little bit easier. Interceptions from Sebastian Quintero Cruz and Genesis Nsenga kept the ball in Oxford hands as

“
By half-time, the score was already out of reach

much as possible, the former putting to use his experience gained from time at the London Blitz and Spanish U19 teams. Having previously been ranked as the eighth top Spanish prospect

(according to 1stLook Sports, a page dedicated to international American football players with over 24,000 followers), it’s unsurprising that Cambridge struggled against his domineering force at linebacker. With five more years of medicine before him, it feels like Cambridge have barely scratched the surface of the terrifying play they’ll face at his hands, until his eventual graduation.

By half-time, the score was already out of reach; only a blocked extra point offered any kind of resistance or consolation. As if transposed directly from their American counterparts, they celebrated their minor success with somewhat unwarranted vigour (considering how bad the scoreline was by that point), but it felt harsh to scrutinise their small win that harshly.

I wouldn’t have been able to predict it beforehand, but I had been moved to sympathy by the drastic nature of the game, and hoped that the game would be over as soon as possible so they could take a solemn bus home and forget all about it. That wasn’t the case however. In fairness to the members of the Cambridge Pythons, they took to Vincent’s Club that night to experience all of the sporting culture (which I’m not convinced they have back home) that Oxford has to offer.

The Varsity win caps off a slightly turbulent season that had seen convincing 30–0, 37–6, 35–0 and 47–2 victories over the University of Brighton, the University of Hertfordshire, and the University of Reading (the final two results), but also difficult losses 55–6 and 8–6 against Brunel. Whereas the first was a fairly comprehensive scoreline, the Lancers would have hoped to capitalise on a considerably better defensive performance.

Off the pitch though, it caps off a season of fairly remarkable moments, which included hosting the NFL Academy at the end of October, an organisation that pools some of the best international talent into the collegiate level.

Image Credit: Leif Findlay with permission for Cherwell



MATCH OF THE WEEK

Final set in college hockey coppers

After St Edmund Hall took down Trinity/Wadham/Queens 2-1, and Corpus/Lincoln/Lady Margaret Hall edged out Hertford College 1-0, the coppers final is set. Corpus/Lincoln/Lady Margaret Hall have done particularly well to make the final, having merged just this year.

Corpus/Lincoln/Lady Margaret Hall will be hoping for more strong performances from next year’s Women’s Blues captain Betrys Galloni in order to take down Teddy Hall, who have relied on good depth for the duration of their run so far.

MOST VALUABLE PLAYER

Stokes powers Pembroke to quarter final

Danny Stokes swapped from one conventional ‘gentleman’s’ sport to another as he lit up the St John’s sports ground against St Anne’s College in the cricket coppers round of sixteen last Friday.

Powered by his blue shorts, he took multiple wickets en route to their convincing win, restricting Anne’s to just 69.

He then came in with the bat and dispatched the ball to all corners of the ground. It was only sledging he struggled with, being constantly heckled by the opposition, just to get out immediately after snapping back.

HALL OF SHAME

KCNC fall just short twice in a row

History often repeats itself, and Keble College Netball Club knows this all too well. A strong Keble team made it to the women’s Cuppers final with ease, winning all four of their group stage matches. Keble went into the final against Brasenose with one eye on the trophy, but fell at the final hurdle – for the second year running. Keble also went out in the semifinals in 2023, making this wait for silverware a little more excruciating. KCNC offered: “the quality of netball was stellar, but we had to keep up the trend from last year and let the other team prevail.”

SHOE THE TABS

Crusaders defeated in battle that rivals the siege of Antioch

An incredible choke by Cambridge’s so-called ‘Crusaders’ on home turf in the 2nd XI T20 varsity match on the 19th May gifted Oxford’s Authentics victory by one run in a thrilling game.

Cambridge elected to bowl first; the Tic’s top scorer was Nathan Schofield, who piled on a classy 39 off 27, but Tom Douglas was hardly far behind with his 37 off 28. But when it came time for Oxford to bowl, it all seemed over. Cambridge needed just 15 to win off of the last 12 balls, with all of seven wickets in hand. Up stepped Will Marriage and Gaurav Kocher who picked up three wickets and a run out between them, for just 13 runs, to take victory.

UPCOMING

Tennis

28th and 29th June
@Cambridge

Captains: Brendan Emmanuel and Anna Jones

Netball

1st June
@Worcester Courts
Mixed Cuppers

Cricket (50 Over)

22nd June
@Cambridge
Captains: Justin Clarke and Elodie Harbourne

Going to watch a Varsity or Cuppers match?

Email sportcherwell@gmail.com to write up a match report



Coffee break with Cherwell



What Is This by Julian Xiao

In this themed American crossword, clues to themed answers are in italics.

