



Cherwell

Emotional baggage: the plight of vacation storage

Ellie Yau reports.

For many Oxford students, the stress of their degree does not end with the end of term. Instead, academic pressure is replaced by a nightmarish rush to pack up and stuff every single one of their possessions into boxes, suitcases and "whatever containers one can get their hands on."

Of the 31 undergraduate colleges that responded to *Cherwell's* FOIs, 30 had some sort of designated storage scheme, while one college did not offer any storage. However, this seeming uniformity masks the fact that vacation storage policies can vary significantly between colleges. Some colleges claim to offer "unlimited storage" while others impose strict limits and only accept certain containers.

While inadequate storage provisions tend to affect international students and those with access requirements the most, it seems that dissatisfaction is more widespread. In a *Cherwell* Instagram poll with 300 respondents, 64% answered that they were unsatisfied with vacation storage.

Furthermore, while 56% of people voted that colleges delivered on promised vacation storage, one survey respondent pointed out that "technically, our college does deliver on promises - it's just that they don't promise enough."

Storage for International students

Unsurprisingly, international students were shown to receive significant priority in storage. Out of

the 30 colleges that offer storage, 18 of them only offer it to international students, while the remaining 12 give them priority. However, this privilege doesn't mean that international students consistently have enough space for all their items, or feel that the extra need of international students is respected as much as

colleges claim.

One international student praised the size and relatively close location of their college's storage space but remarked that they feel the college no longer prioritises international students as they promise in the student handbook. They shared that many students have struggled as the

spaces fill up very quickly, and often it's very difficult to fit everything in, which can become very distressing especially when it is the only way for some students to keep items given flight baggage weight restrictions. Another international student told *Cherwell* that they "shared panic attacks last term", citing that "if we

don't get storage, we don't have a plan B."

Limiting storage to just international students, however, can cause its own issues. A student at a college that doesn't offer storage to Home students expressed her discontent to *Cherwell*.

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Image credit: James Morrell and Anuj Mishra

Oxford threatens disaffiliation from institutions financing fossil fuels

Roy Shinar Cohen reports.

A group of 21 UK universities stated, in a joint statement released on 15 February, that they would cut ties with their financial providers unless they stopped financing new fossil fuel projects. The University of Cambridge is leading the coalition, which includes the University of Oxford; collectively, they manage over £5 billion. Some of the other universities taking part include Edinburgh, Leeds, St. Andrews, University College London (UCL), and the London School of Economics (LSE). This is the most substantial financial move British universities have made to date in the fight for green financing.

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Student Welfare and Support Service data show increase in reported sexual assault

Roy Shinar Cohen reports.

The Student Welfare and Support Service (SWSS) published its annual reports for 2022-2023 on 19 February, 2024. The report in-

cludes assessments of Counselling, Disability Advisory, Sexual Harassment and Violence Support, and Peer Support services. The SWSS provides welfare services to Oxford students and works with the colleges' welfare

teams as well as student volunteers. Their services include counselling as well as the provision of support, advice, and training.

The 2022-2023 Counselling Service report details that 3228 students, or

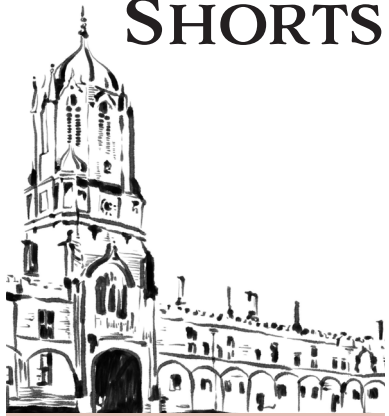
12.4% of the Oxford student body, received SWSS counselling (a decrease of 1.4% from the previous year). A third of the students seeking counselling met a professional within five working days and eight out of ten students

secured a meeting within 15 working days. The largest issue students dealt with was anxiety (31.1% of reports), followed by depression (17.5%) and identity (10.8%) respectively.

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NEWS SHORTS



Oxford colleges hold Pancake Races

Every year, Shrove Tuesday sees several Oxford colleges partake in the tradition of Pancake races. Colleges that are known for holding this event include Oriel and Hertford. Hertford's website advises students on which type of pan is suitable: "woks offer a substantial aerodynamic disadvantage in this sport."

The regulations for this "sport" were even codified by Principal Richard Newton in 1720, which stipulated that betting, tripping and throwing the pancake into the face of one's opponent was forbidden.

Football match abandoned after "mass brawl" breaks out in 97th minute

A local football match was abandoned after a mass brawl broke out 97 minutes in. East Oxford FC was down 2-1 against Bletchington FC when the violence occurred. Both teams are in Division Two of the Oxfordshire Senior League, and are now co-operating with the Oxfordshire FA to get down to the bottom of the incident. No police were required to quell the brawl.

Oxford and Cambridge rowing twins to face off in Boat Race for first time

Twin sisters, Catherine and Gemma King, 24, are set to compete against each other in the 2024 Boat Race. The pair have been rowing on the same team since they were 12, but will now compete for the opposite teams. Catherine is studying cardiovascular science at Oxford, while Gemma studies stem cell biology at Cambridge.

Meet the candidates: Oxford Union town hall

Cherwell sat down with the three candidates hoping to become Union President in Michaelmas 2025. They discussed their qualifications, reasons for running, and exciting visions for the Union's future.

1. Israr

Briefly introduce yourself: My name is Israr Khan. I'm a third year DPhil Law student and I'm currently at Regent's Park College.

Tell us about your experience with the Union: I have been in the Union now for quite a few terms and I have held multiple offices within that. I was on the graduate officer training committee and was Chief of Staff. I grew up on the borders of Pakistan and Afghanistan and I watched the Union debates growing up. Spending three terms within the Union I realised there's a lot that can be changed. A lot of petty politics instead of long term vision and long term inspiration for what the Union should be about.

Highlight a few points from your manifesto: To make the Union relevant again. It should be about quality rather than quantity of events. I want to elevate the discourse that happens within the Union. We get some of the top speakers coming out and all we ask is 'How's your life?'. I want to reform slates – slate culture eliminates access to the Union. And I also want to bring more graduate representation.

What long term issues do you think face the Union and how would you try to fix them? Long Term finances. I already worked on this in the past – I created a finance investment group to get the Union to help shape its finances.

If you could invite any three speakers, who would they be? Elon Musk. MBS (Mohammed bin Salman). And Greta [Thunberg].

What's one particular debate you would like to see? Something on the relationship between the East and the West, like 'This House believes we should look to China for leadership.'

2. Chris

Briefly introduce yourself: I'm Chris Collins, fourth-year classicist at Corpus Christi.

Tell us about your experience in the Union: I've had the pleasure of doing some of the most fun and also some of the most boring jobs. I'm Secretary this term and that means I'm in charge of fun. You've heard of Big Pharma. You've heard of Big Tobacco. I run Big Fun. But I've also [served as] Returning Officer, so I oversaw the disciplinary complaints processes. And so I've seen the Union both at its best but also at its worst.

Highlight a few points from your manifesto: I'm delighted to have arranged and overseen more events, invited more speakers, and delivered more reforms than any other presidential candidate. This election is the

first election without social media campaigns – and I did that. Because I think the culture around our elections annoys people. [I also want] more voices that represent the Union, both from an access perspective but also simply things like postgraduate voices.

What long term issues do you think face the Union and how would you try to fix them? The way that we govern ourselves. As Returning Officer I'm well-placed to fix [our internal processes]. I'm [also] a proud member of the access committee. I think having a bottom-up approach of actually listening to people and communities who feel the Union may not be as welcoming to them as it should be is the most important thing to do.

If you could invite any three speakers, who would they be? We think about what members want to see, what they want to come to. I think more STEM speakers. More collaborations with political and cultural societies around Oxford.

What's one particular debate you would like to see? I'm looking forward to our traditional annual debate on 'This House has no confidence in His Majesty's government.'

3. Ebrahim

Briefly introduce yourself: I'm Ebrahim. A third year law student at Teddy Hall.

Tell us about your experience

within the Union: I'm the librarian of the Union. I helped raise 500,000£ through the membership drive. I served as an officer longer than any other candidate. I've negotiated more deals for the Union. I've fought to make the Union more accessible.

Highlight a few points from your manifesto: It sounds boring, but the first thing is the Rules Reform Committee. I think it's necessary in addressing the dissatisfaction of members. This will focus on Reform of Rule 33 – relating to how elections are run. I do hope that members will have a lot more trust in our elections.

What long term issues do you think face the Union and how would you try to fix them? [Access and] the access scholarship programme. This will be, very simply, a programme that will allow the Union to award scholarships in the form of a membership to people from all walks of life.

If you could invite any three speakers, who would they be? Cillian Murphy, Amal Clooney, and Mehdi Hasan.

What's one particular debate you would like to see? Given the current events in Gaza, I think the platform we have means we have a responsibility to raise awareness of what is going on there.

Voting will take place on Friday, 1st March.

New boutique hotel set to open on Broad Street

Joel Jackson Buckley reports.

The Store, a new, high-class modern hotel, is set to open in May on Broad Street beside Waterstones. With construction reaching an end – after having blocked the corner of Broad Street opposite Balliol College for the past few years – details of the establishment have finally been released.

The 54,000 square-foot building will hold 101 rooms and offer various luxury experiences. Amenities

are set to include a rooftop cocktail bar with outdoor terrace offering city views, a full spa, and an "untraditionally British" restaurant, that will also be open to non-guests. Rooms at The Store will start at £285 a night.

Formerly the city's oldest department store, Boswells of Oxford, had to close in 2020 after nearly 300 years of operation since its establishment in 1738. Its renovation into a modern hotel has been following the trend of the gentrification of city-centre businesses that failed

during lockdown. Some Oxford locals were upset with the change – speaking to *Cherwell* one local stated: "It's sad because Boswells was independent and family run – and a great shop".

Nevertheless, some have argued that The Store will be a welcome addition to Oxford. Most four and five-star hotels sit on the city outskirts, with expensive exceptions, such as The Randolph. The decoration of the hotel will also pay homage to its roots: art and pictures of the department will be a key theme

in many rooms and sections of the hotel.

There are also questions concerning how the hotel will impact the "no traffic" zone on Broad Street and its designation as a walking street, which has been expanded in recent months and is hosting many seasonal markets throughout the year. Although this has not been overtly addressed by The Store, the proximity of the hotel to bus stations and taxi ranks at the end of St Giles Street could nevertheless be a cause for concern.

An Oxford student told *Cherwell*: "it will be nice to have a new hotel that's very central and actually nice. My parents, as visitors, have been unhappy with central hotels in the past." However, speaking with The Business Times, the general manager, Simon Drake, stated: "it's not just parents of students. There's a huge leisure business." He presents the tourism aspect as a key target of the establishment, noting: "So much history and heritage will appeal to Americans, who so far account for the biggest proportion of bookings."

With the opening just a few months away, it will be during the coming Trinity term when we will see the impact the establishment has on students, locals, and tourists that make up the signature population of Oxford's city centre.

Image Credit: Jaggery via Wikimedia Commons CC-BY-SA-2.0



St Peter's Boat Club officially breaks world record

Charlotte Dawson reports.

St Peter's Boat Club have received confirmation that they successfully broke the World Record for the Longest Continuous Row, after rowing for 10 consecutive days on a single rowing machine. The previous record of seven days had been set by Hull University Boat Club in 2019.

Over 70 people participated, handing over the handle of the rowing machine without ever letting the flywheel stop spinning.

Shifts would last between half an hour and two hours – some rowers, completing multiple shifts, rowed up to 12.5 hours over the course of the event. Those who volunteered, from students to the college master Judith Buchanan, covered 2,620,927 metres in those 240 hours. For the rowers reading this article, the average split was of 2:44.8/500m.

"Graveyard shifts" in the middle of the night proved to be quite different from those in the middle of the day when the Junior Common Room – the erg's loca-

tion during the event – filled up. Rowers were kept entertained as films and music played at all times. The challenge even survived a BOP night, as the erg was carefully safeguarded in the corner of the room.

The former rowing Olympic umpire Judith Packer, who had started rowing during her studies at St Peter's, also hopped on a video call to encourage the rowers to pursue their efforts. To add to the fun, rowers were dared by donors to wear funny outfits. Notable mentions are the morph suit

and the prison jumpsuit.

The team started a GoFundMe, which received 102 donations, accounting for a total of £4,345. 70% of this revenue will go towards the Boat Club, to elevate coaching standards and subsidise costs for training camps and races. The remaining 30% will go towards St Peter's College Access and Outreach programme, which is aimed at encouraging students from underrepresented backgrounds to consider applying to Oxford.

Image Credit: Edmund Blok



Student Welfare and Support Service data show increase in reported sexual assault

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According to the Sexual Harassment and Violence report, the service received referrals from 170 students and provided support to 130 (a slight decrease from the previous year). All inquiring students got an appointment within two working days, and met a specialist caseworker within 9.5 working days, on average. Serious sexual crimes (a term encompassing rape, sexual violence, sexual assault, sexual harassment, and stalking) accounted for over 70% of the Service's casework: 15% of the reports involved raped, 17% sexual violence, and 40% sexual assault.

Furthermore, nearly half of the reported perpetrators involved in the cases are unconnected to the University, and 17% of them happened before the student enrolled at Oxford. However, 38% were related to the University, and some cases even involved staff members (4%). In most cases – nearly 60% – victims chose not to report their experience to the police (a decrease of 10% compared to the prior year). However, 23% of service users considered making a formal complaint, and 6%

involved the police. Finally, 85% of users were females, 54% were undergraduate students, and 65% were white – all of which are disproportionately high numbers compared to the general student population.

The University told *Cherwell*: "While Oxford's figures are in line with the wider sector, we are not complacent. Oxford takes sexual violence or harassment extremely seriously and expects all members of the University to behave appropriately at all times.

"Our annual campaign, 'Oxford Against Sexual Violence', reflects the University's strong condemnation of sexual violence or harassment of any kind, and signposts students to the dedicated services and support available to them, including the University's Sexual Harassment and Violence Support Service which provides free, confidential support and advice."

Finally, according to the Disability Advisory Service report, approximately a third of the student body have a registered disability (7350 people). In the past year, there has been an increase of 1.2% in students who registered a disability, and the two most common types of disabilities students struggle with are mental health conditions and learning difficulties. More than half of the students with registered disabilities are female undergraduates.

Image Credit: HarshLight/CC BY 2.0 via Flickr

City Council changes provisions for homeless in Oxford

Charlotte Dawson reports.

Oxford City Council is relaunching its Somewhere Safe to Stay service, which provides short-term accommodation for people experiencing – or at risk of experiencing – rough sleeping. It aims to provide shelter for people while their needs are assessed to link them with the support they need.

Three organisations will cooperate to set up the new Somewhere Safe to Stay service; Homeless Oxfordshire, St Mungo's and Connection Support. From April, the central assessment hub provided by St Mungo's will be relocated from Floyds Row to Homeless Oxfordshire's O'Hanlon House. Home-

£394,000 a year for the council.

Councillor Linda Smith has said: "Our approach to helping people experiencing rough sleeping off the streets has not changed. Somewhere Safe to Stay will continue to offer intensive support and a roof over people's heads while we move them into more stable housing as quickly as possible. Nobody should have to sleep rough in Oxfordshire."

In 2022, according to the Kerslake Commission, 27 people were experiencing rough sleeping in Oxford, up by 13% from 2021. According to the Gatehouse charity, the county regularly comes up as one of the top five areas in the UK for the number of rough sleepers as a proportion of the local population. Moreover, around half a



less Oxfordshire will provide eight new rooms in the city centre with 24-hour staffing for those with "high support needs." Another 15 rooms will be provided in shared housing around Oxford for those who need less support. For them, help will be provided by St Mungo's and Connection Support.

The Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) is aiding the scheme and is contributing £59,000 to improve infrastructure at O'Hanlon House. The closure of the Floyds Row homeless shelter in April, which Somewhere Safe to Stay is replacing, will allow savings of

dozen homeless individuals die on the streets every winter in Oxford.

Floyds Row is being closed as DLUHC no longer funds homeless projects with shared sleeping spaces. Floyds Row had opened in January 2020 and could initially deploy up to 56 beds – more than twice as many as the new project. During the pandemic, shared sleeping spaces made it impossible for people to practise social distancing. To prevent disruption to services if a similar event occurred, the DLUHC only supports self-contained accommodation.

Image Credit: Lina Kivaka/CC via Pexels

CROSS CAMPUS



Cardiff Rugby team 'Wife Beater' controversy

Cardiff University Psychology Rugby Team has allegedly been banned from the SU after members dressed as "Wife Beaters" during a Valentine's day social.

Players were photographed wearing white sleeveless vests and drinking Stella Artois; a stereotype of men who abuse their spouses. When approached for comment, the Rugby club told the Tab that "the issue has been dealt with," although the Cardiff SU have since confirmed that the investigation is ongoing.

Sydney University students sick from infected library water

Low level traces of legionella bacteria, which causes a pneumonia-type illness, was found in a Sydney University library, after three people who had been in and around that area of campus began to develop symptoms. The University has begun cleaning all cooling towers on campus and told students to monitor developing symptoms of the disease, especially those who are immunocompromised.

Nearly 3 in 5 of Imperial students awarded Firsts in 2021/22

Imperial College London has once again emerged as the higher education institution awarding the highest share of first class degrees – 55% of students in 2022 received such classification. These latest figures exceed the Russell Group average by over 20 percentage points.

The rampant grade inflation follows Imperial's decision in 2021 to provide a "safety net," with all departments guaranteeing at least an equal proportion of firsts would be awarded following the resumption of in-person teaching after the pandemic.

Oxford expert suggests malaria could be eradicated within a decade

Emily Henson reports.

An Oxford academic has predicted the possibility of eradicating malaria in the next ten years thanks to developments in vaccinations.

Director of the Jenner Institute, Adrian Hill, has recently created a £3-a-dose vaccine that has been recommended for use by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and he claims, with the adequate funding, it could end the disease.

Speaking at the American Association for the Advancement of Science annual meeting, Prof Hill stated: "Eradication of malaria could be feasible in 10 years." His hopes are in relation to the two vaccines currently approved for use, RTS,S and the Oxford-developed R21, both of which were approved in the last three years.

Previously, hopes have been set for the disease to be eradicated by 2050 –the vaccine development and implementation, however, drastically changed the prospect. Prof Hill stated: "A lot is happening, it's really exciting. I've been in this field for 35 years and it's never

been like this before."

RTS,S was rolled out across Cameroon last month in the first routine malaria vaccine programme. Scientists hope that the cheaper R21 vaccine will allow for mass inoculation

The spread of vaccination is dependent on funding. Prof Hill has estimated that around \$20 million would be needed to eradicate malaria in the next four years - over five times the current spending. However, he is optimistic about the results that can be achieved with current resources: "Today there is \$4bn - \$5bn a year being spent on malaria control with relatively old interventions (bed nets, insecticides etc). Using the same money now with vaccine supply will be a large step towards malaria elimination and eradication."

Currently, there are around 600,000 malaria deaths a year, primarily concentrated in Sub-Saharan Africa. Although plans are in place to vaccinate around 35 million people this year, increasing the scale of inoculation is vastly dependent on funding. Mary Hamel, an expert in malaria at WHO said: "I do agree absolutely that more commitment and funding is needed for us to reach the goal of eradication."

Image Credit: Spencerbdavis via Wikimedia Commons CC-BY-4.0

across the affected nations. The Serum Institute of India already has capacity to produce 100 million R21 vaccines a year with plans to double production by 2025.



Oxford threatens disaffiliation from institutions financing fossil fuels

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In recent years, however, some universities have taken smaller steps such as investments aimed at renewables.

The universities' action is an escalation in their fight against climate change. Last year "Make My Money Matter" claimed that dozens of UK universities continue to work with fossil fuel-funding institutions, even though they had committed to divesting from fossil fuels. The latest development could, however, be a first step toward aligning their actions with their statements. The *Financial Times* quoted Cambridge's chief financial officer, Anthony Odgers, saying "We care about people using our money [to finance fossil fuels]. We

want to have a real-world impact" since "building new infrastructure such as coal and gas-fired plants and pipelines locks in demand for fossil fuels for decades."

The universities' demands align with the International Energy Agency's (IEA) plan to lower emissions to net zero by 2050. However, an analysis by "Reclaim Finance" found that among the top 100 banks globally, only the French La Banque Postale would meet the coalition's demands. Moreover, none of the world's top 100 asset managers appear to be meeting the universities' demands; it would therefore be quite challenging for the universities to find competent financial institutions that meet their requirements. The lack of financial institutions meeting the IEA's guidelines could also pose a major hurdle for the general implementation of their plan for net zero emissions by 2050.

According to a statement by the University of Edinburgh, the universities submitted a Request for Proposals (REP), which is a document that outlines and describes a project and asks for bids from qualified service providers to complete it. Financial institutions, including banks and asset managers, will have until April 8th to respond to the REP. The universities will review and evaluate these proposals but are not required to further engage with them. The University of Edinburgh emphasised that there is "a sector-wide demand for net zero aligned banking products. This collaborative approach sends a powerful message to banks and asset managers and incentivises them to prioritise products that support the net-zero transition."

Image Credit: Daniel Stick



"Godfather of AI" gives lecture on AI and its risks at the Sheldonian Theatre

Roy Shinar Cohen reports.

Geoffrey Hinton CC, FRS, FRSC, a Canadian-British computer scientist and cognitive psychologist known as the "Godfather of AI," gave the annual Romanes lecture entitled on 19 February. The lecture was titled "Will Digital Intelligence Replace Biological Intelligence?"

Hinton made headlines in May 2023 when he quit Google so he could speak freely about the risks of AI. In a New York Times interview at the time, he said he regretted how advanced AI had become and his role in that development. He began the Romanes lecture by declaring it would be a "genuine public lecture" that would explain the basics of AI, why he thinks it "understands," and the dangers it presents.

Hinton, a career academic, led two substantial developments of AI, first in 1985 and later in 2012. This latter research allowed the development of Large Language Models (LLMs) such as ChatGPT. During his lecture, Hinton discussed both near-term and long-term risks posed by AI.

According to him, short-term risks include deep fakes, substantial job losses, large-scale surveillance, and autonomous weapons. He noted that the United States is planning for half of its military to be 'robot soldiers' by 2030.

Still, for Hinton, the more serious risks are existential. According to him, "If a digital super-intelligence ever wanted to take control it is unlikely that we could stop it." In particular, he warned that the ability for AI to create sub-goals for itself to increase its own efficiency would inevitably result in a rise in the power of AI.

In the past, Hinton said that the best hope against the risks AI poses is a combined effort by leading scientists to control the technology. He also believes that countries and companies should pause the development and promotion of AI until safety measures are agreed upon and implemented.

The University of Oxford has an important role in this endeavour through the work of the Institute for Ethics in AI and the Future of Humanity Institute.

It was also recently announced that the University will share

in an £80 million investment to create one of 9 'hubs' across the UK aimed to propel the country towards being a global centre for AI. The Oxford hub is set to explore fundamental questions about AI technology such as

how it can be implemented safely and how to improve algorithmic efficiency. Alongside the Oxford Centre, there will be eight other hubs opening at universities including Edinburgh, UCL, Warwick and Bristol.

The Romanes Lecture is the official University annual public lecture. The speaker is invited by the Vice-Chancellor. The lecture was created in 1891, and the first lecture was given in 1892 by William Gladstone.

Analysis: The Humanity in AI

Alicia Martínez Patiño comments.

As artificial intelligence develops, it is inevitable that its risks will become the centre of public debate. None of us want to experience generalised unemployment, and we also don't want to inhabit an online world where fraud is virtually inescapable. But these dangers have always been discussed in the future tense. We think it is all contingent on one thing: to replace us, computers must surely get to our level in the first place. Professor Hinton's lecture reminds us of the bitter truth: we're really not as great as we think. AI can not only catch up to us eventually, but it is closer than we ever thought.

As Professor Hinton mentions, some have opted to discredit AI by outright denying its intelligence: a "glorified auto-complete" that mere-

ly recognises statistical regularities. On this view, AI is simply struggling to make sense of what humans have already written on any given subject. And this seems to be a popular opinion. With the rise of AI art generators, social media has become full of crash-courses on identifying computer-made pieces. From one-too-many fingers to freakishly high resolution, we are collectively grasping at anything which will allow us to disregard AI. But our attempt to 'catch AI out' only proves that we know it's got the potential to match us.

In any case, our attempts are doomed: AI is decidedly not auto-complete or pure statistical analysis. Much like the human brain, Professor Hinton argues, AI does not simply store patterns of words. It attempts to understand words as sym-

bols, identifying the "semantic features" determining their meaning. AI is, in the end, not unlike human children, fresh out of the womb and desperately trying to understand the funky sounds everyone keeps making at them. Humans have always been attached to language as what makes us special, exploiting it to distinguish ourselves from other species with an air of superiority. But AI threatens to develop these same linguistic capabilities – and, as Professor Hinton ventures to say, perhaps at a higher level. Technology not only has the potential to compromise our economy and justice, but now also to make us question what makes us human in the first place.



Emotional baggage: The difficulties of vacation storage

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She shared that on occasion, she had to “struggle across London with all [her] possessions because it’s impossible for [her] to be picked up in time for when college want the room.” She also told *Cherwell*: “I think colleges need to be more considerate about their students’ home situations. Not all of us have parents who are able to drive over to Oxford, pick our stuff up and drive back home again on a weekend.”

Several colleges which typically only offer storage to international students, such as Corpus Christi, endeavour to support Home students by granting special approval to students living far away. For example, Lincoln includes students residing on islands off the UK coastline in their storage allowances, and Corpus Christi allows storage for students living 100 or more miles away; many colleges also have appeal procedures by which Home students under exceptional circumstances can apply for storage.

term, and that while the college maintained a partnership with an external company, there was still a significant amount of stress sorting it out – especially since they were new to the country. An international student from Harris Manchester also mentioned that in Michaelmas term, the college

“Not all of us have parents who are able to drive over to Oxford, pick our stuff up and drive back home again on a weekend.”

announced last-minute that they wanted suitcases to go into storage the night before leaving college, which caused issues for people who could not leave essentials such as bedding in storage and subsequently faced problems with where to leave them over the vacation.

Furthermore, the inflexibility of storage systems has also proved to be a prevalent issue. For example,

Cherwell about their experience coming back to College on a Friday before term and needing to wait an entire weekend to retrieve their items because they narrowly missed the allotted time that their accommodation’s storage was open.

St John’s College issued a response to these claims: “Student storage is operated by the Accommodation team as a whole to ensure resilience in service. The College’s new Accommodation Manager observed the process either side of the Christmas vacation and will be reviewing how the system can be further enhanced for home and international students going forward.”

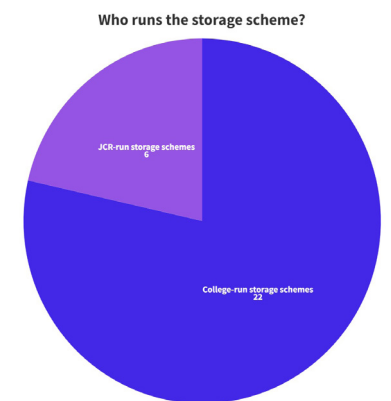
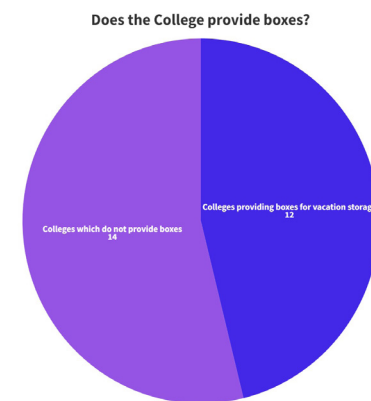
Another issue is the availability of storage containers for students. Of the colleges providing on-site storage, twelve offer containers for storage either directly or through

“Students from these colleges also reported a general overall satisfaction with the JCR-run system.”

a JCR-led ordering system; while this is generally regarded as very helpful, the consequences of this system have in certain cases led to mixed reactions. In Wadham and Lady Margaret Hall, only college-designated boxes are allowed to be stored. While these are provided free of charge to students at LMH, one Wadham student told *Cherwell* that they had to pay for the paper boxes they used, incurring extra charges even for international students where storage is necessary. They further pointed out that the boxes provided were particularly inconvenient to carry up and down staircases compared to suitcases or bags.

In other colleges such as Worcester, Corpus Christi and St. Hugh’s, particularly where storage is only offered to international students, the international officer budgets for the ordering of boxes

a number of students from St John’s College expressed their frustrations over the inefficiency of their storage system, with only one person in charge of opening and closing the storage spaces at strictly allotted times that are often not friendly to students’ respective situations. One student told



so that students do not have to pay. However, one international officer told *Cherwell* that this can often be very challenging given budget constraints: “Ten plastic boxes for £60 is definitely not enough for all international students, but it’s all my budget can allow for.”

For colleges with a clearly stated policy of discarding items left in storage spaces should they fail to be removed, the unforgiving nature of these policies in the face of personal circumstances can also prove devastating for students. One rusticated student told *Cherwell* that they had left items in their storage during rustication, only to have all of their items thrown out by the time they returned.

Six colleges, including New, Worcester and Brasenose, told *Cherwell* their vacation storage system is managed by the JCR

“There is no easy fix to vacation storage problems, especially with the huge variation of college-dependent factors involved.”

rather than by central college administration. An international student from Corpus Christi, which is run under such an initiative, told *Cherwell* that an obvious issue in the system was how reliant it could be on the quality of their JCR international officer: “It requires initiative on

the international officer’s part, and I have heard horror stories of stress that some of the past officers have not been as effective [as our

“A centralised university requirement for colleges to have storage allowance policies, or ways to assist with student storage, could possibly alleviate some of the burden on students.”

current one].” However, students from these colleges also reported a general overall satisfaction with the JCR-run system.

Alternatives and solutions

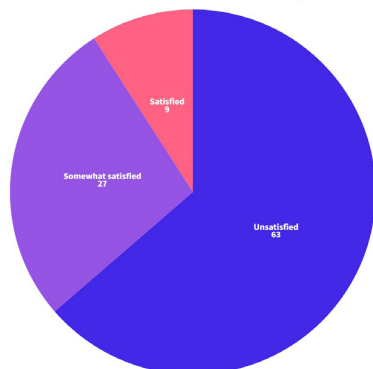
When college provisions are inadequate, students aren’t hesitant to seek out alternatives. Aside from colleges such as New and Mansfield which employ external companies to deal with vacation storage, 16% of students reported using external companies such as Lovespace, Big Yellow and Magenta.

There is no easy fix to vacation storage problems, especially with the huge variation of college-dependent factors involved – the biggest issue of which is having sufficient space, ideally for all students. Perhaps there is something to be said about the need to relocate items to storage at all, even if it makes sense to clear colleges to open them up for guest residence over vacations. One student mentioned that having to completely vacate one’s room can make it feel “impossible to truly settle down and avoid feeling, to some extent, that you’re living out of your suitcase”.

A centralised university requirement for colleges to have storage allowance policies, or ways to assist with student storage, could possibly alleviate some of the burden on students. But while storage problems persist, there will be baggage, psychological as well as physical, waiting to be picked up by us at the start and end of every term.

Image credits: CC0 via Rawpixel

Satisfaction with vacation storage

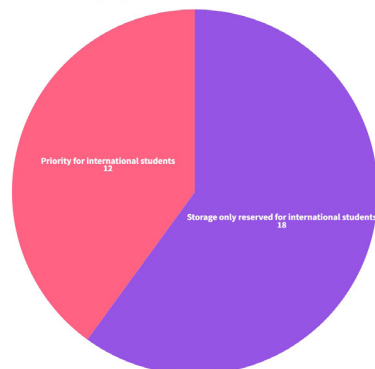


Variations across colleges

Some colleges also open up storage for students with disabilities and long-term health conditions, but storage conditions aren’t always ideal for students with accessibility needs. One student at St Edmund’s Hall reported needing to climb up to six flights of stairs to store items and pointed out how inaccessible this might be for students with mobility needs. He also noted that some of the college’s annexes allowed for items to be stored in their room over vacations. The student told *Cherwell* that he eventually stored items in a friend’s accommodation instead as the building had a lift, remarking that he’d “rather travel horizontally than vertically”.

The lack of clarity and communication about vacation storage provision has also caused distress to many students. Keble cancelled storage indefinitely, leaving students scrambling to resort to other methods of storing items. One first-year international student from the college told *Cherwell* that they were only informed about this at the start of Michaelmas

Privileges given to International students



Discussing JCR SU disaffiliation



JCRs are king – and will remain so

Violet Aitchison

With expanding JCR committees, featuring a variety of roles, one must wonder where the Student Union fits. The SU is impersonal and ineffective, and I struggle to imagine why you'd interact with it when issues could be more effectively and quickly funnelled through your JCR president, who might happen to be a trusted and known individual. The SU ambiguity and inefficacy (even without mentioning its controversies) makes the route of disaffiliation clear to me.

We shouldn't turn our backs

Raghav Chari

It's incredibly shortsighted and naive for students to think that student issues can be resolved without the SU. No JCR has the ability to enact University-wide change. It's not like disaffiliation stops the SU either; it's only the JCRs that suffer from it, as they can't present their perspective and diversify student representation. While the SU may not be perfect, it's a necessary institution and it's to everyone's benefit if we work within it to make it better for all of us.

Give them some credit

Morien Robertson

With stories ranging from a secret slate to the former president sharing porn, the SU is hardly showing credibility. Sensationalism aside, there are genuine concerns about bureaucracy and ineffectiveness. JCR disaffiliation is nothing new: Oriel started in 2001; Christ Church and Brasenose are currently out. Other than the fame of a Cherwell headline, it's not clear that these motions have been anything other than symbolic. You have to give Corpus credit for attacking the SU whilst chewing on the pizza it paid for, though.

Violence, fear, and womanhood

Ollie Simonetti

Womanhood is a charged word. In many ways, it is hopeful: it invokes a sense of community and empathy. Womanhood can be brushing your sister's hair, crying on a mother's shoulder. But it can also be something sombre – shared experiences can easily go from comically bad first kisses to true tragedies. Sometimes, our womanhood seems to be a reminder that the place we occupy in society is invariably painful. However, the deeply personal and emotional fear tied to living life as a woman is rarely a mainstream topic of discussion.

Last November, Italian 22-year-old Giulia Cecchetti disappeared with her boyfriend. Two days later, her body was found covered in stab wounds and black bags, having been mercilessly murdered by her partner. And this is not an isolated event: in 2022, 125 women in Italy were killed intentionally by men. In the UK, the numbers go down to 81 women killed by men in domestic settings. But this still means that approximately two women were killed every 10 days by their partner, former partner or male relative. All sides of the political spectrum agree that these events are devastating, but not everyone acknowledges what goes deeper: these homicides are the inevitable conclusion to a culture which seems to thrive off the subjugation, control, and violence towards women. Deterrence is not enough: nations could resurrect

the death penalty and husbands would keep on killing their wives (and History agrees).

Violence is everywhere in a woman's life – from blood trickling down freshly shaven legs to being followed on the way back from Tesco. We have been conditioned to accept some forms of this violence as an ordinary part of our life (beauty is pain, apparently, so womanhood must also be). In other cases, the natural response is fear. Many parts of womanhood which I have personally bonded over with other women are simply a product of fear. I admit I have felt there is something tender in staying on call while

“Violence is everywhere in a woman's life”

a friend walks home, or vowing to stick together on a night out, whatever the circumstances. It is easy to forget that these actions have a reason other than pure sorority. After all, you will not usually be attacked in the middle of the street. But there always comes a day when catcalling turns into chasing, or a moment where someone gets a little too close for comfort. Suddenly womanhood becomes a serious affair, and we are never truly able to forget the real reasons to be afraid. And indeed, so far as the fear remains, we should not take too much comfort in the idea of collective suffering. The influence of fear in our every decision is not just a bonding ex-

perience, but outrage-worthy injustice.

When I saw Barbie, I thought it was a refreshing portrayal of misogyny from an emotional perspective, emphasising the unique experience of womanhood without falling into mere 'girlboss' mentality. Gloria's speech accurately depicted the usual pressure to fulfil all different sorts of standards of beauty and motherhood: “we have to always be extraordinary, but somehow we're always doing it wrong”. But it was not a full picture of the struggle of womanhood: it almost suggested that the problem was in how high the standards were set, calling for the production of a 'normal' Barbie, like the only difficulty in being a woman is trying to be 'extraordinary'.

Beauty standards may be one manifestation of patriarchal gender roles, but sexism goes much deeper within our culture. After the re-election of the Spanish Prime Minister in late 2023, right-wing protesters gathered in front of the headquarters of the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party. They carried naked inflatable dolls representing the 'socialist ministers' and proudly called the current government a brothel. Public humiliation is a punishment for daring to hold power as a woman. This is also violence: a warning to stay in one's lane or face the consequences. Misogyny does not stop at the obligation to be skinny or hairless. From the seemingly harmless need to wear makeup to honour killings and corrective rape, any form of violence suffered by wom-

en stems from the same source: a deeply ingrained view of women as something to be controlled or policed. When the possible consequences of not sticking to the guidelines can, at best, include vicious crowds showing up at your workplace, fear is inevitable.

Whole books have been written on the causes of this systematic attitude towards women. Activism has understandably focused on mainly political issues, like addressing the gender pay gap or securing safe abortions for all. These are, of course, commendable and necessary causes. We all agree that discrimination and crimes against women are bad, but it is not only this tangible detriment that matters. Women take on a disproportionate mental and emotional load due simply to living in society. I keep finding myself in conversations about makeshift defence mechanisms to use while walking alone. The keys-between-knuckles trick has come up a couple of times, though my mother personally believes in bulk purchases of electric whistles. Although normalised, violence is always on our minds. And we do not only worry about preventing violence – I wish this was the case, and actual assaults never materialised. Today, being catcalled is one of the most harmless types of violence a woman can endure. But even these relatively harmless actions (and that's saying something) can trigger feelings of vulnerability and helplessness which I and many others have been forced to reconcile with our experience of womanhood.

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

The Debate Chamber

Martin and Alfie go head to head, debating whether people apply to Oxford just for the brand

In truth, my task this week was made considerably easier by Oxford University itself. On their page “10 Reasons to Choose Oxford” the very first reason given is “a world-famous university with global influence” – in other words, the strength of the Oxford brand.

Despite how renowned Oxford is, in plenty of categories, it really doesn't lead other universities by much. Surveys consistently show that job prospects are the number one reason people go to university; but, of the twenty best paying university courses in the UK, only five of them are at Oxford. Increasingly, your field of study matters much more to job prospects than where you studied it – econom-



ists do five years after graduation. But it's not all about money – do students apply to Oxford for the world-class teaching? Oxford generally ranks as the best university, alongside Cambridge, in the UK (although the Guardian rankings have recently rated St Andrew's higher). But teaching hours in Oxford are often woefully low – in Britain, the average liberal arts student has nine hours of contact hours a week; I've never had more than five. There is one way in which Oxford is completely worldbeating, however – the strength of its brand. Saltburn highlights this best of all – when was the last time you saw a blockbuster all about students at Nottingham University? It's the strength of Oxford's brand that allows it to pay PhD tutors only £20 per tutorial; without all the beautiful buildings and archaic traditions, Oxford would be forced to attract students on its academic strength instead – which it would undoubtedly find a far harder task.

The Oxford brand is a brilliantly curated one. When one thinks of Oxford it's all about beautiful buildings, cobbled streets, and vast array of libraries. Oxford is most certainly all of those things: we have not been sold a lie about its beauty when we applied here.

The Oxford brand is also one of extreme privilege, snobbishness, and exclusivity. Oxford is most certainly all of these things too. Even in its use of Oxford-specific jargon: sub-fusc, collections, vac and, even just the name Magdalen. These are all things only an Oxford student would know. And references to Saltburn support the case that the Oxford brand is not merely just a beautiful place to study.

Despite the negativity of the Oxford brand, the common consensus of my peers is that while Oxford is idiosyncratically self-indulgent, that is part of what makes experiencing it in a fleeting three to four years, with its intense bursts of eight-week terms, so bizarre and wonderful.

While I did not know this would

be the case when I applied here, I knew I had applied to somewhere different – not a single one



of my friends had applied. That unique and inimitable university experience is what I was seeking.

I wanted the opportunity to speak to world-leading experts on the subject I had a passion for and to meet eccentric and intelligent people I would be unlikely to meet anywhere else.

Ultimately, the decision to apply to a university is a multifaceted one, and potentially my decision to apply to Oxford was influenced by the positive side to the brand more than I am willing to admit. Yet, what is also true is that I knew Oxford would be a unique experience of learning at one of the best places in the world to do so.

Academic pressure and the overachiever mentality

Yunzhang Liang

Academic intensity should not be something foreign to Oxford students. Indeed, I became acquainted with this idea before even coming to university – growing up in Singapore in a traditionally Asian household, the importance of academic excellence and achievement was constantly reinforced by schools, teachers, parents, and even politicians. I didn't bat an eye when my friend slept for 3 hours every day in the weeks before A-levels to revise. All-nighters and skip-

ping meals to study were the norm. In a system that prizes academic achievement above all else, it can be easy to forget that there is more to life than grades on a sheet of paper. Students, however, tend to forget this – which is why, on A-level results day in Singapore, certain schools have their balconies and higher floors cordoned off to students.

We are often told that many years down the line, we would realise grades don't matter, that life is more than tests and exams. To the young, naïve teenagers whose lives revolve around school, this can be hard to see. Exams inevitably consume our life; they become the benchmark against which we assess our self-worth. Students with stellar scores are singled out and showered with praise from teachers and parents, and those who make it to prestigious universities are



showed off as having 'made it'. But what about those who don't? When everyone strives to be exceptional, some inevitably end up becoming merely 'mediocre'. This gives rise to the central problem surrounding academic pressure and the 'overachiever' mentality – that while we are fully aware of its harms, everyone still strives to 'overachieve', for fear of being left behind, of being 'mediocre'.

In China, such a phenomenon is termed 'involution', and refers simply to the feeling of being trapped in a never-ending rat race even when one knows it is meaningless.

without flaws, is still the best option in light of the lack of popular alternatives.

A trend common across Asian societies is that competition during university admissions tests, be it the Gao Kao in China, the Sunegung in South Korea, or the A-levels in Singapore, is unforgivingly ruthless. Nevertheless, I don't think this should negate the intention of these standardised tests – to give everyone an equal shot at their own future. In China, for example, hundreds of thousands of students from rural villages sit the Gao Kao each year, because it is their only ticket to a university and (hopefully) a brighter future in a big city. Often, they carry the weight of the generations before them to finally break out of the poverty cycle. It is easy to espouse the idealistic notion of 'do what you love', but the harsh reality is that you can't always do what you want or love. These students from rural areas cannot achieve their dreams unless they first have the grades to access such opportunities in the big cities. Grades, to some extent, give you the power of choice – they allow you to choose the kind of life you want to lead, instead of being forced to settle for something else because your grades couldn't make the cut. In the wise words of Oprah Winfrey, you have to "do what you have to do until you can do what you want to do".