Across:

- 1) The D of DJ
5) Opposite of o'er
10) Fool
13) Dark clouds, perhaps
14) Domed homes
16) Patch things up, say
17) *Heaven*
19) One and the same?
20) "That was flawless!"
21) Harder to come by
23) *Mum*
27) Value
30) One way to face a challenge
31) "Yellow Submarine" singer
32) Potato container, usually
33) Ditch
36) Puffin or guillemot, e.g.
37) *Cheese*
40) See 38-Down

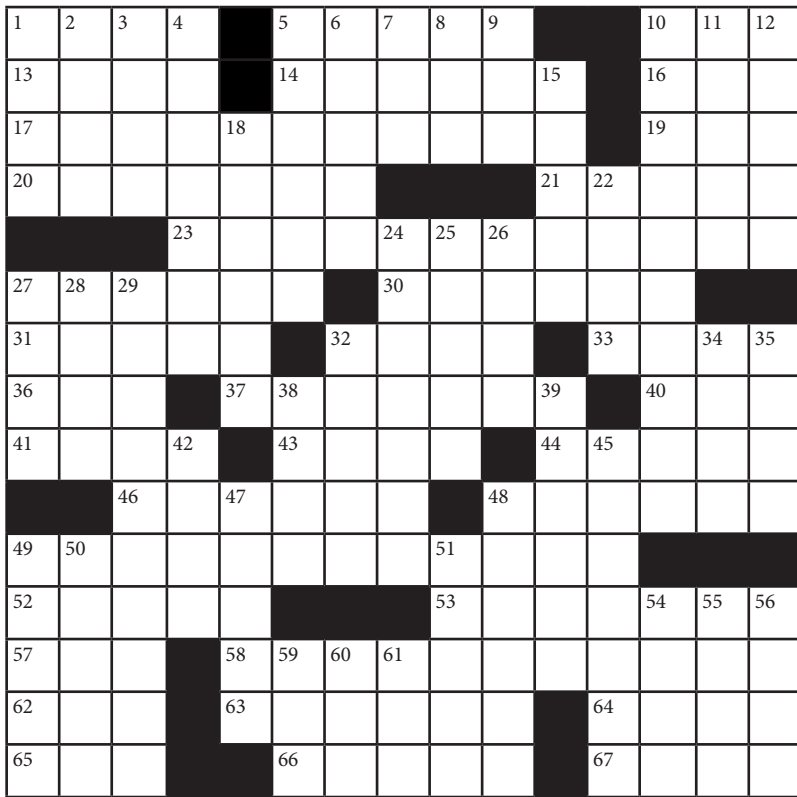
- 41) Prefix sometimes spelled with an umlaut
43) Some Grecian art pieces
44) First artist to win an Oscar for a James Bond theme
46) Whip follower
48) Puts forth
49) *Now*
52) Quick fads
53) Goes by, as time
57) Computer science pioneer
58) *Some*
62) 2022 movie with the song "Naatu Naatu"
63) "Just like I said, right?"
64) Emerald Isle, to native speakers
65) It might be saturated
66) Arcade machine insert
67) Ointment

Down:

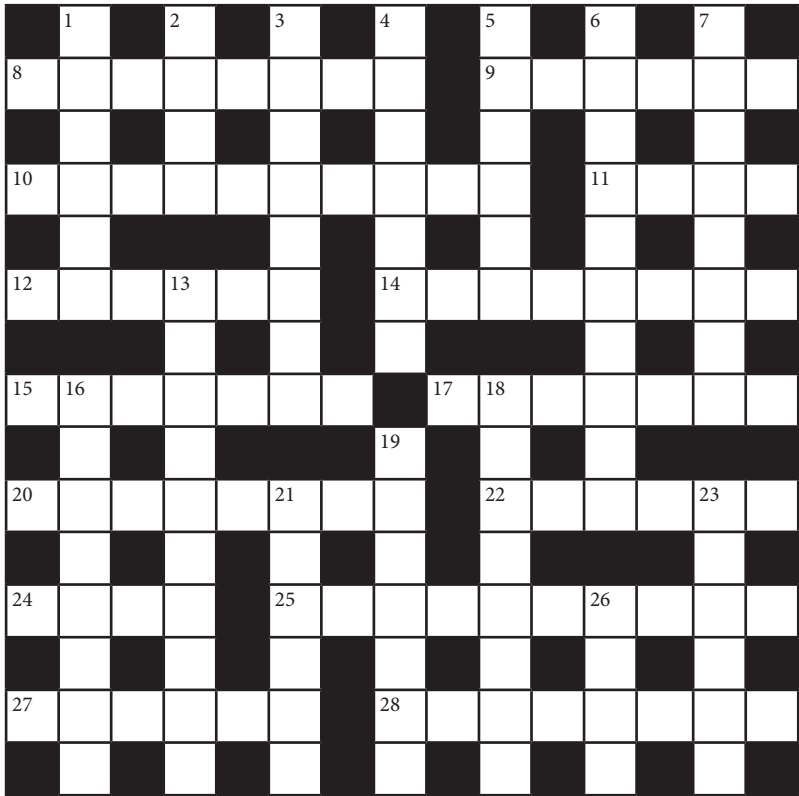
- 1) Up for it
2) "If you ask me, ..." in texts
3) Astin or Bean of "The Lord of the Rings"
4) Tallest structure in the Western Hemisphere
5) Lecture time students often complain about
6) Discharge from the body
7) In the style of, in cooking
8) Rocky hill
9) Sexy
10) One whose research involves a lot of looking up?
11) Underground network
12) A daring performer may swallow one
15) Show off on a guitar