I believe that there is merit in pushing yourself to academic excellence – looking back, I don't regret having pushed myself while taking my own A-levels, because it showed me the value of hard work, perseverance, and brought me here to Oxford, where I've met so many amazing people and seen things I couldn't have seen in Singapore. I also believe that exams are not do or die, and there are times where academic pressure turns worrying or deadly. It can harm students' mental health when they overwhelmingly associate academic

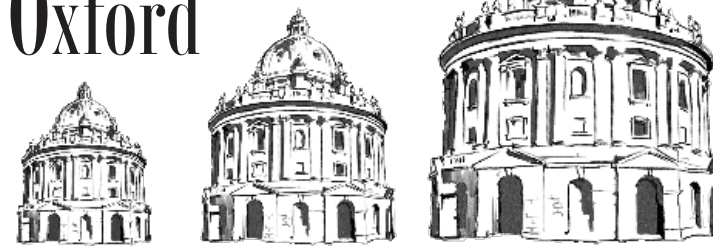
achievement with their self-worth, or when sub-par exam results begin to feel like the end of the world. It can be hard to reconcile these two realities, but the key, I suppose, lies in striking a healthy balance.

I don't think it is a bad thing to be an 'overachiever' or 'try hard', or in testing your limits to see how far you can go. But I also believe that such a mentality can and should be applied to goals outside of academia, because while it can be easy to feel inadequate when you fall

behind academically, we are not one-dimensional creatures who only know how to study and sit for exams. I've known people who are athletes competing in global tournaments, or musicians playing in sold-out theatres, or published poets and writers. You don't have to be the best academically that you possibly can be. You only have to be the best that you can be.

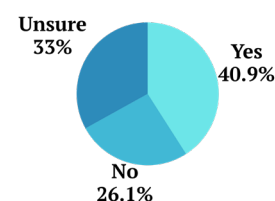
Image Credit: Public Domain via Wikimedia Commons

The view from Oxford

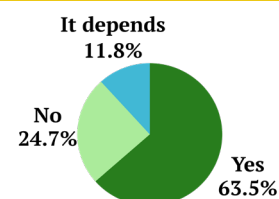


This week, we asked our Instagram followers...

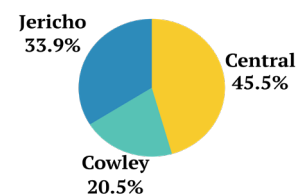
Would you disaffiliate from the SU?



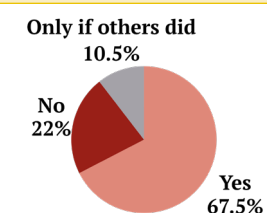
Is it harder to work in the winter months?



Where's the best for a pub night?



If you could, would you do a year abroad?



A crash course in British politics

This week, Roy Shinar Cohen explores 'What does the public care about?'



Our crash course in British politics is coming to an end in this fifth and final article. In recent weeks, we learned how British elections work, who the main candidates for PM really are, and what were some of the recent scandals in both parties. In this article, we will look past Westminster and analyse the public. In particular, what issues does the British public think are most important? Before we begin, it is important to note that this article is based on public opinion polls, which are volatile and could change substantially by voting day.

First, YouGov's tracker on the "most important issues facing the country". According to its last update, on February 11th 2024, the five most important issues are the following:

the economy at 51%; health at 46%; immigration at 38%; defence and security at 23%; and a tie between housing and the environment at 22%. Interestingly, these issues remain relatively stable when the analysis is broken into Labour and Conservative voters, although for the latter defence and security do not make the cut, being replaced with education.

An additional analysis finds that women care about the same issues as Conservatives (but to different extents), and care about the economy and health equally, at 48%. However, although British men care the most about the economy, at 54%, they narrowly see immigration as more important than health, at 40% and

39% respectively. Finally, it appears that across age groups, the issues dominating the public's interest are the economy, immigration, and health – possibly unsurprisingly for anyone reading the news.

Next, according to an Ipsos analysis from December 2023, the most important issues for the public are inflation at 34%; the economy at 31%; immigration at 29%; the NHS at 28% and housing at 15%. However, a closer observation of the public's interest appears to create two groups of issues that receive close public interest. The first group consists of the top three issues, the economy (and inflation), immigration, and the NHS (health), which are close to 30%. The second group consists of the next five issues – housing, poverty, environment, lack of faith in politics, and education – which are around 12%.

In Ipsos' breakdown into different groups, we find that men's and women's perceptions are, mostly, very close to one another. However, while men care more about the

economy and immigration by 6% and 5% respectively, women care more about housing and poverty by 6% and 7% respectively. When it comes to political affiliation, Labour voters care more about inflation by 10%, the economy by 9% and the NHS by 7%, while Conservative voters care more about immigration by 31%. Notably, white voters care substantially more about immigration than ethnic minority voters, by 22%.

So, the voters are quite clear – the economy, immigration and

healthcare services are generally most important to them. But when it comes to other issues, including housing and defence, the picture starts breaking down into groups based on political belief, ethnicity, and age.

It has been my pleasure to go on this journey with you, learning together about British politics. Thank you, everyone – and congratulations on gaining a basic understanding of British politics.

Image Credit: CFCF/CC BY-SA 2.0 via Wikimedia Commons



Cats, football, and arena comedy: getting niche with David Baddiel

Olivia Boyle in conversation with comedian David Baddiel.

David Baddiel gets asked a lot of questions. And, often, they're all versions of each other: what was it like being the first comic to perform at Wembley? What's it like being the voice of anti-antisemitism for Britain's comedy scene? Can you say 'It's coming home' a few times? So, when he agreed to speak to *Cherwell* following his first lecture as Visiting Professor of Creative Media, we aimed for improv - where Baddiel is at his finest.

He may have the gift of the gab, but the comedian's primary passion was football. David Baddiel was going to be a footballer. So, we started there.

The comic is known for going big. He was the first, alongside Rob Newman, to sell out Wembley Arena in 1993. Does his sizeable ambition toe the line of Macbeth's? As far as men's football is concerned, it still hasn't come home. Not since Baddiel teamed up with Lightning Seeds and Frank Skinner with Number One, 'Three Lions' in 1996. Baddiel, though, is learning from those who have fallen from great heights.

What does he make of the Super League, that bizarre proposition to funnel billions of dollars of oil money into a football league made up, exclusively, of the most successful clubs in Europe?

"I don't like the Super League. One of the last times I was active on social media about something that wasn't about anti-semitism was being very anti the Super League. I think I might have written about it as well. Obviously the problem with the Super League, like a lot of sport, is the way that capitalism has gotten in the way of sport. I think of sport as something which should be unassailable in a way - even though lots of terrible stuff happens in sport and obviously, there's a lot of sort of money in it."

Then Baddiel demonstrates his career shift as he frames football in an ornamented, artistic one.

"At some level, the theatre of great sport is always brilliant, despite all the nonsense that always surrounds it. But then I thought that a Super

League might finally crash that because the one thing sport has to have is some sense that 'okay, this is an amazing game.'"

As Baddiel kindly reminds me, we can't all be special. Unless, of course, you're a comedian with a hit single and a double first from Cambridge.

"In *The Incredibles*, there's a really extraordinary," he pauses, "you know *The Incredibles*, right?" I did in fact know *The Incredibles* but I guess 2004 dates us - I should be flattered?

But, in *The Incredibles*, "a very interesting and unusual thing is said, which is that - what's he called? Special Case?" He's not; he's called Syndrome. Though, Baddiel's observation, for those who know *The Incredibles*, is apt.

"The villain, the boy, he wants to

"unlike Stewart Lee, I don't like slagging off other comedians..."

be special. There's a climactic scene where Mr. Incredible says if everyone is special, no one is. Which is kind of an odd thing in a way to tell children who all want to be special, but that's a harsh reality about life. I applied that to the Super League. If every game is Real Madrid vs. Man United, then there are no interesting games anymore because you've raised the bar to such a pitch where there's no rhythm to it. So I was always very against it."

Stadiums, arenas, creative intersections: Baddiel has gone big. Stewart Lee calls it the 'Michael McIntyre effect' - I guess a sort of Marmite for the comedy junkies. Having mentioned this, I get the machinations of a comic who really knows what he's doing in return:

"I think Stewart Lee is the best comedian in Britain. Anything he says about other comedians is to do with his rage about him not being paid as much as say, Michael McIntyre, or whatever. But, yeah, it's true that that arena comedy thing, which was

started by me and Rob Newman - I agree with Stewart - I don't think that's the best space for comedy."

Being suspicious of the Super League means being suspicious of big-space comedy. Baddiel favours the intimate - say, two black arm chairs and all black scenery to make a hostile interview a little bit more tight for air?

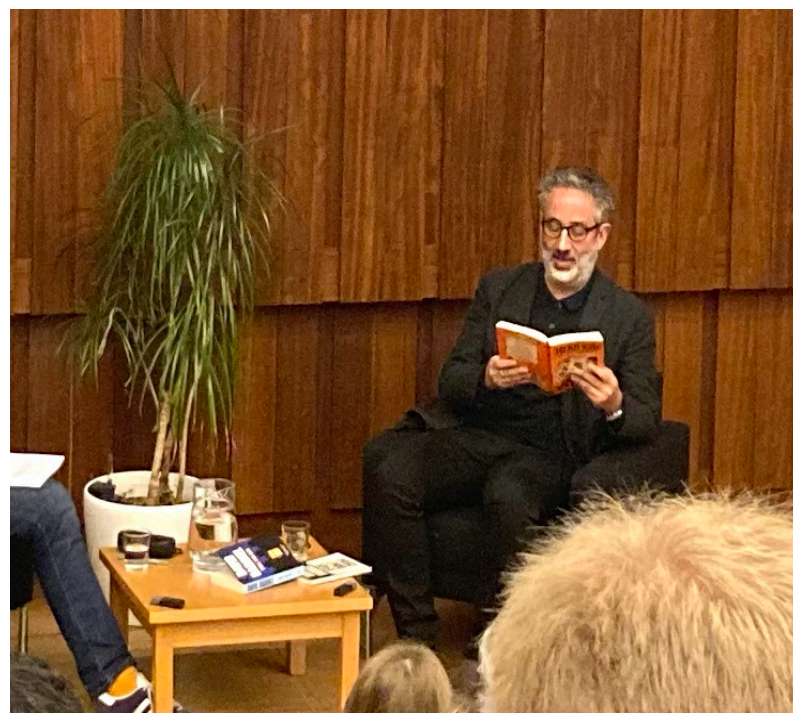
"The best space for comedy is a smaller room. I did the Lowry in Manchester on my last tour and saw Stewart Lee do the same room. 1200 people is probably the best number and 12,000 probably isn't. You're trying to create the illusion of talking individually to every member of the audience and obviously, the more people there are the harder that is. Having said that, I think comedians who play to bigger crowds like Michael McIntyre, even though he's slagged off a lot by people like Stewart, are really good."

Can't we all be special, then? "There are some comedians that I don't think that about," Baddiel continues, "but unlike Stewart, I don't like slagging off other comedians." Hairs raised at the onset of a brewing Twitter storm.

You can rely on circuitous answers from the man of many talents. An interesting phenomenon, people and the media alike turn to the comedian for a perspective on the most pressing current affairs. I did. I asked why football is a flame which seems to have no death to the moth of racism.

"It was really, really awful when I was young. There was so much racism, of all sorts, and homophobia. It still remains an arena where there is ugliness. There was hooliganism at West Brom versus Wolves the other day like I haven't seen for years."

He suggests that this has something of the social media effect to it where profiles are crafted meticulously and obsessively. "I'm a Chelsea fan. But my identity isn't really 'I'm a Chelsea fan'. My identity isn't 'I'm a Jew'. I think identity is a nebulous, complex thing. Therefore, I can't imagine any situation in which I would get up and shout in a way that I was defining my identity by opposition to someone else."



Fans, the fanatics, will say "I'm a Chelsea fan' but will define their identity by saying 'I hate Tottenham' or 'I hate Arsenal'. I don't like football and Chelsea enough to say I hate something in order to make my own sense of identity bolstered. And that's why there is horrible anger and racism and bad behaviour around football."

There is, of course, the digital battlefield where the beast feeds. "On social media, you can be talking about all these hot political topics and then the minute there's a football game, that is what trends on top."

But, of course, nothing reaches the golden importance of a cat video on Twitter. I think it was made clear that cats are a rival to Chelsea in Baddiel's self-identity.

"My dad was not an emotional man but the only place he showed any affection was to cats. We always had a cat. And so I think that created this sense of cosiness and reassurance around having a cat. I don't feel at home unless a cat is there."

The Beautiful Game has got nothing on what the comedian terms "the absurd, basic beauty of cats. I think they are the most beautiful creatures. I don't think I've ever seen an ugly cat."

Baddiel empathises Cats are "stereotyped negatively in ways which aren't true," he says, smuggled in with a chuckle, "a bit like Jews."

Whether it's a result of needless Twitter baiting or protection of the memory of his father, "I've got an energy to try and make people understand that cats are not the stereotype of aloof, selfish, and, you know, standoffish that people think they

"Mr. Incredible says if everyone is special, no one is. Which is kind of an odd thing to tell children who all want to be special."

are."

Stewart Lee, cats, football - I sense that Baddiel likes a good ol' bit of sparring or challenging what people think they know.

Indeed, as we parted ways, David asked, in true bitter, having-the-last-word, Cambridge fashion, "what actually is *Cherwell*?"

Image credits: Olivia Boyle

Quickfire Questions

What's the worst film you've ever seen?

I'm just gonna say *Cats* even though I've only seen like 20 minutes of it. It's particularly upsetting for me because I love cats - the real ones. And, in the film, they're so not cats.

If you could go back to university, would you change your subject?

No, I would choose English but I'd like to be able to do English with physics as a secondary subject. English and physics seems like an odd combination. But I'm obsessed with physics. And I don't really understand it because I can't do maths, but I am interested in the grand reality of life and that's physics.

Who was your hero when you were a child?

Probably Peter Osgood, who was a footballer who used to play for Chelsea but also my older brother. My older brother was probably actually my hero but I didn't know it at the time. I incredibly looked up to and copied things that he did."

“Poetry is political because it’s so immediate”

Cherwell Profiles in conversation with Oxford’s own poetry aficionado, Aliyah Begum.

In search of localised wisdom, *Cherwell* spoke to one of Oxford’s own. Poetry sensation, Birmingham Young Poet Laureate (2018-20), Foyle Young Poet of the Year (2017) and English student at Oxford, Aliyah Begum talked all things ‘literature as a side hustle’ with us.

How did you become a poet?

“I’ve always been writing ever since I can remember. I think I wrote my first poem in year two. It was very simple like, you know, six lines, abab,” that’s poetry talk for the rhyme scheme, “nothing too groundbreaking. I had been writing stories, but then I magically realised that poems are a lot shorter, and therefore less hassle.” That’s some realisation for a seven-year-old.

Before the Bodleian, there was Aliyah’s local library. “In the West Midlands, we have Poetry on Loan; they have little postcards that they get local poets to write poems on. I used to collect those in the library.

“And then I think Secondary School is when I got more into it. We had a spoken word club. And so - as lame as it sounds - every Friday lunchtime. Then I started going to open mic nights in central Birmingham.”

The poet truly punched above her weight. “They were always adult poets doing their thing, and then I’d go on stage with like, ‘Oh, this is my first time on open mic night. I’m 11 and I’m going to read a poem about anti-capitalism or anti-racism or something.’ So I think the spoken word scene in Birmingham was where I really grew as a poet. It led to the Poet Laureateship and me taking poetry seriously for myself.”

Aliyah said that current Poet Laureate for Birmingham, Jasmine Gardosi was central to her precocious appearances at open mic nights. But, naturally, placed ‘mum’ in the category of champion. Watching Aliyah metamorphose from shy Year 7 into poet extraordinaire, “I think she could see how much performance

boosted my confidence and how much I loved it.”

But, over the course of ten years, with an Oxonian hiatus planted in the middle, “the landscape has changed. Some of the more grassroots open mic nights are now in Symphony Hall or theatres. It’s cool to see the old ones get bigger and the new ones pop up.”

Thoughts? “It’s the natural progression of how things go. Poetry Jam, that was a kind of community. It would be in the Java Lounge and small coffee shops - probably breaking a million health and safety violations because there were no fire exits. People would be sat on the floor in between rounds.”

There’s a demand for this. “So they would scale up the venues each time and then they’d probably get more funding and the Arts Council would get involved. But it’s nice to see grassroots open mic nights still pop up in pubs and social clubs. I think that’s something I really missed in Oxford.”

What’s different about Oxford’s poetry world?

“The thing I love about poetry is it’s so inclusive and warm and welcoming. Being used to Birmingham, where a lot of people look like me, especially in the poetry scene and coming to Oxford where you go into the lecture theatre and it’s a room full of white girls - I found that quite intimidating in first year.”

Then, Aliyah gushed at the “exciting and vibrant” potential of Oxford’s writers: “they produce such beautiful, amazing pieces of work.” But, when you’ve been milling around with 20-something professional poets since you were 11, university poetry will seem very fledgling.

“It’s a really exciting scene but it is a little bit insular - maybe that’s just Oxford in general - I think there could be more collaboration a-



tion. Like, there could be so much more collaboration between societies and magazines, and even with the local community. Oxford Poetry Library, for example, does brilliant writing workshops and community sessions.” Inside and outside the University, “the poetry scene in Oxford is brilliant, and there’s so much opportunity. We’re really lucky to be in this city of poets.”

Is your poetry framed by a cityscape - Birmingham or Oxford?

“In terms of the literary world, there are maybe two districts: spoken word and performance poetry, and then a kind of more so called highbrow or literary poetry.” Aliyah pauses then to say “even the term ‘highbrow’ is a whole thing in itself because it comes from racist phrenology.”

“Poetry that I learned in Birmingham and grew up with was spoken word and communal. Whereas at Oxford, it does feel like there’s a tendency to turn towards the literary and to try to replicate those institutions. For example, the Oxford Review of Books is like the London Review of Books. In Oxford, poetry is trying to lean more towards the institutional side of literature rather than the communal side of it.”

So, Aliyah is doing the work of building a bridge between the two. “I think there is a space for both spoken word and orthodox literary poetry to co-exist - and they must - but, at the moment, I don’t like how supposedly highbrow poetry is valued more than spoken word perhaps.”

COP26, Young Poet Laureateship - how do you reconcile

your poetry with institution?

The ‘institution’ of Young Poet Laureate was not without its pitfalls. “I did work with schools and libraries sometimes, but most of the time, it felt like I was more of a spokesperson or presenting, which I love to do. But I think I wish I had the chance to be more kind of actually engaging with young people and advocating for poetry directly with them.”

Aliyah seemed unsettled by the constant need to be validated by pre-existing institutions. “I think what I’m going to realise as I’m getting older is that it’s fine to not seek validation from these institutions. It’s not as bad with poetry as it is with novels or art but prizes or certain organisations tend to provide validation. I love poetry because it can be radical and grassroots. And, not to bang on about capitalism, but the value of poetry is contingent on how much money it can raise. So trying to feel proud about poetry and being able to love poetry outside of those institutions and prizes is something that I think is really important. It’s something that I’m trying to try to get better at - challenging where I think I get validation from.”

Again, this comes in the form of community where validation is just as much about the groups of people you engage with. Another institution Aliyah is involved with is The Poetry Society.

“I love the Poetry Society. I interned with them over summer. You can really tell that they care about poetry, they care about young people, and they just want to give young people more opportunities

to write and to make poetry more accessible.” Sometimes, pre-existing frameworks are invaluable to establishing community. Like with Foyles Young Poets, “it does introduce you to a kind of network of like minded people.”

Even still, poetry seems to be Aliyah’s means of challenging this notion of ‘institution’ in a way that is unavoidable.

“I think poetry is inherently political. Even if you’re writing about a rosebush that you see outside, the fact that you’ve got the chance to, you’ve got time away from work, you’ve got time away from other responsibilities, that’s - I don’t want to say privilege because I think it should be right - but you’re lucky to be able to write poetry.”

Alongside nine other young poets, Aliyah Begum was chosen to perform at COP26. “It felt like a glorified careers fair. There were companies trying to sell themselves to you. It was just very icky.”

So poetry becomes a method of political protest. “I did a Poets for Palestine event at Worcester last year. And that was inspired by Anthony Anaxagorou who did a national Poets for Palestine event. Poetry is a way of honouring and listening to voices that are being suppressed.

“Poetry is political because it’s so immediate. You can write a novel but a) that takes time to write b) you have to find a publisher and give people time to read it. Whereas a poem, you can share it online or in person; it’s a lot more digestible and is a more immediate way of conveying your opinion.”

Images courtesy of Aliyah Begum

Quickfire Questions

Who was your hero when you were a child?

This is a very cliché answer, but it’s actually my mum

Aliyah is in fact the first to give that answer.

Which film are you most looking forward to seeing this year?

I have not seen *Past Lives* yet. I know it came out last year but really want to see it at some point.

Cheeky dinner order?

I’m boycotting McDonald’s at the moment. So, I’d have to say Solomons - great chicken strips and chips.

CHERBADLY

Results from the 2024 Cherwell Eggs Survey

The data is in from this year's *Cherwell Eggs Survey* or 'Eggstigation'. Though often overshadowed in popularity by the more salacious 'Sextigation', the Eggstigation nonetheless provides a fascinating and valuable insight each year into Oxford students' relationships with eggs.

This year, the mean daily number of eggs eaten is 3.5 eggs per day, representing a significant rise from last year's mean of 1.9. The average stu-

dent reported having eaten 613 eggs since coming to Oxford.

However, the median number of eggs eaten per day is just over 1, with 21% of students, mostly vegans, having eaten no eggs since matriculating. Indeed, it seems that the high average eggs-per-day count is actually just statistical error. Eggs Georg, who lives in Regent's Park & eats over 10,000 eggs each day, is an outlier and should not have been counted.

Regent's aside, the egg crown this year goes once again to 'Eggseter', whose students recorded a median of 6 eggs a day. Meanwhile, Wadham students came last, averaging a meagre 0.3 eggs a day, with several claiming not to know what an egg actually is. 'I thought chickens reproduced asexually,' admitted one Wadham respondent.

The most popular egg style was boiled, with scrambled and fried coming in a very close second and

third. However, more adventurous styles were also popular. Devilled eggs, deep-fried eggs, and 'just cracking a raw egg onto my face' all scored highly; one student reported eating an ostrich egg. Notably, for the first time, a majority of students reported opening their eggs at the big end rather than the little end, a shift potentially caused by the popularity of Oxford SwiftSoc.

41% of students admitted to eating more than one egg at once, with 13% bravely going for at least three at once, and one respondent remarking 'I often just tip down a whole carton of twelve in one go'.

Students seem generally satisfied with the quality of eggs at Oxford, giving them an average score of 3.5/5. One frustrated respondent however complained that eggs here are 'too! vanilla!!!', then clarifying

they meant that their egg supplier was injecting copious quantities of vanilla extract into their eggs to flavour them.

Some have also expressed annoyance with the prominence of the Oxford casual eggs scene, with many reporting feeling pressured to participate in 'cook-up culture'. 'It's very difficult to become involved in more serious oology here,' wrote one respondent.

Perhaps the problem is the lack of open discussion of eggs, despite being a staple of Oxford life. Hopefully this survey's results will help to crack open the conversation surrounding eggs at Oxford. As Salt-n-Pepa originally sang before their label made them change it: 'Let's talk about eggs.'

Thanks to Professor Quentin Fitzquentin-Quinquinton for his assistance with this survey!

Brought to you from the

CHERWELL
archives

By Kelsey Moriarty

2007: Do you like your degree?

Many regret Oxford and degree choice

■ Survey results described as 'sobering'

■ Calls for more degree flexibility

Naomi Scherbel-Ball
Deputy News Editor

A SIGNIFICANT number of students are unhappy with fundamental aspects of university life, according to a survey that has revealed widespread dissatisfaction among undergraduates.

In a survey of 119 students conducted by *Cherwell*, 35 per cent of Oxford students said they regretted taking their subject and would seriously reconsider their choice of course.

30 per cent of students are unhappy with their choice of university and 23 per cent expressed regret at their college choice. When asked about their degree choice, 6 per cent replied that they regretted it "a lot".

Students listed the workload and academic pressure at Oxford as key difficulties facing undergraduates and many called for more to be done about these problems.

Others criticised the social life in their colleges and said that greater efforts should be made to improve the welfare of students.

Among the responses from the students, a significant number said that their course was different to what they had expected and said that there needed to be more flexibility within different courses.

One student suggested Oxford should look into a modular

degree system where students could take options from other faculties. Although students on courses combining a number of disciplines have some flexibility, others are forced through a linear degree programme.

In some cases, students wishing to transfer to a different course have to face a second interview and the possibility of their request being declined.

OUSU President, Alan Strickland, said, "I think the figures are very disappointing, particularly to hear that a third of students feel that they are doing the wrong degree for them. Problems with degrees are age-old and point to a need for a more flexible system that allows students to change their degree as they themselves change."

"Choosing how to spend three or four years of your life is a big decision and an imprecise one. The system needs to be able to accommodate students who realise that they have chosen the wrong subject. Subjects can be very different at degree level, and many students are studying areas impossible to experience at A-level."

"A fifth of students regretting coming to Oxford has to be fairly sobering," he added.

Strickland said that OUSU was currently researching a report into welfare provision at different colleges.

Aidan Randle-Conde, OUSU Vice President for Welfare in 2006, said that Oxford had a serious problem with academic pressure and that high expectations can limit freedom for students to change universities.

"A lot of people are pressured by their families to come to Oxford and they think that

their families will criticise them if they do not live up to their expectations. They are worried to admit that they may have made the wrong choice," he said.

"Students need to know that they can transfer to other universities. Oxford is not the be all and end all," he added.

Jason Arthur, JCR President of Somerville, said he was surprised by the findings. "You would think that students would have picked subjects that they liked. Perhaps it depends on the course tutors and the type of degree they do. There are lots of factors to consider here," he said.

Queen's JCR President, Vishal Mashru, played down concerns that Oxford students were unhappy. "It's not really a big deal. There are always some students who won't be so happy at Oxford and not much can be done to change that," he said.

He added that students were often unaware of the nature of their degree course and were not always interested enough in their subject. "Students sometimes just get bored of their degrees," he said.

Student representatives expressed surprise that a quarter of students would reconsider their college choice. Alfie Stroud, Lincoln Welfare Officer, said, "There is usually an atmosphere at Oxford of college pride. These statistics are very surprising and should be looked into further by student bodies."

John Eekelaar, admissions tutor at Pembroke, said, "The extent of the disparities between colleges is an issue and needs to be kept under review."

The University declined to comment on the survey.



35%

of Oxford students regret taking their subject

30%

of Oxford students regret their choice of university

23%

of Oxford students regret their college choice

If you do, that's great, but you definitely know someone who doesn't. Or indeed, multiple people. Perhaps you've said 'I hate my degree' jokingly in the middle of an essay crisis or after a tute. If any of this is true, this week's pull from the *Cherwell* archives is for you.

35% of people in this survey said they 'seriously regretted' their degree choice and would 'seriously reconsider if they could, 23% of people said they regretted their choice of college (I wonder what proportion went to Catz), and 6% of people said they regretted their degree choice a lot. It makes sense.

Oxford is a high stress environment at the worst of times, and a medium stress environment at the best. It's not surprising these numbers are what they are, nor that they would probably be quite similar today.

The reaction from the SU President is interesting, and touches on many points that are still relevant today - 'Problems with degrees are age old and point to a need for a more flexible system that allows students to change their degree as they themselves change'. He goes on to say 'choosing how to spend three or four years of your life is a big decision and an imprecise

one... many students are [now] studying areas impossible to experience at A Level'. History of Art is a particularly good example of this. Art History Link-Up, a charity advocating for state school access to A Levels in Art History, say there are only seven state schools that offer the course at A Level. It is probably not a coincidence that most art historians I know feel lukewarm about their degree at best.

After a whole term in the archives, the cyclical nature of the news content continues to surprise. People will always hate their degrees, I suppose.

John Evelyn

1st of March 2024

Friends, Members, Countrymen, lend me your Votes. The Hacks are setting their plans in #MOTION... Budding Seccies are practising normal human interactions, Leon Boy and his girlfriend are running practice laps of Tesco, and The Diplobrat is flexing his OUCArisma. But just who will rise to the top, in the Union's busiest (and Businessiest) contest of our time?

This Election got off to a delightful start: the Buildings themselves preemptively gave up, and succumbed to a power-cut, which surely helped the nomination process. Nonetheless, all other nominations were without disruption... Until the #DeepSlate thought better! Many woke up on Saturday to their name, and electoral hopes, in the Bin. NoHeKhan't learn from the mistakes of his past. Saved by a fellow fossil, Eminem came back, and chose mercy, and the 20+ Can'tdidates were reinstated as Candidates faster than the 40-Year-Old Virgin whips his Jaguar.

Frewin Court has indeed found many of its oldest assets rendered purposeless in recent days: the Old Library, the Bar, the Goodman, and The Marxist. In place of running Scrutiny, he took a migratory flight to Germany - rumour has it, he was listening out for the wrong type of 'Coo'. In his absence, RO world chose chocolate instead of chicken with more kitkat. The Baconaterf, the CAMPanologist, and The DickHead stand firm behind their new ruler, but Jevelyn hears we'll be seeing fewer Constitutional Czechs this term...

For weeks now, legends of a new CONtender have spread, but it became apparent that one Shoe-in had been Booted - The Neighbour drew his blinds on the election. After a rushed and secret Slate



Switcheroo, Teddy's Panda has now finally shown his Paw: desperate to get the party started, Convict Fraudulent Moe is riding shotgun. Let's just hope the Ex-Treasurer remembers Rule 33(a)(i)(18) before he #DRIVES his team head-first into another tribunal.

Speaking of which, there's a party in town! But somebody wasn't invited - despite living in the very house, McGloneley was seen wandering the streets of Oxford into the twilight hours. Jevelyn hears an altercation resulted in his exile, while Obsessed with Watson and Miss I Can't Leave Student Politics danced the night away.

Upon the Thrones, Goldilocks remains unshaken; a recent debate has stirred controversy, but with the buildings perpetually powerless, Jevelyn has no confidence in attempts to post certain notices on the board. Nonetheless, with Teddy's Panda and the Secrizztary at electoral loggerheads, Goldilocks is now tasked with managing her Officers not too firmly, not too softly, but just right.

And So The Battle Commences: The Graduate boldly marches forth, under the banner of #REVIVE. This comes as no surprise: what better metaphor for the relentless pursuit of his youth, with a team that may well have been called up from their death beds? The Secrizztary takes on the moniker #MOTION and Teddy's Panda shows his #DRIVE to win. Meanwhile, our favourite MBA candidate is #REIMAGINE-ing the rules, by not declaring his electoral allegiance. It will be interesting to see if he sticks to what he said to all 3 Presidents after his friend is organising his birthday party coincidentally on Friday in Frewin court...

I'll see you guys at handover,
J xx

Cherwell Team

Editors-in-Chief

Review Virtuoso & News Team
Stockholm Syndrome

Deputy Editors-in-Chief

"We're so back", SUPERman,
Sextigator, ICT Teacher, In
Conversation With..., Anglo-Saxon,
& Stanford Girlboss

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Interview icon, double agent,
science sleuth, honorary hack,
cleats, butterfly adiconado, Oxford
United press dept., second-hand
rustication expert

Features Editors

Schnitzel, Bridg-man of sighs, Day
1, terminally offline, Excel master,
MIA, Salt-N-Pepa-head

Comment Editors

WW2 Laptop, Mr Pie Chart, Oh
yes he's here too, Secret hack, Only
here because their degree doesn't
occupy them enough, Power editor

Profile Editors

Everywhere but the Choffice, That
touchy-feely friend, Snollygoster

Culture Editors

Longs for creative team, RUNS
the creative team, Avid Goodreads
user, OUO rep, Wonka enjoyer
#1, Wonka enjoyer #2, Wonka
enjoyer #3, Fashion Gala insider,
Indesign fearer, London show
lover, Comp ticket swindler, lay-in
hater, Instagram famous, Cherwell's
Simon Cowell, Canva wizard, 5th
week revelation

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Oxfesser, Excellent Editor,
Unexpeced JCR Pres, Spreadsheet
Matchmaker, A-Goya-ny Aunt

Food Editors

Anton Ego, Heston Blumenthal,
Jamie's Italian

Sports Editors

"bro thinks he's nonchalant", College
Mafia

Puzzles

OxDoku, NYT Puzzles, Jeremy
Paxman

Creative Team

On the Masthead Twice (Director),
the next Picasso, "Kevin!",
Kristofferson Silverfox, Saturday
tutee, Cherwell's image bank,
"shouldn't be too long!"

Business Team

"You're fired!", Designated Survivor

Video Team

Quentin Tarantino (Director),
TikTok Tsar, "Don't bully us for
our posh voices!", urgh!!!, Emma
Watson's best mate, Tripod wizard &
first to Choffice

Archives and Cherbadly

Nineties Nostalgia-trip, Cher-goodly



Anuj Mishra
Editor-in-Chief

At the end of my first term at Oxford – in the hazy but not-so-distant past – I decided to apply to the Oxford Blue. On the day of their application deadline, a post on my JCR Facebook page appeared advertising *Cherwell* section editor applications. Not thinking myself qualified to take on the mysterious institution that *Cherwell* appeared to be, I resolved: "I'll do a term at the Blue, get some experience, and then go for it".

"Who cares, it's just a student paper, you might as well go for the best one", a friend replied. So, I changed my mind, and went for *Cherwell* instead.

If you've been paying attention

to these editorials – which I highly doubt anyone is – then you'll have read many rants interspersed with a heady dose of nostalgia. In this, my final instalment, I opt for the latter.

My time with *Cherwell* has undoubtedly been the best part of my university experience, and I'm far too sorrowful that it has come to an end. I'm often asked if I would plan to stay on in some other role, editorial or otherwise, but it's high-time I prise my hands away from my precious paper and make way for some other journalist hack.

So, without further ado, it is only fit that I end our three-hundredth volume, and my stint as editor-in-chief, with a farewell. Each edition of *Cherwell* comes about through the efforts of over eighty pairs of hands: thank you to all our staff, contributors, readers, and especially to Bintia. I wish the best of luck to Oli and Adam, into whose able hands we are delighted to leave the paper.

And with that, I finally get to live my *Devil Wears Prada* fantasy (the bit where Andy throws her pager into the fountain) by deleting the entire Adobe Suite from my laptop and at last turning off those damned Messenger notifications.



Amelia Dovell
Deputy Editor-in-Chief

This week at Features we published a piece by Leila Moore, where she recounts how losing her diary led her to develop a new appreciation for diarising: not only as a tool for self-discovery but also as a way to let go. Leila's article is a beautifully written piece, and I'd really recommend everyone read it. It articulated some of the worries that have been playing on my mind this year, namely: "Why did life not feel entirely real until I had written it down? Was it possible, I thought, that I had relied too much on these diaries to make my reality?"



Bintia Dennog
Editor-in-Chief

Earlier this week, when interviewing all the potential successors for the paper, one question asked to each of them was: 'if you manage to achieve one thing as editor-in-chief, what would you want it to be?' While it was fascinating to hear their answers, it's also led me to questioning what my own proudest moment at the head of the paper has been.

One thing I am certainly proud of is carrying on the paper's legacy. *Cherwell* has existed for over a hundred years, and it's managed to survive a myriad of crises and controversies. Everyone on the team works exceptionally hard to put together our print editions and to churn out consistent, high-quality content. After our panel

discussion with journalists from The Times this week, one of them even told me that *Cherwell* is a known name within their newsroom – a clear testament to the work we have been doing. And it fills me with so much honour to play even a tiny role in this.

However, I feel even prouder to carry on the legacy of my past editors. I began my time at *Cherwell* with little to no idea of what journalism could entail, oftentimes aimlessly covering stories because, well, why not. What sucked me into this somewhat absurd world of student journalism was largely the people I've had the chance to work with. There are so many within *Cherwell* who I admire and look up to; who have shaped my writing; and who I can honestly say have changed my university experience for the better.

While being part of *Cherwell*, especially the News team, has been a constant 'quick, think on your feet' exercise, I know I will miss all of the chaos and commotion. Perhaps even the constant messenger notifications, the spam mail, and the long days spent slaving away in the Choffice. Letting go of the paper is incredibly hard, but, in the end, I am most proud to be able to pass it on to Oli and Adam, who I know will do an excellent job in the next term and continue carrying on the long legacy of *Cherwell*.

I think one thing that strikes me here at Oxford, and is rather trite to say (sorry), is how quickly time seems to pass by. As a second year, this fact was brought rudely to my attention this term during Halfway Hall. Perhaps it's the routine and familiarity that makes days blur into one, where I'm left scrambling to figure out what I did on a certain day last week, or how on earth it's already March. Maybe it's the apps on my phone. BeReal and 1SE distil my days into a single image or a fleeting second. It may sound strange, but something I struggle

with is this idea of wanting to capture every moment, remembering, and holding onto every detail. I used to find myself annoyed at not being able to properly recount my memories as I remembered them on paper. It never felt the same, but of course, it never could.

In a world where everything is increasingly digitalised, there's beauty in written reflection. But as Leila's piece does so well to emphasise, letting go is part of the process. It's ok to forget, because you are proof enough of your experiences.



Cem Kozanoglu
Deputy Editor-in-Chief

Science without Philosophy;
don't even bother

It's undeniable that as society has progressed, academia has shifted

towards a very stringent intellectual division of labour, not only in its departments and journals, but also in the individual researchers themselves. Very rarely do scientists in STEM fields engage in philosophy, and many in the humanities are woefully unaware of technologies that now rule our world. It's a problem for society that many believe that they should stick to what they know and don't think too hard about what the other side does.

This attitude is not only corrosive to creating well rounded and intellectually curious citizens, but it also stifles innovation in the sciences. The greatest advances in physics in the last century have

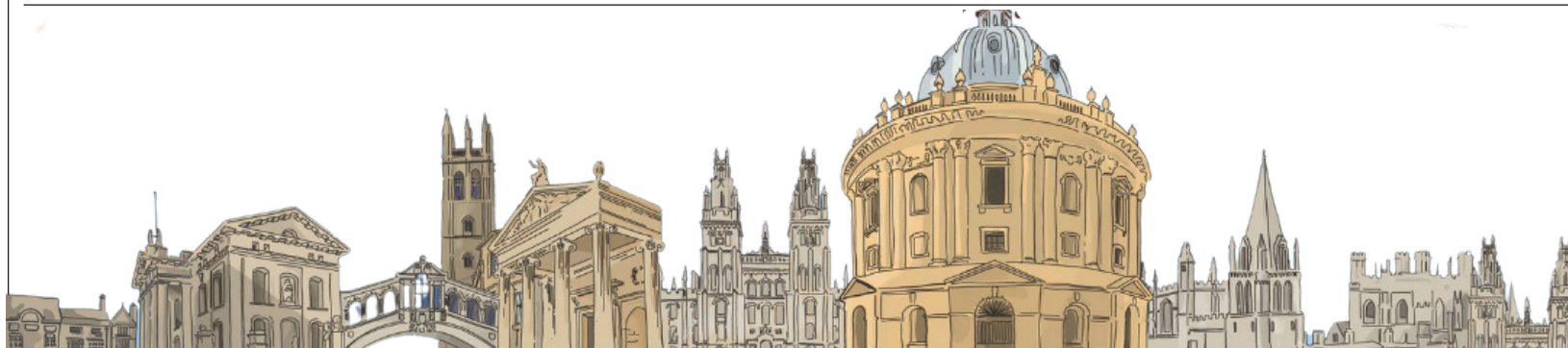
been from scientists who reflected deeply about the philosophical assumptions and implications inherent in their research.

Take it from Einstein: "A knowledge of the historic and philosophical background gives that kind of independence from prejudices of his generation from which most scientists are suffering. This independence created by philosophical insight is - in my opinion - the mark of distinction between a mere artisan or specialist and a real seeker after truth."

There is a rich history of cross-disciplinary interactions, which was never phrased in that way because the idea of separating

disciplines was never as rigid as it has been in the last half century. For example, Descartes is not only one of the critical modern philosophers, but he's also the reason why we have Cartesian geometry. For him, any distinction between maths, physics or philosophy would have been completely incoherent.

We should all lament the fact that many of those in STEM fields have forsaken an interest in philosophy and art (except an embarrassing obsession with AI art) in favour of 'scientific-certainty'. Any elementary understanding of philosophy would show that there can be no such thing.



How to grieve a stolen diary

After losing her diary, Leila Moore contemplates the significance of diarising to memory and identity.

Elizabeth Bishop's poem 'One Art' is beautiful because of its hypocrisy. The speaker exalts loss - of places, names, houses, their mother's watch - with an odd joviality. You're sure, reading it for the first time, that there must be something disingenuous going on here. The act of writing exposes the chasm between speech and feeling, as Bishop squeezes out the painful final lines: *Even losing you (the joking voice, a gesture I love) I shan't have lied. It's evident the art of losing's not too hard to master though it may look like (Write it!) like disaster.*

Bishop's voice here, before she lets the mask slip, seems to be reminiscent of some stoic and ancient philosophy, those that recognise the futility of attaching our worth and feelings to things you can have, whether it is a beautiful ring, or a city, or a person. She remains resistant to the hyper-consumption of modernity, when every time we open our phones, we are bombarded with an array of products that promise to make us feel a little better about ourselves if we buy them. But all of that is old news- we've all learned by now that ordering something off Amazon can't replace those parts of ourselves we suspect have gone missing.

Besides, isn't it boring, not to covet anything? A friend texted me recently with the quote that 'in capitalist societies, to love things is something of an embarrassment', and I felt gratified that I did have material things in my life to treasure: my books, my favourite clothes, and my diaries. Treasuring physical objects, especially ones that you have dreamed of and laboured over, feels like an apt rebellion in the age of click and collect.

Of course, there is a more pertinent theme to 'One Art' than possession, and that is loss. The motion of it, its substance, its stubborn revival throughout our lives. Until recently, I was fairly sure that the loss of a possession could never truly devastate me- to do so seemed frivolous, spoiled, even a little unintelligent. I could lose my

favourite pair of shoes, but I would still be me, I thought. That is, until I lost my diary.

Well, it wasn't technically lost; it was stolen on the last night of term. I always find endings uncomfortably liminal, full of fluctuating emotions and swallowed goodbyes that live in your throat for weeks. That's exactly why this Michaelmas I strategised something that would keep me occupied and not too existential: the faithful pub trip. Bundling into the Lamb and Flag on one of the first nights of December, I chatted with a friend about the last few days, and then briefly entertained some Americans who wanted restaurant recommendations from 'two real Oxford girls'. It was a normal evening, and the infinite potential for disaster that 'Friday of 8th week' holds in my mind turned out to be, well, in my mind. That is, until I woke up the morning after and realised I had left my bag in the pub. After confirming nobody had turned anything in, I began to accept that the journal, stored inside, was truly lost.

The first stage of acceptance took place in Crewe train station, which is already one of the most depressing places in England, indeed only made more so by the sight of me wailing on the phone to my mother as I wandered aimlessly up and down a platform. The shock of receiving the message that, 'No, no brown leather bag was handed in last night', had sent me into a temporary frenzy, and I was sobbing unashamedly in public for the first time of my adult life. My mum has watched me grow into a person who cocoons herself with words. Closest to my heart is the dear-diary prose of the journal, the mode of writing I began with at age five, which I still swear by now. At twenty, the form of the diary is still sacred to me, the place where I express what I am and craft the person I hope to be.

The notebook I lost spanned around six months of my life, including all my summer travels, even a few photos. But it wasn't necessarily the memories I had recorded that hurt the most to lose-



Artwork by Yuan-Yuan Foo

it was my feelings. My most private, most painful, and sometimes most shameful thoughts went into that notebook, the most previous entry dated only a few days prior to its loss. The thought tormented me, of a complete stranger rifling

“The thought tormented me, of a complete stranger rifling through the pages I had imprinted my heart onto.”

through the pages I had imprinted my heart onto. Would they be amused? Would they think I was silly, or reprehensible? My worst fear was that they would view it as entertainment, an opportunity to

tour my mind as a burglar would stroll into an unlocked house. 'I'm sure you feel as if you've been violated,' my mum said over the phone when I had stopped crying. Her words twisted in my stomach, but I was grateful that at least she understood.