- 18) Do unto ____
22) No-show
24) People from Ohio
25) Band aids
26) Ceremonial Māori dance
27) Red-haired Biblical figure
28) Incomplete Wikipedia article
29) Deconstructed
32) Full-bodied French wine
34) There's plenty of it in the sea
35) They're on your face and can be sharp
38) With 40-Across, Marisa Tomei's role in Spider-Man movies
39) Worker with duties?
42) Put on a scale
45) Sites inaccessible to surfers
47) Problem sheet

- counterpart
48) Fitting first name for a political commentator?
49) Canary ____
50) Beast slain by Hercules
51) Little giggle
54) Official sect of Islam in Iran
55) Superior of a viscount
56) Like most four-year subjects
59) "____ to worry!"
60) Green owl mascot
61) Sound of disapproval



Cryptic Crossword by Alessandra Edwards



Across:

- 8) List of tasks you must complete thoroughly before becoming wealthy (4-2-2)
9) Alternatively, run out amidst Human Resources fright (6)
10) Perhaps that's enough to give to previous partner at the start? (3, 7)
11) Pick bit of lettuce out of smooth vomit (4)
12) Means to stick together during travel (cross-country) (6)
14) Critic reported a horse? (8)

- 15) An average established to be the most cruel (7)
17) Witters about tornado (7)
20) Germany overturned foul throw leading to a comeback (8)
22) Answer during older criminal's trial (6)
24) Show off back of outfit (4)
25) I'mma see you later, shortly will be flawless (10)
27) Brought out and educated at shed (6)
28) To intrude, get right

into carriage after evacuating Edmonton (8)

Down:

- 1) Stand for Duke and Earl associated with posh school from the south (6)
2) Struggling with huge? Stick with it! (4)
3) Soon return to remix song from nine angles (8)
4) Firm friends (7)
5) Weep about that guy (first ex) being happy (6) (10)
6) Three in Madrid made the cut but entered without permission (6)
7) "Stable" Tory on Greek

- island (10)
13) Reportedly returned that woman to position (6, 4)
16) Pretty thing you might get on Halloween? (3, 5)
18) Bird with two dicks (8)
19) Compartment displays cautionary signal after gutting crash (7)
21) You and I vow to steal Romeo's nut (6)
23) Opposed to Computer Science silliness (6)
26) Lube up new England men's player (4)

Track and Field by Zoë McGuire

AGENT

AX

BEDDING

BLACKBERRIES

BLUEBOTTLE

EASTERN

EAT

ELEMENTS

ENTERPRISE

EYEBALLED

GORDON BROWN

GREEN CARD

JAIL

LUCK

PINK PANTHER

REAYER

REDHEAD

SKIING

TOSSED

VACCINATED

VACUUM

VENIAL

YAM

YASSIFIED

YELLOW SUBMARINE

Right on Cue

Talking Heads

--

--

Evolution

Double Trouble

--

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Want to contribute to the Puzzles section? Cherwell will accept open submissions for variety word puzzles. We are looking for well-crafted word puzzles with creative rules. To learn more, or to submit a puzzle, email puzzlescherwell@gmail.com

Week 3 Answers: Cryptic Crossword:

ACROSS: 7) Parent, 8) Cinnamon, 9) Devotion, 10) Evens, 11) Cul-de-sac, 12) Pop-ups, 13) Archaeology, 17) Embalm, 20) Talented, 22) Satin, 23) On silent, 24) Tinnitus, 25) In sync.
DOWN: 1) Careful, 2) Beholder, 3) Ethics, 4) Interpol, 5) Make up, 6) Gossip, 8) Conscientious, 14) Humanity, 15) Gentlest, 16) Leaning, 18) Mosaic, 19) Acting, 21) Lose it.

Cryptic Ingredients:

ACROSS: 1) Tomato sauce, 7) Bacon, 8) Ouija, 9) Et al., 11) Cheese, 13) Facade, 16) Menu, 20) Olive, 21) Dough, 22) Seismometer.
DOWN: 1) Table, 2) Mocha, 3) Tuna, 4) Sloth, 5) Unite, 6) Erase, 10) Tea, 11) Cue, 12) Sin, 13) Floss, 14) Chili, 15) Dream, 17) Erupt, 18) Usher, 19) Adam
PIZZA

Codeword: Letters representing each number from 1-26:

1=M, 2=D, 3=C, 4=E, 5=A, 6=L, 7=G, 8=F, 9=V, 10=H, 11=K, 12=T, 13=S, 14=X, 15=J, 16=W, 17=Q, 18=I, 19=P, 20=N, 21=U, 22=B, 23=R, 24=Z, 25=O, 26=Y

Solve our weekly mini crosswords on cherwell.org
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