When I arrived home for Christmas, I was drawn to the keepsake box stowed under my bed which contains all the diaries I have finished. My grief had subsided after a week, but I found myself thinking about writing more than I was actually writing. Why, I asked myself, had this habit endured for so much of my life, long enough to become instinct? Why did life not feel entirely real until I had written it down? Was it possible, I thought, that I had relied too much on these diaries to make my reality?

Diving headfirst into existentialism, I pulled out the first notebook from the box. A gift from my aunt when I was five, it came with a little lock and key that I quickly lost, but the notebook remains. It's as battered as you would expect: some pages are ripped out, some just contain scribbles, or a person

without arms I had abandoned drawing when something more interesting came along. Progressing through earlier journals acquainted me with the mechanics of writing- how to avoid smudging ink, how to date, how to write in cursive. When I was six or seven, I began to chronologise, and increasingly to complain- about my annoying sister, or someone at school.

There's little variety. I myself don't find them that interesting, despite having actually written them. Nevertheless, I can appreciate them for what they represent; namely, the beginning of my discovery of a secret place I could reside. A place of my own creation, which both did and did not exist, which was everywhere but only for me to find- in short, privacy.

Childhood is not a time many would define by privacy. For a start, you are taken care of for most of it, watched by someone, whether it be a parent or teacher. Sharing a bedroom meant I hardly had any time alone until I was around ten- but a diary in childhood is one of the few places of solitude you can create for yourself.



I was a quiet and at times strangely introspective kid, and I quickly learned that reading or writing meant people would leave me alone, and that being alone entailed a different kind of living than I had experienced before.

Also apparent from my writing is how expert the young diarist can become at mimicry; at age eight I strolled into a narrative voice heavily influenced by *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, and I even accompanied my entries with drawings for a few weeks. Thankfully I gave that up quickly after realising whatever talents I possessed did not lie in visual art. At age ten, when I was writing in a red fabric-bound journal, I faithfully addressed it as 'kitty', hoping to emulate my new personal hero, Anne Frank. Beyond the diarists and diary-novels I was reading at the time, these entries are really an unconscious reflection of what I loved to read when I learned to love reading, from *The Little Princess* to *The Hunger Games*.

In May 2017, I picked up my journal to write an inventory of all

“People often don’t have the energy to write anything but their tutorial essays at Oxford.”

my friends at school; what I liked and disliked about them, who was popular, who I admired and who I was jealous of. The teenage diarist is one of the most enduring images in pop culture; creative, disdainful and rebellious, the diary is an adolescent’s new playground. It’s clear I was revelling in the true range of my emotions when I was fourteen: one paragraph I’m dissecting the reasons for my parent’s divorce with surprising maturity, the next I’m describing the specific colour of my period blood. At this age I

discovered how liberating it can be to simply write the unspeakable, something you would have never dared to articulate before that now exists just for you.

At seventeen, Sylvia Plath’s collected diaries became my bible. I loved the passion she observed the world with, and tried to channel her diligent diarising into my own, fervently recording interactions I had with people in coffee shops and attempting to get down scraps of poetry.

Now that I’m a few years older, and one story-diary wiser, I can’t help but think of the trespass it is to treasure someone’s personal writings that were never intended for publication- that possibly would never have been in the public domain if their author had not committed suicide. But I fell in love with Plath’s writing about fish and chips before I was mature enough to consider the ethics of reading it-

“The girl picked up the cracked metal tin of salt and snowed it into the bag. Then, taking the cut-glass bottle of vinegar, she showered it onto the fish, lifted the edge of it, and doused the potatoes. She handed the bag back to the woman, who wrapped it in a sheaf of newspaper.”

Today I still find it difficult, as a literature student, to know what I think about reading diaries as literary artefacts. The private self is indeed different from the self we construct to face the public; but it is still constructed nonetheless, and whether it is ‘truer’ I could not say. Apart from the fact that, if the stranger that stole my diary reads it instead of throwing it in the bin, I hope they would understand that although that notebook expresses important parts of myself, it hardly constitutes the whole of it.

When I was eighteen I started university and stopped writing for myself. At the same time I was writing more than I ever had in my life, and became quickly acquainted with the rhythm of churning out the weekly essay. People often don’t have the energy to write anything but their tutorial essays at Oxford, and this was true for me, but the bigger obstacle to my keeping a diary was actually the new version of my life I was struggling to become acquainted with. As I departed from adolescence, so I departed from the ways I wrote about my adolescence, and after many failed attempts at describing my new life, I got tired of staring at blank pages and angry at myself for being unable to fill them with anything but self-pity. So I put my pen down for ten months and learned how to have fun.

But old habits are hard to break, and in my second year I inadvertently started writing about my feelings again when I was keeping a travel itinerary in Morocco. My diaries now look very different to what they did before; they are not such obviously precious objects, with pages ripped out, scribbled over, paragraphs abruptly broken off when I had to dash out of the house, and entries interspersed with shopping lists which remind me to buy a new pair of nail scissors. I’ve also taken to obsessively collecting ticket stubs, notes from friends, play programmes, and postcards, in an attempt to scrapbook. It’s an activity that I find profoundly feminine and novel, with its roots in the 19th century scrapbooking of wealthy and

travelling women. Trying it myself only sheds light on my own shortcomings, and the unrecognised talents of women living centuries ago, who were able to create such beautiful works of art in their day-to-day lives.

“It is an endless labour of love that involves parting with my feelings in the hope that they can find a more bearable form in language.”

Diarising is one of the most socially accepted forms of vanity, a room which contains only your voice. When I lost mine, it was the loss of this privacy, the preserved parts of myself - shopping lists and all - that hurt the most to be parted from. But as the weeks have passed, I’ve forgotten most of what I wrote in the stolen notebook, and I think less and less about the anonymous thief who may be delighting in it. Most surprisingly, I’m still me, with the same ideas and feelings which I can record in my new journal (I treated myself to my first Moleskine to help me through the mourning period).

I always assumed that I journalled to obtain self-discovery; that one day I might stumble across the clearly articulated source of all my problems in an entry dated ten years prior. How naïve it was, I realise now, to think I could be my own archivist. Writing about my life could never solve the question of who I am; that kind of work must be done away from the page. What I have learned is that these notebooks are aesthetic testimonies to the various chapters of my life. The greatest joy of keeping them is being able to flick through the filled pages and basking in the texture of my own existence: ‘I am, I am, I am.’

When I lost my journal, I was confronted with how much of a hoarder I am, of my emotions as much as my possessions. What I failed to realise before is that all diary keeping is loss. What’s present in my entries is the shedding of pain and worries, hopes and aspirations, so that I can move through life a little less encumbered by their weight. It is an endless labour of love that involves parting with my feelings in the hope that they can find a more bearable form in language. It demands me to trust that I have the ability to make something useful out of this separation.

Diaries are collections of our most noteworthy debris, and we keep them because, as long as they have blank pages to offer, they, in turn, offer the opportunity to lose whatever is causing weight on the mind and heart: an exercise in self-annihilation as much as self-creation. It took a forgotten bag and a healthy dose of thievery for me to realise this, and to

know that Elizabeth Bishop is right after all; loss is an art, and I have been unwittingly practising it since the Christmas I received my first notebook. Once I got past the sensation of feeling as though I had lost a limb, I welcomed my diary’s disappearance as an opportunity to let go: of the feelings of inadequacy and guilt it sometimes stored, of unkind words about the people I love, of unfulfilled wishes.

“Diaries are collections of our most noteworthy debris... they offer the opportunity to lose whatever is causing weight on the mind and heart.”

Of course, I could have taken a different route of cynicism and anger, that I can never keep the things I treasure safe. But so much writing has taught me that I do have free will in small matters such as these, so I’ve chosen to be kind to myself, to craft a story and a lesson out of the whole affair. Isn’t it what I’ve been preparing for all along?



The making of a new generation in northern Kosovo

Sofia Johanson discusses the work of The Library Project, a charity in Kosovo which uses the power of literature to heal fractures.

Eager hands reach toward the ceiling as children at the Ismail Qemali school in Mitrovica, northern Kosovo, desperately try to attract the attention of an author who has come to talk to the pupils about her new book. They want to know more about the central character - a young refugee who finds herself in a strange new country - and about how to be a good writer.

Such a scene was unthinkable before The Library Project began its work in the region, building libraries from scratch, bringing books into schools for the first time, training teachers in new methods, and implementing 'Reading Hour', an activity in which the entire class participates in a discussion of a book's themes, plot and characters. The charity's overall aim is to use group reading to construct a tradition of dialogue in a region that has suffered greatly from ethnic divisions and alienation, not only during the 1990s Yugoslav wars, but more recently too.

Last April, ethnic Serbs boycotted the Kosovan mayoral elections in a protest over broken promises of autonomy; in July the hospital in Mitrovica faced shortages in medical supplies due to the closure of border crossings; and by September four men had lost their lives in a confrontation between Serbian paramilitaries and Kosovan police. Symbolically, this last conflagration had taken place in an Orthodox monastery only twenty minutes away from the Ismail Qemali school in Mitrovica.

I came across The Library Project whilst desperately trying to understand what has been going on between Kosovo and Serbia over the last twelve months. It was born from the founder Safete Binaku's experience of the Serbia-Kosovo conflict, in which campaigns led by convicted war criminal Slobodan Milosevic resulted in the displacement of over one million Albanian Kosovans, and the deaths of thousands.

Safete Binaku was one of those forced to flee, moving to Sweden aged 13. Memories of her school days are not filled with novels and the opportunity to discuss literature, but of being taught in separate classrooms to the ethnic Serbs, and not being allowed to play with them at breaktime, before finally leaving Kosovo. She describes her flight in terms that convey the chaos, pessimism and tragedy of the era: "as we left everything burned down behind us, there was no return". Fittingly for someone who runs

a charity based on the power of books, she explains that the brutality of the 1990s was a consequence of the fact that Serbs and Kosovans had "two completely different stories", and neither group sought to understand the other's. It was partly her desire to make sure that today's young Kosovans are able to engage and understand others' stories, experiences, and opinions, that encouraged her to set up The Library Project in 2017 with some friends in Stockholm.

Owing to her promotion of tolerance and dialogue, I wanted to know if her experience of the famed culture of acceptance in Sweden had also played a role in the estab-

"Understanding the transformative potential of a single book, she wanted to bring that empowerment to her homeland."

lishment of her charity. Her answer is nuanced.

On the one hand, she describes how proud she was to associate herself with Sweden up until 2015, recounting how she signed up to volunteer with Syrian refugees but didn't get a spot because so many people had put themselves forward.

However, like in much of Europe, the country's right-wing populist party has seen significant gains in recent years, and in 2022 it became part of a government coalition for the first time in its history.

The innocuously-named Swedish Democrats' doubt the viability of multiculturalism and often point to the situation in Malmo, a city with a 35% foreign born population, which has long suffered with high crime rates and has been described as having 'no go zones' for police. Safete laments the rising trend of politicians laying the blame on immigrants, but feels that Sweden still has a "very giving culture", highlighting that it is currently the fifth biggest donor to Kosovo.

But she also directly credits her experience of the Swedish education system as inspiration for the charity, citing the injustice she felt

when she was helped to pick out a book at secondary school, knowing that Kosovan children didn't receive the same attention as she did. Understanding the transformative potential of a single book, she wanted to bring that empowerment to her homeland.

Safete believes that part of the value of being a lifelong reader is becoming comfortable with perspectives that challenge your own. She tells me how *Wonder*, a book about a boy with a facial deformity, and the orphaned *Oliver Twist*, have had a particularly strong impact on the Kosovan children who have received books thanks to The Library Project.

Nonetheless, Suzana, a teacher and Safete's co-founder, highlights the children's "hunger for more stories that speak to them", a desire that is being met by The Project's drive to get more Kosovan literature into the classroom. By seeing their own childhoods reflected on the pages of books, it is hoped that pupils will also gain the tools to articulate their own experiences to others.

'Reading Hour', similar to activities like 'class reader' in the UK, is unlike anything Safete experienced at school in Kosovo in the 90s, when the education system was strongly grounded in strict discipline and rote learning. In fact, today's Kosovan children struggle with the concept initially as a result of comprehension and analysis skills still being completely left off the Kosovan curriculum. They are often uncomfortable with the concept of debate, answering questions intended to elicit their opinions with memorised paragraphs of the book, but soon begin to passionately advocate for or critique the central characters in every story.

All the books are handpicked by the Project, based on their ability to generate discussion on a pressing theme, whether that's friendship, LGBTQ+ issues, or bullying. Some of the themes even allow teachers to tackle taboo topics in Kosovan society, and Safete explains how Anne Frank's diary provided a surprising example.

"They didn't know

that you could talk about having a negative relationship with a parent", she says, describing the shock the children felt when Anne expresses less than generous thoughts about her mother. It is not part of Kosovan culture to talk about feelings openly, especially any sentiments that might betray disrespect to one's elders, and so it is unsurprising that several children told their teacher that they were going to start a private diary. For their sake, I hope their parents don't read them...

But the impact of the project is felt far beyond 'Reading Hour'. In the absence of a clearly defined curriculum, Kosovan teachers are often left with little guidance on how to educate the children, a difficulty compounded by the scarcity of resources written in Albanian. One of the first ways that The Library Project sought to make a change in Kosovan classrooms was by training educators in small sessions, before sending them back to their respective schools and asking them to spread the new methods amongst their colleagues.

"We're trying to put the system in place and then hand it over", Safete explains, a philosophy which reflects the sense of independence, creativity, and initiative that she is trying to instil in the children themselves.

Testimonies all attest to the impact the project has had on educators' professional and personal lives, with teachers Ermira, Donita and Merita all commenting on how it has revolutionised the children's learning and their own approach to all subjects, and Naime - the very first teacher to receive the training - saying that Reading Hour, loved by the children, "has become very dear" to her as well.

But scrolling through the charity's Instagram account, it is striking that almost

all the pictures of the

teacher training sessions include only women. Though empowering the female educators the project works with, Safete admits that male teachers are often more resistant to learning new techniques.

This is only one of the challenges they face, the greatest of all being the scepticism exhibited by children, headteachers and parents when approached by the charity.

"Kosovan kids are not like the Swedish kids."

"You are never going to manage to build us a library."

"They don't read that way."

The second of these statements of doubt was uttered by Ardian, a ninth-grader who was incredulous at the prospect of his run-down school having its own library.

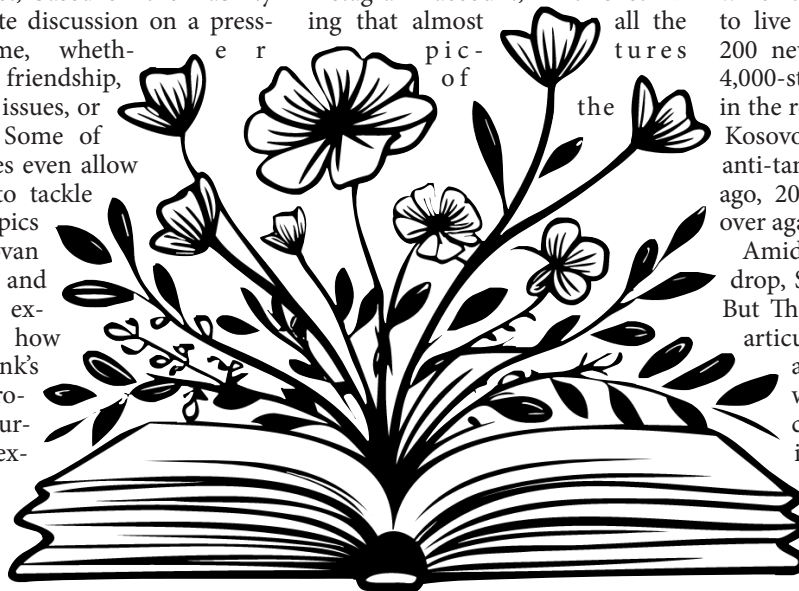
A few years later, Safete was in a café in Kosovo and Ardian bounded up to her, excitedly telling her that although he had now graduated, his younger siblings were using the newly built library at the school.

Such success stories as this will fuel the project's current plans, which will involve more teacher training and setting up a library in Pristina, Kosovo's capital. Like the other facilities set up by the charity, it will have a rotating collection, so local schools will be able to take out a full set of books to run 'Reading Hour', and when they come back for their next set, their previous loan will be passed on to another school to borrow.

Last September's escalation of violence perforates this sense of optimism, but also re-asserts why The Library Project's work is so crucial. Serbian children still learn a different version of history to their Kosovan counterparts across the border, and without a mutual understanding of one another, it is difficult to imagine a context in which the two groups might be able to live in relative harmony. With 200 new UK soldiers joining the 4,000-strong NATO taskforce based in the region, and the US accepting Kosovo's application to buy Javelin anti-tank missiles only two weeks ago, 2024 could see tensions boil over again.

Amidst this dark, uncertain backdrop, Safete insists she is no hero. But The Library Project's mission, articulated by co-founder Suzana as using books to pave "the way to a brighter future for children and young people in Kosovo" certainly seems heroic.

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



Music

American Odyssey – The World Building of Lana del Rey

Ellen Rowlands

The past decade of Lana del Rey's music has ventured from the deserts and neon-lights of Las Vegas to the streets of New York, Hollywood, and eventually rural California. This journey through the lens of old-world Americana is enticing, and for me a huge part of what makes her music so captivating. Moulding this narrative not only through where she chooses to place herself, but also how she chooses to express it has led to Lana del Rey filling stadiums around the world, always keeping us coming back for

more. Whether it's a cry-your-heart out ballad, 160's inspired lullaby or an effortlessly cool hip hop piece, her world building plays such a large part in her success. However, whilst places and time scales may change, Lana's continual reliance upon the idea of melancholy and sadness within her work shines through. It's the melancholy and continual longing for the places she's left and the places she's in which makes the listener dive into another album looking for the next instalment.

If we are to think of her albums as these instalments, they feel almost confessional. They track the

life of a young twenty something party girl gone wrong into a ranch owning chicken feeding country woman. NFR, her fifth studio album, expresses this metamorphosis clearly when in *How to Disappear* she writes "Now it's been years since I left new York/ I've got a kid and two cats in the yard/ The California sun and the movie stars/ I watch the skies getting light as I write/ as I think about those years". Infusions of the confessional into lines like this is part of what keeps us wrapped up in the story. We want to see what area of Americana she'll lean into next. If it's not the starlet, the old-money darling or the free-spirited hippie what could it be? In light of this, it's possible to draw comparisons between Lana and Taylor Swift. Both rely heavily on creating set time-periods in their work or in Taylor's case, Eras. On the sides of both del Rey and Swift this is a clever marketing tactic because why pull in only one fan-base when you could have four or five? Listeners can identify with their chosen album, infusing into it their own memories, feelings, and journey. It's common knowledge and pretty obvious that artists are never going to stay the same, take Lorde's transition from grunge Tumblr teen to Solar goddess. However, the dif-

ference in Lana's take on this sets her apart from her contemporaries, she not only builds landscapes, she immerses us in them.

The landscapes she builds for us may drastically shift, yet there's a distinct sense of cohesiveness to all of her projects. Just take a look at any of her lyrics, there are constant repetitions of "tears" "racing cars" "guns" "roses" or perhaps most infamously "cola" tie her many lives together. This kind of lyrical branding, honing in on specific words and their connotations in order to paint these landscapes are central to her brand. Immediately, when we think of them, our mind draws back to this idea of the sad-girl, bad-boy universe she plays into that it almost becomes referential to what she's actually saying. Whilst readings such as this have drawn controversy from both the media and the songstress herself, in a 2019 Twitter battle amidst the NFR release, Lana got back at critics by quipping: "Never had a persona. Never needed one. Never will." Her shape shifting and reliance on specific tropes make it really easy to see why this conclusion might be drawn. However, for me, it's always been possible to see Lana not as a persona but a commentator for our times and our culture. She referenc-

es, she provokes, and she engages us in her world building. After all, who else would be able to say "pass me my vape/ I'm feeling sick/ I need a puff" after writing something as poetic as Margaret? She's up to date on every aspect of today's cultural milieu but isn't afraid to look back to the past when it might seem more poetic. It's this tongue in cheek observing and crafting of her sound which is testament to her value as an artist rather than a persona.

Lana's sound and brand seems to be a never ending public and private journey. From listening to her first album on my iPod mini aged 9 (the consequences of unfettered access to the internet) one thing I've learnt is that she's never tiring. Even though we're now a decade on from that release, it's still an album I continually return to. Why? Because it's exciting. Amongst her other works, I get to go on a journey, to sepia toned flashes of dinners and parties and beaches whilst meeting bikers, celebrities and maybe the odd gangster along the way. With her headlining of Reading this summer and release of her country album *Lasso* this autumn, I'm only more excited to see the new territories she's charting.

Image Credit: Jaguar MENA /CC BY 2.0 via Flickr



Art

A Press Morning at Yoko Ono's 'MUSIC OF THE MIND' Exhibition

Taya Neilson

Tracing seven decades of Yoko Ono's multidisciplinary approach to art, the exhibition *YOKO ONO: MUSIC OF THE MIND* is a celebration of her interactive and often radical work. As such, a symphony of sounds struck me upon first entering the main gallery room of the exhibition at the Tate Modern. Her 'Music of the Mind' was very much present and alive. The general buzz amongst visitors, the projection of Ono's films onto the gallery walls and her voice added a dimension of musical performance to the exhibition, contrasting the traditional silence expected in art galleries.

The usual compelling force to remain quiet within the art gallery was thus removed; visitors did not stare at the work created by Ono in silence for a prolonged period of time or awkwardly shuffle to the side to make room for the next observer, their brows stern as they inspected the pieces on display. Instead, visitors were constantly mobile and vocal as they moved from one interactive piece to the next. The gallery space itself did not provide an atmosphere of silence, but rather upon observation, isolated moments of contemplation and quietness were evident amongst

the bustling scene in the room.

Ono's installation *Add Colour (Refugee Boat)* is an example of how viewers interacted with her work to create their own collaborative art. It started as an all-white boat in an all-white room and, as the day progressed, it became a mural adorned with blue messages. Visitors expressed their own thoughts regarding the ongoing refugee crisis present today in contemporary society through the medium of art as they responded to Ono's instructions that 'Just blue like the ocean' they should contribute their own hopes and beliefs in blue and white. The collaborative creation of this piece, therefore, reflects on the ability to make a significant impact through collective action. Yet, alone in that very room was a little girl, clasping a pen marker bigger than her hand. The girl was not aware of the messages written across the walls or the press that stood to the side of the room, but rather she was circling the white boat, deciding where to make her mark. It soon became apparent that she was finding the perfect place to write Ono's name. An act of commemoration occurred at that very moment and the artist herself became part of the collective wall of messages encapsulating human agency and joint-responsibility.



Another two men participated in the *White Chess Set*—a game consisting of white chess pieces and the instruction 'play as long as you can remember where all your pieces are'. They avidly leant forward to observe the game unfolding, so focused and unfettered by their fellow visitors walking past. First released in 1966, *White Chess Set* demonstrates Ono's anti-war stance, making the interactive element of her piece extremely significant. As the chess pieces are indistinguishable, Ono's modifications encourage the players to collaborate in order to establish a truce between them. She wanted her art

to engage its viewers, feeling it necessary to directly communicate the importance of world peace to her fellow activists and neighbours.

In May 1971, Ono revealed how she believed anyone could be an artist and that, in her view, paintings went through a life transformation when people engaged directly with them. This explains the presence of Ono's 'instruction pieces' throughout the exhibition. A particular moment caught the attention of the room during the press morning: a sudden banging as a girl engaged with Ono's piece *Painting to Hammer a Nail*. As soon as the loud clamour was heard, photographers clustered around this spontaneous performance. The girl not only became an artist in her own right, hammering a nail into the blank canvas as instructed by Ono, but she also simultaneously became part of the art, as photographs were taken capturing this event.

By instructing others to add to her work, rather than merely repeating it, Ono noted in 2001 that she felt like she was representing the whole artistic community and releasing herself from her position amongst an elite group of artists. The exhibition *YOKO ONO: MUSIC OF THE MIND*, therefore, cleverly relates Ono's artwork to

her world views. Rather than taking the position of the 'elite' artist, Ono removes the hierarchy established between the artist and viewer through her instructions. Her collaborative artwork and performances were thus created to reflect on the importance of collective activism and agency in order to cam-



paign for world peace and social justice.

'Soon there will be no need for artists, since people will start to write their own instructions or exchange them and paint' (Letter to Ivan Karp from Yoko Ono, 1965)

Photography by Taya Neilson

Fashion

The Oxford Fashion Gala is Back!

Eden Kilgour

You heard it here first! After an incredible sold-out 2023 show, The Oxford Fashion Gala is back for 2024, so get the date in your diary (W3 TT24!), because after speaking to the OFG President, David Akanji, and Creative Director Zaira Christa, we're convinced that it won't be one to miss.

In case you haven't heard, The Oxford Fashion Gala is an annual fashion showcase, celebrating creativity and fashion design which is so often overlooked at Oxford, which, this year, is focused around the theme 'A Voyage in Ascent'. This year's Gala is in support of Oxford Mutual Aid, a not-for-profit company which is working towards reducing homelessness in Oxford. To give our readers an exclusive insight (!), *Cherwell* spoke to the team themselves to get all the hottest on their vision for the upcoming OFG, and we can assure you they didn't disappoint!

It appears that we're in good hands, with the multi-talented OFG President himself - David Akinja - a second-year medic at Oriol, who explored his motivations for applying for the role as rooted in his experience completing a Foundation Course at UAL, where he focused his Final Major Project around the evolution of the UK black fashion scene and its impact on current trends. David is intrigued by fashion, being at the "forefront of [his] creative endeavours" as

an extension of sculpture and 3D art, and is excited to share this creativity through his Presidency!

The brilliant Zaira Christa, second-year music student at Somerville and OFG Creative Director outlined her motivations as based around bringing her own experience in the fashion industry to Oxford, being her self-titled brand 'Zaira Christa', which launched in September 2022 and first took to the runway in London Fashion Week 2023.

A Voyage in Ascent, is adapted from Issey Miyake's SS22 collection *A Voyage in Descent*.

This collection is a representation of a journey into the abyss, whereby the looks play

with fluid, dynamic and lightweight fabrics, combined with flowing curves, glossy textures and intense colours to represent a progression into the deep sea, from the silence and peace which come with entry into the water, to the discovery of new creatures and sensations as the voyage continues. The team explored their fascination with, and subsequent adaptation of this collection

with their initial attraction to "celestial" ideas and the stark contrast of such with "depths ... and darkness". David told *Cherwell* that "upon more research, I came across Miyake's SS22 collection, ... which made me think that would be a nice spin to put on it ... instead of descending downwards, let's take that and spin it and bring everything upwards". The OFG team is keen to "give designers a good breadth to take the theme and push it in any direction ... so it becomes a

more celebratory event where designers have their own creative vision and they are free to explore any avenue".

Contrast appears to be an element the team is excited to work with, as Zaira explored the development of her original "lunar eclipse" idea, where the "guests would dress in black so the designers would have the freedom to design in any colour", which was built on by the team's focus on "celestial bodies, and spiritual ascent as well as literal ascent".

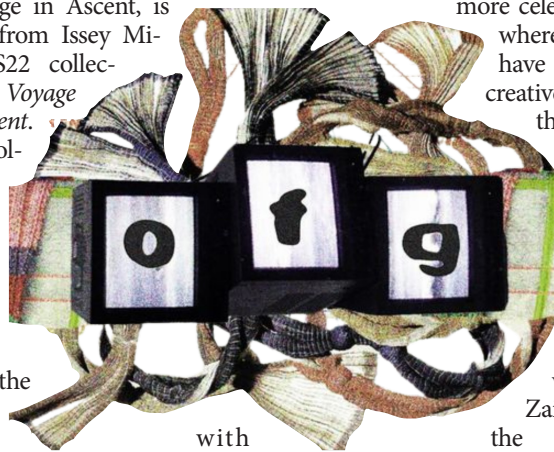
The OFG team plans to make the celebration of who the designers and models are a priority this year, with a production of a catalogue of looks

with bios of each designer, and spaces for them to discuss their ideas and thoughts, to contextualise the garments and bring them to life. Zaira emphasises their focus on a "space of creative expression... with a celebration of fashion and art for both designers and guests".

However, the Gala itself isn't solely about the expression of artistry, as David delves deeper into their focus on sustainability, stating the team's pledge to "align ourselves with brands that are ethical and ... work well with the environment, ... adamantly steer[ing] away from retail", despite its potential economic benefits. The team "values integrity ... as a society", and is encouraging upcycling, emphasising to designers that "you don't need to go out and buy yards and yards of fabric to create a look! ... The resurrection of clothing is an avenue we're really trying to push designers to go down".

Perhaps the most exciting element of The Oxford Fashion Gala, however, is that you can get involved! The call-out for both models and designers is open now on their Instagram, @theoxfordfashiongala! With no experience required, this is the perfect opportunity to channel your creativity, as either a designer or model, as David emphasises his desire to decrease gate-keeping of the industry, and increase inclusivity in the event, calling for "everyone to have fun, and enjoy themselves through fashion".

Image credit: Oxford Fashion Gala



Mistakes and Markers of Time

Violet Aitchison

Whilst I was procrastinating in the Rad Cam a couple of days ago, I glanced down at my hand, and for the first time in a while, I properly looked at one of the tattoos I had gotten two years ago. Of course, I catch sight of it every day as I'm washing my hands, typing on my laptop, and cooking, but I don't often actually look and think about it. Part of the reason I so infrequently admire it is because when I do, I have to face the fact that it's slightly wonky, weird-looking, and faded, as a friend of a friend 'stick and poked' me in her mum's sitting room. The reason it is slightly wonky is because, during the process, I refused to tell her that I wanted the stencil position to be moved slightly to

the right. I was too scared I would upset or offend her, so I let her tattoo my wrist knowing it looked off-centre. Because at that time in my life, I would have truly rather permanently altered my appearance in a way I didn't quite like rather than stand up for myself. I understand how stupid this might sound to some of you. But now, when I look at my wrist, I don't regret my choice, I look at it fondly.

It's very easy to criticise and cringe at old pictures of yourself, wondering how your mum ever let you leave the house in your most treasured white ripped 'joni jeans', or knee-high DM boots. But to me, this evidence acts as such a time capsule. Dying my hair has been an important part of my identity since I first coloured it baby pink at sixteen. For some people, different scents or songs can transport them to different times of their lives, but for me, hair colour acts as a marker of time. My hair has been pink, bleached blonde, silver, black, red, brown, copper, blonde, and brown again. It's a bit of a cliché that when faced with change you completely alter your hair, but I have to admit that when I broke up with my first boyfriend, I immediately chopped it all off and dyed it black. Similarly, before I came to university, riddled with anxiety about how I was

going to be perceived, I got way too many layers cut and dyed my hair copper. And whilst I've learned to regulate this tendency, I refuse to feel remorseful.

It saddens me now to see teens of eleven, twelve, and thirteen wearing 'trendy' outfits, compared to the likes of influencers like Molly Mae or Matilda Djerf. It feels like these young people are missing out on 'rite of passage' experiences. Because without all those whacky outfit choices, and crazed make-up looks I'm not sure I would have found my style. Experimenting and messing up is an important part of building your distinct identity, and if we have children who never did this due to the pressure from social media to be 'cool', individuality is going to decrease. Amongst pre-teens, the rise and dominance of brands such as 'Lulu Lemon' which emphasise neutral tones and basic silhouettes are adding to the loss of originality. And that is not to judge older people who enjoy this style. It's just I'm sure those adults had time to experiment with different styles before choosing that as their own. But when eight-year-olds on 'TikTok' are in matching beige sets carrying a 'Stanley' cup half the size of their head, you've got to wonder how we got here and what is to become of a new generation

whose life is so documented online that they cannot bear to make mistakes or laugh at themselves. How do you ever move forward or become self-aware without learning from disastrous decisions that are only forgivable because of your youth?

These days, I wear my closed-up piercing holes and grown-out layers with pride. Each story behind them might not be my proudest moment, but I'm glad I have literal, lasting marks on my body to remind me of memories I would have otherwise forgotten. We live in an age of impulsivity and impatience, and whilst many of my piercings and hair changes happened for those exact reasons, I'm glad they led to physical reminders of all the experiences I've collected across the years. Because whilst the minute stick-and-poke flower on my right hand's middle finger might often be wrongly identified as fireworks, shooting stars, or, in its worst moments, a magic wand, I get to always hold the memory of that drunken night with my two school friends when we gave each other the tattoos. And I'm certain that was not my last dodgy tattoo or failed fashion choice. But I look forward to reminiscing about the stories behind my future 'mistakes'.

Image Credit: Penn State



WHAT'S ON...

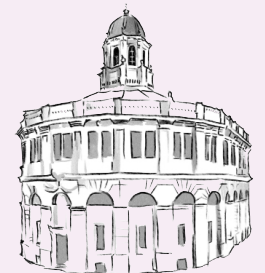
The ultimate guide to what's happening where in Oxford in 7th and 8th week...

Stage: The Trail to Oregon
@The Pilch
5th-9th March

Based on the classic Trail to Oregon game, the musical follows a family as they travel the Oregon trail. The twist? Each night, the audience chooses the names, stories and endings of the characters - no two shows will ever be the same!

Stage: The Sun King
@BT Studio
5th-9th March

The Sun King takes us through a boy's adolescent years... and the reign of a fantasy king. In the Sun King's realm, it's always bright and warm, no matter the season.



Art: Bruegel to Rubens
@The Ashmolean
23rd March - 23rd June

The Ashmolean's next ticketed exhibition will be a showcase of over 100 exceptional Flemish drawings from the 16th and 17th centuries.

Film: Dune - Part II
@Odeon Oxford
From 1st March

Timothee Chalamet and Zendaya among others return in Dune II, with Paul Atreides seeking revenge against the conspirators who destroyed his family.



Books

Greg Heffley: A Hero of our Time

Sebastian Hall

Is Greg Heffley the hero we never knew we needed?

Few modern comic heroes align with our distinctive age – an age which Dickens's famous opening, 'It was the best of times, it was the worst of times', would easily resonate, and an age in which progress and innovation coexist with existential threats. Jeff Kinney's literary forebears, those of the disillusioned and hubristic comic hero tradition, lie firmly in the twentieth century: the gloriously self-important Mr Poots, Orwell's ostracised bookseller Gordon Comstock, the ever-exasperated academic Jim Dixon, and the acne-riddled Middle-England poet Adrian Mole.

Greg represents all of the hubris and 'self-irony' of this literary tradition, and this is where the series' comic appeal lies. For instance, his constant belittlement of his best friend Rowley Jefferson, and pretensions of grandeur by comparison, is confounded when Greg's paranoia leads their mutual date, Abigail, into Rowley's arms in *The Third Wheel*. Yet in his distinctive 'David Brent'

mould Greg's heroism is consistently balanced with some pretty unsavoury characteristics. Between his disregard for Rowley when he breaks his arm in the original book and his failure to take responsibility for wrecking his Dad's car in *Old School*, we do not find a particularly noble or virtuous character in Jeff Kinney's volumes.

But is that what we want when we turn to comedy? Probably not. Rather, it is the passages of ironic brilliance, that elude self-realisation, that resonate with us and make us laugh. Just as Sue Townsend's *Adrian Mole* fails to recognise the shortcomings of his ultra-pretentious avant-garde literary style, Greg's comic strip is superseded by Rowley's genuinely funny *Zoo Wee Mama!* comic in the school newspaper. In a quest for popularity that does not dissipate throughout the series, Greg also demonstrates his shallowness. After becoming the most popular kid in

school for being able to tell the time at his terrible new school in *No Brainer*, his newly bestowed title of "Time Lord" beautifully characterises his self-delusion – or maybe reflects a sense of pragmatism that, if he becomes popular based on being able to tell the time, so be it.

The twenty-first century could well be perfect for the sense of disillusionment which pervades every volume and affects Greg's actions so decisively. And through its engagement with deeply contemporary issues, the series explores being a teenager in an age which should have everything, yet in which there are new and troubling challenges. His battle with his anti-technology mother at the beginning of *Old School* pits the generations firmly against one another – an Arkady bringing the modernising Bazarov to the sceptical older generation.

But it is the trip to a tropical resort

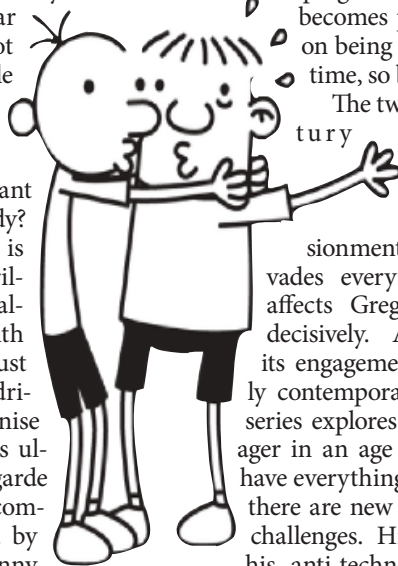
in *The Getaway* that most embodies our ambiguous and sometimes pessimistic age: his high expectations of paradise are confounded by what has become the epitome of modern tacky commercialism. If his parents are Adam and Eve going back to their prelapsarian nirvana, then Greg is the voice of their fallen descendants, wrestling with the snake of disappointment. He must reckon with the frustrations of modern life, just as Orwell's neurotic Gordon rails against the modern "Money God" that conspires against his relationships and writings.

Yet, between the dating failures and the strains of family life, there remains in Greg a profoundly human capacity for kindness and humility. This provides a heartfelt, necessary counterpoint, and reminds the modern reader of the possibility and everyday reality of goodness in our times. His reconciliation with the recently broken-up Rowley in *Hard Luck* allows Greg to bury the hatchet with his oldest friend; when the proposed Heffley house move in *Wrecking Ball* threatens to break the friendship apart again, and does not materialise at the eleventh hour, the

final scene of them reunited reminds the reader of the tenderness of relationships forged over many years.

Here Greg experiences a rare and cathartic moment of self-realisation: his friendship with Rowley is more important than any new house. The dichotomy between constant self-delusion, and self-realisation in the critical moments, provides the reader both with searing humour at Greg's expense, and yet the final recognition that he can overcome his flawed personality and relationships to preserve what matters – so the bumbling David Brent reconciles with his Wernham Hogg colleagues in *The Office*'s dying moments. The 3-pointer Greg accidentally makes at the end of *Big Shot*, having been traded off his basketball team by his own mother, emphasises this unlikely heroism. Happiness in an uncertain world may come from unexpected places. It is his unimpressive ability to tell the time, rather than any self-deluded attempts at romance, that finally gets him a girlfriend in *No Brainer* (if only for a few pages). And if the perennially under-achieving Greg can find success, so can we all.

Image Credit: sugarbee908/CC BY-ND 3.0 via DeviantArt.



Stage

"Mature & intelligent": *Julius Caesar* review

Adam Saxon

Arriving at the TS Eliot theatre to be greeted by a small (intimate?) venue, I was fascinated to see how the Merton Floats, in collaboration with the Univ Players, would deliver on their promise of a 'film noir' take on Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. We were warned before the sold-out Friday showing that a cast member had been taken ill and other members would be 'filling in' – but as the cliché goes, the show must go on, and soon enough the lights dimmed, and the play began.

From start to finish, it was a show filled with excellent performances from leading cast members. Take, for example, Cassius (Lucas Haskins). He was depicted perfectly as the brooding plotter, disillusioned by Caesar. Particularly brilliant was the visible rage behind his eyes in the scene where he is mocked by Caesar. Both his and Brutus' (Ethan Bareham) drawn out speeches to each other were also excellent, and we felt a real connection build between the two as the play went on.

was also very well played, with the internal turmoil seen through the body language exhibited during scenes like that of the murder of Caesar, in which he appeared to be in a state of agony.

At the right moments, it was also a play which didn't take itself too seriously. Our *Julius Caesar* (Myfanwy Taylor-Bean) was especially good at knowing which moments to bring lavish extravagance to and generate laughter from the crowd as a result. Her hubris was visible, and her charisma convincing. As Caesar should be, she was the centre of attention in every scene she was a part of. Other cast members were also incredibly good at making the most of the funny parts of the script – take the comic relief of the murder of Cinna the poet; a silly scene, and suitably silly in its delivery in this performance.

By far and away though my favourite moment of the evening has to go to Mark Antony (Thomas Allen). His Soliloquy following the death of *Julius Caesar* just before the interval was filled with the passionate rage that such a speech wouldn't be right without. Indeed, from his first appearance in the play, Antony

delivered an incredibly mature performance, exhibiting the manipulation of Brutus and Cassius with his changes in demeanour perfectly. His speeches were convincing even to an audience member, and he had us all in stitches with the way he worked the crowd up at Caesar's funeral.

One must also give credit to the crew for the very intelligent use of the space in the theatre. Though I was concerned upon entry about the small venue's ability to do justice to the grand and extravagant speeches that this play is laced with, its intimate setting actually did much to enhance the experience. Being so close to the actors allows the audience to pick up on every detail of the cast's body language, an aspect of their performance that many members had perfected. The compact setting also worked in the cast's favour in scenes like the Caesar's funeral, in which the cast surrounding the audience to heckle the characters during their speeches made us feel at one with the crowd. The hilarious fickleness of the Roman citizens through the switching tones of the heckles was a hysterical touch (made particularly funny by whichever cast member was repeatedly shouting 'bastard' at any mention of Brutus).

The only major aspect of the play which I felt more could have been made of was the 'film noir' theme. The opening scenes which utilised the piano and the warning to Caesar of the 'Ides of March' taking place over the phone were great uses of this, but it felt as though beyond the costuming the theme was much forgotten after that, other than the odd gun being waved around here and there.

Stop Me If You've Heard This One Before...

Rufus Jones

*The Sail- Mikhail Lermontov*

A lone white sail shows for an instant
Where gleams the sea, an azure streak.
What left it in its homeland distant?
In alien parts what does it seek?
The willows play, the mast bends, creaking,
The wind, impatient, moans and sighs.
It is not joy that it is seeking,
Nor is't from happiness it flies.
The blue waves dance, they dance and tremble,
The sun's bright waves caress the seas.
And yet for storm it begs, the rebel,
As if in storm lurked calm and peace! ...

When you're busy, slow days without any alarms or to-do lists seem heavenly. Once the holidays come around, though, such days quickly get old and left to languish, ennui sets in. While rest is important, there is a crucial distinction between rest and inertia: to be out of the action for too long, like a sail on calm seas, robs us of purpose; something far more satisfying than a lie-in.

Seneca gets at what I'm trying to say aptly: 'No man is more unhappy than he who never faces adversity. For he is not permitted to prove himself. If your path has no obstacles in its way

and you get what you want easily, it all feels a bit shallow and meaningless. I know it seems banal but doing, creating, etc. is a surer way to fulfillment than rotting on the sofa.

One thing that trumps even the fiercest college rivalry is a universal smugness about the Oxford workload – though it doesn't always feel like something to be chuffed about – and how easy all other university students have it by comparison. For better or worse, we have all chosen to face the stormy seas; a challenge both daunting and exciting that we should be proud to tackle.

Of course, the scope of what can be done with Shakespeare is incredibly limited, especially given the size of the set, but it might have been nice to see the periodic nature of the interpretation drawn out slightly more.

Nevertheless, these minor points did not detract from a performance that was truly admirable. I was stunned by the maturity of all of the

lead actors – especially given challenging circumstances out of their hands on the night. It is a difficult play, made even more challenging by the constraints on the size of both the cast and the venue. However, they did a very impressive job, and I look forward to seeing what all those involved take on next.

Image Credit: Univ players and Merton floats



Film

Review: *Zone of Interest*

Kate Bunn

In the first chapter of Martin Amis' 2014 novel *The Zone of Interest*, Golo Thomsen, a Nazi soldier, describes the passing of a lorry revealing its 'cargo' to the newly arrived French inmates of Auschwitz-Birkenau. To Thomsen, it's 'nothing more than a day's natural wastage from KL1, on its way to KL2. But of course our Parisians let out a great whimpering howl'. His euphemisms are obvious, yet they are emblematic of the culture of 'seeing without seeing' that cast its shadow over the National Socialist period in Germany. Jonathan Glazer's recent film adaptation of the novel captures this same atmosphere of avoidance, but does so through its visual language rather than through Amis' sardonic prose. Their shared title, 'The Zone of Interest', was the commonly used term which euphemistically referred to the restricted zone surrounding the death camp. It is emblematic of the industrial levels of mass murder that the Nazis committed: reducing human suffering to numbers, and human life to 'cargo'.

Glazer does not ease us into this

horrific world. The first two minutes of the film show only a blank, black screen paired with Mika Levi's deafening and sparse score. There is no narrative exposition: we are thrown headfirst into the daily life of the Höss family. Rudolf Höss, the patriarch and longest serving Auschwitz Kommandant, and his wife, Hedwig, live in a sizeable house and share a garden wall with the death camp. We watch them care for their children, entertain guests, and be attended to by servants. The servants are most likely prisoners whose one wrong move could result in them being sent back over the wall. They are mostly treated as an invisible nuisance by the Höss family, yet on one occasion, following the early departure of her mother, Hedwig threatens death upon the servant girl as easily as scolding her for burning toast.

Hedwig is perhaps the most interesting character of the film, brilliantly portrayed by actress Sandra Hüller. There is something infantile about her, and though she spouts Nazi rhetoric more than her husband, there is a sense that she does not really understand the words she says, or perhaps she has regressed

in an effort to distance herself from them. When her mother visits, Hedwig takes her on a tour of the garden, and jokingly brags at one point that she has been nicknamed the 'Queen of Auschwitz'. Her garden, like her nickname, is an effort to make light of the atrocities being committed, yet the foundations, the very soil, are inseparable from death. In one scene, a prisoner tills ash into the ground; death becomes the fertiliser for Hedwig's lush, green Eden. Nonetheless, Hedwig's sincere or feigned ignorance allow her to be fiercely proud of the life she and her husband have built.

Rudolf Höss' feelings towards his 'job' are more ambivalent. He cares deeply for animals and his children. He takes his boots off before he goes upstairs. He is as childlike as his wife, teasing her from his separate, single bed about her French perfume. The only hint that he feels any guilt comes towards the end of the film. He is relocated to Oranienburg near Berlin, and after attending a party, calls Hedwig and recounts pondering how long it would take to gas the ballroom. It is the film's most direct allusion to the atrocities he has committed, and, though

earlier his doctor had found him to be physically healthy, he begins gagging in the stairwell. The film then abruptly cuts to the modern day as cleaners sweep the gas chambers and wipe down the ovens for imminently arriving tourists. The irony of cleaning these spaces to make them more 'palatable' for modern day tourists is as contradictory as Hedwig's garden of death. The film is less about the 'banality of evil', but rather the sanitization of it.

The Zone of Interest ultimately ends as it begins, with the same black screen and deafening audio. There are other instances of these Nazi flag coloured scenes throughout the film. As the sounds of gunshots fill the garden in one scene, Glazer redirects us to a close-up of a flower that dissolves into a bright red block of colour. In another scene, Glazer films the white sky above Auschwitz accompanied by the sounds of children crying. These more abstract scenes, along with the folkloric atmosphere of the scenes where a Polish girl plants apples for the inmates, were the most moving. Their simplicity forcing us to reflect - forcing us to reflect on the possibility of our own evil.

Forget Her Not:
Rediscovering
Women in Music

Keziah McCann



Although hugely popular in the French-speaking world, the Belgian singer-songwriter Angèle is undoubtedly an underrated voice in the UK and US. Her musical influences are eclectic, ranging from electronic to jazz to rap, her lyrics mixing French and English, spanning charged meditations on her sexuality to the Balance Ton Porc movement to toxic internet culture. Her debut album, *Brol*, went 7x Platinum and 2x Diamond, and her 2018 single *Tout oublie* broke Stromae's record for weeks at the top of the Belgian charts.

Angèle Van Laeken was born in 1995 in Ucle, Belgium, to the singer Marka and actress Laurence Bibot. Her brother is also a famous rapper, Roméo Elvis (with whom she collaborated on the song *Tout oublie*) and she was encouraged to pursue her love of music from an early age. Angèle first gathered a following through covers she posted on Instagram and as the support act for the rapper Damso, but it wasn't until her single *La Loi de Murphy*, released in 2017, that she became well recognised when its music video gained millions of views. Soon after the release of her debut album *Brol*'s tracklist, the artist was breaking chart records and performing in sizable Paris venues.

Angèle's 2019 song *Balance Ton Quoi* (named after the French movement *Balance Ton Porc*) sought to call out France's institutionalised sexism and the rampant and normalised sexual assault of women, particularly in the entertainment industry. The singer doesn't hesitate to expose the sexist rhetoric, dehumanisation, assumptions of nepotism and backhanded compliments she, and indeed as do so many women, face on a daily basis. The audacious nature of the music video is lent even further emotional and political weight in its midway break, in which she features, speaking to a group about the nature of consent. Balanced and mature, Angèle succeeds in relaying a vital message through a fun, catchy song.

Angèle's *Ta Reine* is also not one to be missed: in 2019 the singer's sexuality was outed on a French talk show without her consent, and so the next year she released this beautiful, intimate and poignant portrayal of a woman in love with another, in fears of the impact of expressing her love. The orchestra version, released in November 2019, heightens the song's poignancy and emotion even further, its violin crescendo in particular serving to intensify the profound candour Angèle is unafraid to write into the song.

Let's hope for another album soon!

The Source

The attic is spilled with the last, gleaming sunlight of the afternoon, and Robin's fingers are covered with paint.

His thumb, a swirl of yellow-blue-green, accidentally leaves a stain on the table when he removes his brush from the palette, and Eliza makes a snort.

"Shut up," he mutters, rolling his shoulders and trying to focus on the canvas.

Eliza does no such thing. "How did I let you talk me into this?" she complains.

Robin has to fight an incredulous laugh. "You asked me to."

"You needed someone for your portfolio. I was being charitable."

"Again, you volunteered."

"Again, charity."

"Thank you, oh magnanimous Eliza," he intones, rolling his eyes. "You're getting a free portrait from NYU's premier student artist—what a blessing for my poor, plebeian soul."

She almost cracks a smile. "Write me letters instead," she says, shaking her head with an exhaled laugh, and stretches. "They're more romantic than paintings." Her fingers strain towards the sky, and her braid slips over her shoulder, her neck tilting back, a portrait of movement and something that is her and he can see the scatter of freckles on her shoulder where her collar has slipped down—

His mouth opens, pauses there. Any response is lost.

Eliza doesn't seem to notice. She yawns and slumps back in her chair. "When is this going to be over?" she mutters. "I don't like to sit still."

"We should be done at half past five," Robin answers automatically. The sun has angled through the window, casting a draping river of golden light and shadow over the table. He blinks, blinded by the speckles of darkness in his vision.

His fingers have gone numb, clutching his paintbrush.

The canvas mocks him, bare but for a few strokes. He was trying to paint her hair—trying, and failing, because he'd try to compare the shade of it, the way it curls around Eliza's jaw...

And then he'd get dizzy, and the world would disintegrate to the disgruntled look on her face, the memory of how she twists her hair around her finger when she's bored.

Write me letters. They're more romantic than paintings.

Oh, Christ above. Robin's face is suddenly hot, and he wants to look anywhere but at her—

"Okay, now you're not even painting," Eliza says. She shifts irritably in her seat, fingers cradling her jaw in the position he'd asked her to assume over an hour ago.

"Do you paint, Lizzie?" he asks, his embarrassment making him more prickly than usual.

"I sew."

"Exactly."

Eliza looks like she'd like to use him as a pincushion, and communicates this sentiment with an exceedingly dry look. "You are a pain."

"Brat." He returns his paintbrush to the canvas, trying not to let her see the shaking in his fingers.

"Insufferable artiste."

When he doesn't respond—he's trying to trace the curve of her wrist—she mutters something unflattering, then starts tugging at the buttons of her sleeve.

The sunlight is burning its way through the room, illuminating Eliza and turning Robin's sanity to ash. The wet colours of the paints—red, blue, yellow, green—blur. Her words are on a loop in his memory.

Write me letters, Eliza said and she laughed and the world froze for a second, didn't it? Was he imagining that now, in retrospect?

Robin wonders, dizzy, if a painting counts as a letter. A love letter? Did he—It's a thought in his mind, a wisp of a feeling. A thorn caught in flesh, an I don't want to forget this.

It's arresting and sudden and—he is blinded, staring at her across the table. She's still picking at her sleeve, frowning at the little buttons.

"I hate threads," Eliza mutters and gives it a yank. Her forehead is all lines, crinkled and crossed.

I love you, he thinks and the world is buzzing, filled with panic. Oh, God, I love you.

The gold light drips down her face, shadows her eyes, the shape of her mouth. Her irate, pursed mouth.

The light is there and gone.

I'll tell her tomorrow, Robin thinks and presses the paintbrush to the canvas, leaving a smear of bright yellow in its wake.

Angele Baum

Help! My best friend is addicted to Oxfess!

Reuben Meadows discusses the all-consuming world of Oxfess

Oxfess: the social media platform that broadcasts the woes and troubles of the University's most prolific overshareers. Yet it also piques the interest of thousands of other overworked students keen to tune into the latest gossip cycle. It's where reality TV meets dark academia, a cultural crossover that I never anticipated when writing my UCAS application. And it's everywhere, having infiltrated the doom-scrolling that marks our generation. The guy sat opposite you on his phone in the radcam? He's on Oxfess. The girl queuing for an ATS sandwich? On Oxfess. Your tutor on his laptop as you inevitably arrive late to the tutorial. Oxfess (indulge me). It's a time-killing activity whose immediate relevance to our everyday experiences, its capacity to be relatable in this small city, makes it addictive. Although Instagram reels are just as good too.

So what has this esteemed establishment brought us? Highlights include the Univ

Sh***er, Balliol scurvy, and ChCh puffer boy from the darkest corners of the Glink. Freshers will have to forgive me for such outdated references; this second year has been desperately trying to fight his addiction. The deleting and all-too-soon re-downloading of Facebook is a perpetual loop. To escape, only to overhear someone mention the latest especially salacious Oxfess e.g. Oxwhy did I sleep with both my college parents? Well now I'm intrigued. Ultimately, I pin this university's cravings for such depravity on its workload. The constant reading lists, problem sheets, and lectures leave us wanting more than the academic confessions SOLO can provide us with.

Yet it can also become too much. The constant stream of a collective Oxford consciousness leaves me wanting to blast white noise, run a bath (one can dream), or just bury myself under the crushing weight of the Bodleian Library. Extreme? Perhaps. But there is a repetitive streak to these online submissions that can make even the most ardent Oxfess 'top fan' begin to yawn. Take the classic 'x

freshers as...' format. Although I know a particularly good one assigning every Hilda's first year to a Mamma Mia character, with accompanying pie charts too! Its authorship remains a mystery (apparently it was a collaborative endeavour...). Clearly last year's admins had good taste. But recent failings have led me to question whether current Oxfess editors do in fact have a sense of humour. Not sure how I would know that, I never submit anything. That would be embarrassing.

What is perhaps more embarrassing, while this could be particular to me, is experiencing the bizarre happenings of everyday Oxford life only for my best friend to exclaim 'wait a second, I have to Oxfess this now.' There are two types of Oxfess addiction; I introduce you first to the 'mass producer'. A way of spilling your deepest desires (confessing your love for your Oxford crush as you pass them on Longwall), critiquing your ex (toxic yet not undeserved), or expressing frustration at your faculty's inability to replenish the loo roll. By all accounts, we should rebrand the platform to Oxmoan. But when you start recognising your best friend's Oxfesses then you should be worried. Should I be proud of my intimate knowledge of your writing style

or should I stage an intervention? Either way, your Oxfess about the microwaved gnocchi really made me giggle. Or the time you started the Emma Watson goes to Hilda's rumour. A startling ability to turn idle hearsay into university-wide chatter has made this infamous platform into an institution.


“A startling ability to turn idle hearsay into university-wide chatter has made this infamous platform into an institution...”

The other type of addict is of course the 'invisible consumer'. The silent majority. 7 people and your college spouse may have liked this Oxfess on Facebook, but hundreds have seen it. I know an especially well-read Engineer who never misses a new release, yet rarely interacts beyond this. But what of those who do? The site has become a road to BNO-

hood, or equally a surefire way of deciding who should be avoided. While I appreciate your japes and banter, tagging someone in an Oxfess so specific it could never be your friend is something I consider a serious faux pas. They're the people in the subject GC who really need to take it to the DM. I did once get a photo with HN in the Oriel MCR. In the moment I was near star-struck. Who'd have thought mindlessly tagging SH could bring you such celebritydom?

I do feel for the honest Oxfessers. Those asking for advice, searching for a welcoming society to join, or struggling with the overwhelming experience the University can provide. They have been rather drowned out by the Oxmoaners and gossipers that plague the student body. Myself (hesitantly) included. Scandal and shocking speculation is entertaining; it serves as a momentary distraction from our busy schedules.

But could I live without it? Would we all be better off without it? It certainly feeds a sense of shared Oxford identity - from Pembroke to Catz to Hertford we've all heard the same rumour - yet are there other ways of fostering such a commonality? Something beyond the doom-scrolling and incessant commenting.



Cherpse

Cherwell sent two lucky readers on a blind date, here's how it went...

ROMEO	JULIET
First impressions? Chatty and well dressed	First impressions? Really good! They were nice and had a cool t-shirt on.
Did it meet your expectations? Yeah	Did it meet your expectations? My expectations were low, but it was so much better.
What was the highlight? He took me on a really nice walk afterwards.	What was the highlight? Bonding over our shared love for theatre.
What was the most embarrassing moment? Not being able to find them at the beginning!	What was the most embarrassing moment? One of my (usually funny) jokes not landing.
Describe the date in 3 words: Fun, interesting, sweet	Describe the date in 3 words: Enjoyable, surprising and fun.
Is there a second date on the cards? Maybe	Is there a second date on the cards? Yes if they would like to.

Looking for love?

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

The patience of ordinary things

Evelyn Power discusses one small, mundane pleasure of life... This week, *the weird and the wonderful of student societies.*



By the time this column reaches print, 7th week will be over, and the term will, officially, be coming to a close.

Rooms will be packed up, fridges cleared out, goodbyes exchanged – and I, along with a large proportion of Oxford's student population, will go home.

And what better time to consider the term retrospectively, than at the approach of its ending?

And, for me at least, it is a hell of a retrospective. This term, after the obligatory settling-in of Michaelmas, I had one resolution on my mind; to get involved with the most outlandish student societies I could find.

This, of course, is a promise more easily made than realised. I have been patiently waiting for admission into the Oxford University Change Ringers' Facebook group since early January – in hindsight, my multiple references to The Hunchback of Notre Dame probably did little to earn me a place amongst their ranks. My attempts to attend the Cheese Society's tasting nights have always ended with me, forlorn

and cheese-less, blankly staring at the 'sold out' Fixr notification that seemed to appear almost before the tickets themselves went up. I may work hard - but Oxford's cheese-tasters work harder.

On the (humiliatingly rare) occasions in which I am actually allowed into these events, experiences within them are varied, to say the least. I have a bad habit of seeing posters without reading them, and making up my mind to attend without really understanding the nature of the events they advertise – which is to say, I have sat, sober, in one too many crafting sessions that, (in my defence) I had no way of knowing were hosted by the Psychedelics Society.

Save for the fact that it was written on the poster, of course.

My natural gift for spouting confident nonsense, combined with a natural inability to admit the (extensive) limits of my knowledge, have guided me through (and possibly ruined) countless society debates.

My reputation as an ill-advised-extracurricular-enjoyer precedes

this column, and will most likely outlive it. Given the amount of life-drawings, society drinks, and painting evenings that I have dragged my long-suffering friends to, it is not an unearned title. And while not always invoked in a complementary manner, it is not a title I resent.

My experiences in these societies may well be varied; but it is the variation that makes the experience so worthwhile. My humbling encounters in Psychedelic Society crafting sessions and awkward debates have left me with so much more than just some poorly made scratch-off art and burning animosity towards students I will likely never see again. At least, I hope so.

One of the big 'sells' of university, so to speak, is its value as a place to find yourself and figure out who you are – and part of that is figuring out who you are not.

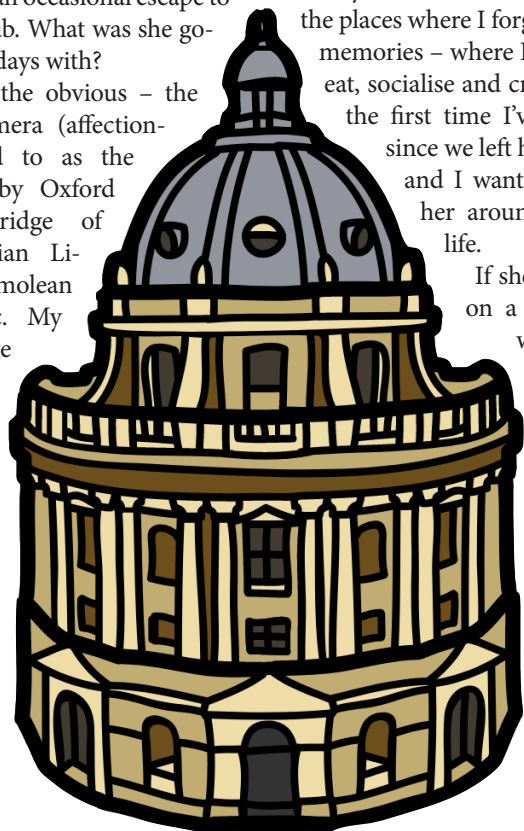
And that, with my endeavours into shoddy (and mildly insulting) nude portrait-artistry and terrible open-mic poetry, is exactly what I am aiming to find out.

A guide for the impromptu undergraduate tour

Yunzhang Liang

How do you even begin to show a relative or friend around Oxford? In Michaelmas, a friend studying in London came to visit. She stayed over for a whopping three days which, to me, was a disproportionately long time to spend in a city that was a fraction of the size of London. Oxford is no big, bustling metropolis; it has no famous tourist attractions (besides the university itself), no world-class restaurants, no breathtaking natural scenery. My days are filled with lectures, tutorials, libraries, and an occasional escape to the pub or club. What was she going to fill her days with?

Well, first, the obvious – the Radcliffe Camera (affectionately referred to as the “Rad Cam” by Oxford students), Bridge of Sighs, Bodleian Library, Ashmolean Museum, etc. My friend is a huge Harry Potter fan, so that was easy – I was already at Christ Church, so I showed her around the dining hall and cloisters, got my friend from New College



to show her around the courtyard (which had a feature in the film Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire), and brought her to the Divinity School. Lunch in the Covered Market, dinner at a Christ Church formal, then an impromptu post-midnight Hassan's for the complete Oxford student experience.

But all these places could be discovered from a quick Google search of “things to do in Oxford”; my friend didn't need me to point them out to her. Besides, I felt too much like a tour guide, not someone showing their friend around the place that will define their life for the next three years. I wanted to show her the places where I forged my best memories – where I live, study, eat, socialise and cry. This was the first time I've seen her since we left high school, and I wanted to show her around my new life.

If she had come on a weekday, I would have brought her to one of my lectures. We couldn't study together in the Rad Cam (my library of choice), so instead I

brought her to Caffè Nero to try their godly hot chocolate. We got a quick bite from Najar's, visited the cows in Christ Church Meadows, and queued for an hour in the cold for Ramen Kulture (and it was absolutely worth the wait!). We ate bingsu (Korean shaved ice) at Endorphins Dessert Cafe. We watched the sunset from the rooftop of Westgate. And all along the way, I pointed out snippets of my life to her – this is where I ate my first meal in Oxford, this is where I was drunk out of my mind after my first night out, this is where I cried when I felt so homesick. This is where I saw the most beautiful sunrise of my life. This is where I walked whenever I was stressed or anxious. This is where I built my new life, in a foreign country 6000 miles from home. We got G&Ds, then chatted the night away in my room, reminiscing about the old and catching each other up on the new as we settled into the next chapter of our lives.

So, to answer the question: how do you begin to show a relative or friend around Oxford? What makes for a good impromptu tour? Of course, show them the grand, romantic architecture, the buildings steeped in mystique and history that tourists marvel at when they visit Oxford. But also show them what Oxford means to you. Show them where you like to go on a night out. Where you go for lectures. Where you churn out your 2000-word essay dangerously close to the deadline. Where you get your groceries. I've been thinking about how friendships change and evolve as we move on to university – as you

grow older, friendships become less about experiencing life together, and more about telling each other about your respective lives. This rings true for family as well. Before university,

“Now, with each of our paths diverging, I barely see my friends from school anymore. By hosting them when they come to visit, I am, in a way, integrating them back into my life...”

we spent virtually every day together with our family or friends – they are integrated into our lives, as we are into theirs. Now, with each of our paths diverging, I barely see my friends from school anymore. By hosting them when they come to visit, I am, in a way, integrating them back into my life, even if it's just for three days. That, I suppose, is what makes an impromptu undergraduate tour worthwhile – the surreality of seeing old friends and family in such a new environment, and the familiar warmth they bring to remind you that they're still here. It's like no time has passed at all.



Something's not adding up. Take out the abacus, put away the supercomputer. Simple calculations.



Head to the Rad Cam, get to casual surveillance of library users. It's not creepy, it's private investigation.



Keep going. I hear good things are coming to you in 27th week.



Emails are just so passé. Return to roots: pick up pigeon fancying.



Seize the Ides: eat, drink, but skip the Mamuralia.



Relax into repetition. Twist your brain into liking the drudge: tutorials aren't so bad.

Dear Cherwell, I am hating long distance!

Dear aunty, I've gone long distance with my boyfriend of 2 years who graduated last year. I'm finding the long distance really hard and starting to resent the fact our lives are in different places even if I really love him. Oxford without him is really hard - I don't know if this is the beginning of the end? What should I do? - Love-sick at LMH

Dear Love-sick at LMH, Long distance is perhaps the hardest episode of any relationship - you'll often hear people say that it's the 'make or break' moment of a relationship. Anyone who has been through this situation will lend their sympathetic ears and shoulders to you.

Oxford without your partner must really suck. When you know a place so intimately with a person, it can feel that your memories haunt

you everywhere you go. One way around this is to try and reclaim it as your own - keep yourself busy, join that society you've always wanted to, and do things you may not have done last year. That way, you'll be able to at least distract yourself from the feeling of missing him. If you were to pine over him constantly over the year, you may resent him for not being able to enjoy your years in Oxford on your own terms.

I understand perfectly that you may have started to resent the fact that your lives are on different paths. Now that he has graduated, your lives are no longer coinciding or drawn closer together by the gravitational pull of the Oxford bubble. Whatever he is doing, it may feel like he is doing less than you because you are still under Oxford work pressure. However, think that he's a proper veteran of the system. Therefore, he is a great person to have in your support net-

work; a mentor if you like to help you get through these Oxford situational problems.

It sounds like your new situation is making you think differently about the physical distance between you. Trying to see each other on weekends, or at milestones will make you feel less isolated. After a 2-year relationship in Oxford, it is easy to associate physical closeness with emotional closeness. Now, you're realising that the two are not necessarily mutually inclusive. Loving at a distance is hard and it's certainly not for everyone. Since we love a love story, I would encourage you to give it all that you can to keep the emotional distance between you as close as you can.

The key thing really is communication. That does not necessarily mean constant communication. By talking about your new environments, and thoughts, you can better understand his new context, which is the key to

maintaining respect: without this, you may start to resent what he is doing. I gather this may have started having an effect on you already.... Maybe you feel yourself itching to have this conversation? If you're not, would you rather let this fizzle out? It may be worthwhile identifying how you'd like to approach it. After 2 years of a relationship, it seems that you owe each other a good heart to heart. The fact that you think it is the beginning of the end may say more about you than the relationship - are you saying this because of fear of change?

Things won't change overnight, but Facetime lots; send voice notes; and talk to each other about your days, but also bigger questions and topics that you have in common. That way you can restore the intellectual and emotional intimacy you've once shared, despite the physical distance.

Got a problem? Need some advice?

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



Don't just walk to your classes. Locomote like a spider; scuttle.

♏ Scorpius



Learn a new hobby, read a decent book. It's not Rot Girl Hilary.

♐ Sagittarius



Tick, tick ... Time to make those vac plans.

♑ Capricornus



This 8th week, revel. March is your midsummer: light bonfires and dance naked but for flower crown.

♈ Aquarius



Stop fucking reading Cherwell and do the tutorial reading you've been putting off.

♊ Pisces



You are the hottest, most stylish person in your college library. Phwoar.

Tales from the High Table: formal dinners at Oxford

Nina Naidu

I vividly remember spending my first ever evening in Oxford at the Freshers' Formal Dinner. Surrounded by strangers and the portraits of those who came before me, I was in for quite the ride. I had heard a lot about formals when I still romanticised attending Oxford – seeing people post videos in their subfusc, sipping college branded wine, and enjoying three-course meals. Yet, after my first formal in question I soon realised that it wasn't as dreamy and Harry Potter-esque as I'd once imagined.

To be fair, the reason for this was partly my college. While it is customary to wear your gown to formals, this is not a requirement at St. Hugh's College. Although I have no particular interest in wearing my gown any more than I have to, I can't help but feel it would add to the traditional ambiance of enjoying formalling in Oxford. In radical contradiction,

when I attended a formal at Magdalen, many students dressed casually, yet the gown remained a staple. At Hugh's, students often dress extravagantly, perhaps to compensate for the rather unconventional setting of our ex-war infirmary dining hall. I've found myself dressing over-the-top for every formal, resulting in an unhealthy amassment of charming ankle-length

dresses... Despite the Hughsie way of formalling differing from my initial expectations, I always enjoy going.

During my year abroad, I found myself losing the desensitisation

“I'm grateful for the opportunity to partake in something so distinctively Oxford.”

to the somewhat absurdity of formalling traditions and culture. Just this week, I visited Hugh's in time for their weekly Tuesday formal and felt embarrassingly amused by the Latin grace at the beginning. Rising for the high table as they filtered through like royalty seemed startlingly comical to my friends and me, leading to exchanged snickers across the table muffled by the bread we'd stuffed our faces with.

Setting aside the Latin prayers, formal dinners at Hugh's are quite enjoyable and usually delicious. While some meals I've had at other colleges (I won't point fingers, but Keble is a worthy mention) have been pretty tragic, the formal menus at Hugh's tend to live up to the hype. The starters are consistently impressive, especially when

they whip out the soup, and the menus vary week by week. At less than £15, it's incredible how you can enjoy a fancy full three-course meal, making it a viable option for students seeking a sophisticated dinner without breaking the bank. One could even say there is a certain value in learning the art of formal dining, allowing valuable training in the navigation of knives and forks. Surrounded by peers, there is hope that this learning and training is made less intimidating.

Now that I'm

away from Oxford for the year, in an air of odd nostalgia, I do miss formals. Dressing up with friends, cracking open a bottle of wine, and fighting over the butter are weird but unique experiences that I don't think would exist in many places outside of Oxford. While I'm well-versed on the antiquated traditions at Oxford, it's always amusing when I invite friends from back home to join me and they look at me with confusion. Formals are an integral part of the Oxford experience, and while they may appear peculiar from the outside, I'm grateful for the opportunity to partake in something so distinctively Oxford.



Lessons from the landing...

Katya Ferrier brings you a musing and a meal... This week, a 'nectarine'-ly sweet end to the term



At last, week 8 is on the horizon, dusk is beginning to fall after labs finish, and maybe (if the rain ever stops) spring is on its way.

To celebrate the close of another instalment of academic chaos, I did what I (arguably) do best - cooked for my friends. On today's menu: pan-fried salmon on top of spaghetti in a pea and basil sauce, all accompanied with nectarine and mozzarella on top of a bed of rocket.

As my quartet of dinner companions dug into a real culinary treat, we discussed the end of term. The end of term and the beginning of vac is always a tricky one to navigate: should we be sad to be parting ways with our friends or relieved that we survived another eight weeks in the rollercoaster of Oxfordshire's most hectic and emotional ring-road?

The truth is, your feelings about this term and its conclusion should be exactly that. Yours. All too often, especially in the highly digitised Zillennial ecosystem, we put too much pressure on feeling what society tells us to feel. For instance, social media portrays University as the best time of your life! Is this echo-chamber of toxic positivity a reality for the majority of students? Probably not.

To be frank, this Hilary, whilst sweet at certain corners, has left me feeling (if we're running with the nectarine metaphor) a little emotionally bruised and in some aspects, a bit rotten. Am I ashamed that my term has been 'wasted' by unpleasant emotional episodes? Of course not. I mean I'm a bit

annoyed that the past eight weeks have been marred by internalised emotional turmoil, but that's part of being twenty and growing up. I am in no way advocating wallowing, rather, I am urging you to accept that your feelings about what is such a tricky term are valid, and more normal than you probably think.

To finish the term is an achievement in itself. Congratulate yourself for merely existing, even if maybe some essays never materialised or some friendships went awry. Reflecting on the past two months, we need to look for the brightness and colour, even if fairly brief, which occurred in our lives. Not to sound like my mother, but we need to practise gratitude. As we pack up our uni lives into a series of boxes once again, it may be productive to reflect on our feelings at the close of term, whilst also seeking out people and experiences which made a very damp eight weeks a little lighter.

So, as we all crawl to eighth week together, I raise my pint to all of you who have found Hilary not the easiest of times and salute those of you who managed to have the time of your lives in the bitterness of winter. As I run away from OX4 I leave you with the gentle reminder that things only get better from here. Light is coming. Days are extending.

Maybe (if the rain ever stops) Spring is on its way.



Cherwell recommends...

Our life editors' top picks for how to make the most of your final week in the HT paradise

1 Lectures. There are two approaches here: 1. Tackle that Panopto pile-up head on (at 1.5x speed of course), ready to indulge in a lazy first four weeks of the vac before collections panic sets in) or 2. Forget 'em! You've got a week left. People to see, forgotten essays to finish.

2 End with Park End. For those who have it in them, the Week 8 Cheese Floor will be happy to welcome another body to the crush. Freshers have no excuse. Finalists? Why not make it your last hurrah! A bittersweet farewell to the place that has no doubt witnessed your messiest moments.

3 Housekeeping. Got a chair monster you've been feeding? The mountain of clothes strewn across your room needs addressing before it evolves into sentiency. A light spring clean will make your termly college move-

out a little less stressful when Saturday rocks up. Make your bed. Open the curtains. For the love of god, let the light in.

4 Sorry, I've been busy! You've accumulated an inbox full of unopened messages. Social catch-ups you really should have followed through with. Coffee with an estranged college sibling. Lunch with your first year fling. A walk around Port Meadow for a friend in need. Time to make amends, open that notes app and start drafting your guilt-ridden messages.

5 Treat yourself. You've made it. Another term is almost over. Pat yourself on the back and be thankful you've survived. Why not indulge in some retail therapy? Or buy yourself a sweet treat. Despite all your overdue submissions and all-nighters, you deserve it (or I'll say you do, for the local economy).

In praise of breakfast grandeur

Bruno Armitage

Breakfast is a neglected meal. Your average cookbook doesn't even go there, and most food influencers will only occasionally create complex cooked numbers 'to cure that hangover': this is a mission for which their shakshuka will never receive a call up.

But breakfast, that is the actual food that people eat on a daily basis, is a neglected meal for good reason. Is it unfair to expect reasonable people to spend more than five minutes on breakfast in the morning, and dirtying a pan? Even more so. Breakfast ideas that are fast, cheap, repeatable, healthy, and tasty are hard to come by, and their scarcity is down to the fact that there just aren't that many. If you're not a fan of oats, or eggs are off the table, tough luck.

The criteria might seem too re-

strictive, the brief too exacting, but there is a solution. It comes in the form of what must be described as mashed beans on toast, a suitably unglamorous title for this workhorse of a meal, but one that belies its sophistication. It isn't just the ingredients here, but the process too that makes this a practical option that I turn to most days. To keep from getting bored, this recipe can be adapted depending on what you have, and what you're in the mood for, but the basic elements remain.

Start by using a fork to remove around a third of a can of cannellini beans into a small bowl – the rest can go in the fridge for following mornings – and optionally a handful of frozen peas for colour and variation. Put the beans and the peas in the microwave until the liquid they produce is nearly boiling, or just very hot, it doesn't really matter. In the meantime, toast a slice of bread.

I go for half of a hunk of sourdough (the loaves sold at Jericho Cheese Company in town, and Hamblin in Iffley are excellent for a treat) but rye, or any other bread will do. I cut and freeze my bread beforehand so that it doesn't go stale, and I can transfer a slice from freezer to toaster without creating any washing up.

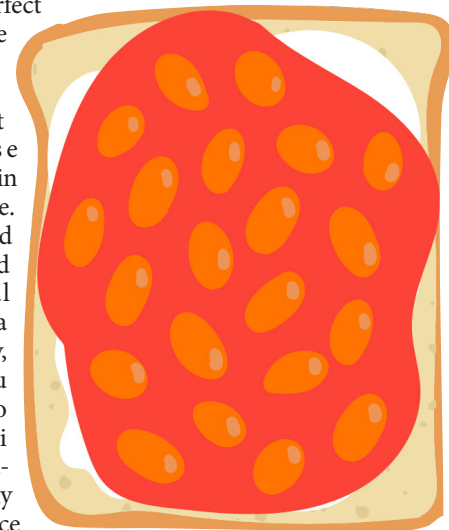
Once the beans are finished in the microwave, take the fork from earlier and use it to roughly mash into a spreadable consistency, or however you like it. You might need to pour off some liquid if the peas give out a lot of water. I always add lemon juice or another acid to the beans, and a bit of nutritional yeast if I want it a little thicker and richer. Once your toast is done and doused with as much extra virgin olive oil as you can justify, pile the beans on top – don't worry if the beans go over the side, this will be eaten with a knife and fork.

The toppings are where you can

get creative. Salt is a must, but aside from that anything goes. Nuts and seeds add a lot texturally, and this is a perfect time to use any herbs or leaves that might otherwise be dying in the fridge. More good olive oil and nutritional yeast go a long way, and you could also add chilli flakes, sumac, or any hot sauce to contrast with the relatively savoury bread and beans. Now is also the moment

to use any ferments or pickles you might have or have made. Not only will your microbiome thank you for it, but keeping the base fairly plain means you can appreciate their strange and complex flavours to the fullest extent.

At first blush, this breakfast may seem like a jumped-up beans on toast with ideas above its station, but the process here makes hot, healthy, varied, and delicious food every morning a distinct possibility. If you get fast at it, you can brew a coffee to have alongside. I'm yet to think of a better way to start each day.



Uncorny traditionalism at Il Corno

Amanda Li

Il Corno stands out from the average sit-in Covered Market restaurant. Its crimson walls contrast from the beiges and blues of the surrounding stalls and walls, with an inviting and intimate yet intimidating atmosphere that made me feel like I was no longer in a market. The walls were covered with various statues of cornicellos - twisted chilis that look like horns and are central to Neapolitan culture - that the restaurant took its name from. They also served as centrepieces for each of the metal tables with red out-



door market-style chairs adding to the colour scheme. Light jazz played in the background, and the seating was limited, which made it feel more close-quartered, and packed despite coming at 3pm on a weekday.

Il Corno is a Neapolitan panuozzo place cooking the Cucina Campana. The restaurant serves this type of sandwich - panuozzo - made of pizza dough cooked in the oven and filled to the brim with various ingredients. Il Corno is run by Fanny and her family, who are from Naples. After getting her Italian Studies PhD in the UK, Fanny wanted to incorporate her culture into the restaurant through both the food and decor. The cornicellos are lucky amulets

in Naples; each one brings a slightly different type of luck. The other statuettes in the restaurant are from Naples as well. There's one of San Gennaro and Lady Bella to bring positive energy. Fanny also noted that the jazz playing in the background was all Neapolitan records. She truly ties in the theme of traditionalism.

The food was no different. To begin, we had the almond taralli, a traditional street food that is a small donut-shaped wheat snack. They had both a vegan and a non-vegan option to try, with the non-vegan option being made of pork fat. I loved the crumble of the non-vegan option and the way it paired with the crunch of the large pieces of almond. This was a delight to have warm. It was slightly salty and not much else, which let you focus on the unique texture. The vegan option had no almond and was more crunchy than crumbly, which I liked less, but reminded me of the sweet taralli I'd have at the Italian bakery at home. The crunch was more similar to that of an extra crunchy pretzel, and I certainly could picture eating some on a late night snack.

We then got to the panuozzi themselves. There were both vegetarian and meat options, which Fanny explained was one of her key priorities when planning. "At first, I wanted it all to be veggie and vegan, but it created a clash with making it all authentic Neapolitan food. This was the best compromise." There is an option to make it vegan; Il Corno's award-winning vegan mozzarella is from a vegan pizza ingredient producer in London and costs nothing to substitute. The other ingredients in each of the panuozzi were likewise assured to be fresh, whether from Italian ingredient shops in London or from Italy itself. Fanny explained that she cared more about the quality of ingredients than the number of options, leaving us with four total

panuozzi: two veggie- and two meat-based.

We started with the half-panuozzo Munaciello, which had sausage, broccoli friarielli, and scamorza cheese. The broccoli friarielli was a new touch that I hadn't found before in Oxford. It was salty, thinner than your grocery store broccoli, with more of a chew than a crunch. The sausage overpowered the flavour originally, but the friarielli came out in the aftertaste. The scamorza brought out a bit of smoky flavour that I quite liked. Overall, with the crunch of the bread, I felt it was a very good and filling meal, especially for half the normal portion.

Then came the vegetarian Il Corno, which had tomato, mozzarella, and basil. It was a great sandwich, but wasn't anything groundbreaking. The bread, once again, really added to the experience. I thought that a bit of balsamic vinegar would have improved it even more. I had later tried the other vegetarian option, with the friarielli and bell peppers. I liked it more, though the feeling that something may have been missing was still there.

Prices ranged from 8 to 11.5 pounds, which seems expensive for student budgets. There are options, though: half toasties were half the price and just as filling. And for the price, it felt like a fun treat to have for something relatively unique. Even just being able to sit in the restaurant and work felt good: many people had just grabbed coffees and sat to get something done.

We finished with the delicious limoncello and baba rum, which was a soft bread soaked in syrup and served as a nice cap to the afternoon. While finishing up, we touched on their location in the Covered Market: Fanny talked about befriending the other stall owners, especially her neighbours, and the warm welcome they received from the Market. She

notes that Il Corno had created a different kind of space, one that focused on letting people sit and relax while eating rather than grabbing food and going.

With many Italians coming by to get a taste of home as well as tourists and students grabbing a bite to eat, the restaurant always seems to find a way to introduce Neapolitan food to new people. Fanny says that she's happy to see her regulars come and catch up, whether they order food or just a coffee to sit and work. She's taking advantage of the Covered

Market's late hours on Thursday and Friday to spice up the restaurant during dinner hours; it's often filled with people going out for a date night.

She plans on hosting talks about both Neapolitan and Italian culture overall. Overall, it was a great experience at Il Corno, with a little immersion into traditional culture mixed with the modern flare of jazz. The food was good, though pricey, and I would totally go back for the taralli if ever in need of a savoury treat.

With thanks to Fanny and the team at Il Corno.

Three Goats Heads

Susanna Elliot and Reka Sztaray review another iconic Oxford pub...

Week 7 – for the normal student, we are approaching the end of term, for the less normal; it is hack week on St Michael's Street! For our last review therefore, we headed to the Three Goats Heads (conveniently right beside the Union). We visited here for Sunday lunch and found the pub to have a welcoming, vintage feel. The staff were really sweet and the food arrived incredibly quickly. In short – it was fantastic! The macaroni and cheese was delicious and the nachos were huge and had an exceptional amount of cheese (looking at you, Turf!). The chunky chips also deserve a shout out – they were the best we have had. For drinks, they had an extensive range of beer on tap, we of course had to try their bitters. Samuel Smith bitters was delicious with a buttery note, they even rivalled our favourite bitters at the Lamb and



Flag! Our friend had the Alpine lager, claiming that it tasted like Staropranen (a popular Slovak beer – we will take her word for it). An impressive feature of this pub is their cocktail selection – quite rare to see in a pub but this place had it all, ranging from fruity classics to some more sophisticated flavours. Our friend had the Rob Roy and claimed it was the best cocktail he had tasted in a while! Overall, this pub is very quaint, has a great vibe and delicious food, and is particularly good if you don't want to break the bank!

Pints: 5/5

Food: 3/5

Price: 4/5

Ambiance: 5/5

Overall: 4.5/5

Two world wars and five world cups: sport & self-identity

Oliver Sandall

When asked “who do you support?”, I never know what to say. And that’s not because I don’t know – it’s almost always because I’d have to explain my real answer. Besides, it’s rarely not a loaded question.

Growing up ‘biculturally’ (whatever that might mean – I’m no sociologist) has meant that I’ve always had an ‘English team’ and a ‘German team’: Manchester United and 1. FC Nürnberg. City- and Liverpool-fan readers: yes, I’ve ostensibly managed to pick two of the most tragic teams of this decade.

Yet whilst I might ‘support’ Manchester United, I’ve never truly identified with the *Red Devils*. I have a good understanding of the team, the managerial situation, and their current state of play. But I *did* have to google when they last won the Premier League: now over a decade ago, in 2012-13. But aren’t there many such ‘fans’? Not every Tottenham fan can tell you when they last won the Premiership, for instance.

I’ve also only ever been to two games at Old Trafford and have never owned a jersey. Yet I’ve somehow managed to go to see *der Club* whenever I’ve had the slightest

chance whilst in the area. I’ve been to multiple public training sessions, met some of the players through a family friend (see photo), and been



to over a dozen matches – all whilst having spent less than two years (collectively) of my life in Germany.

Never, when watching a United game, have I shouted at the screen and channelled my inner Mourinho to shout drunken instructions at the fullbacks. But, as my mother can attest to, I have done many a times at the Max-Morlock-Stadion.

Many people who know me as more than just a distant ‘mate’, know that I feel a lot more German than I feel British (specifically English). This is not to say that I think your

relation to a football team always reflects how close you feel to a certain nationality. But I think it does demonstrate that for many, sport and sporting clubs make their sense (or lack thereof) of belonging more apparent. We can all appreciate that football – or other big commercial team sports like rugby or American football – helps people come together and identify as one big group.

Having grown up in a culturally diverse part of Manchester, I became increasingly aware of this divide. Those who have no difficulty in knowing who to support and those who do. At my school you would have been in the minority if you were *just* British.

So, when it came to Euro 2016, I vividly remember people saying: “I don’t really know who to support.” And then in Euro 2020 (played in 2021), when England played Germany in the round of 16, I was, deep down, supporting Germany – but those around me didn’t know that.

But the more I am invested in English football, not least because of the friends I’ve made at Oxford or

because I am now the Deputy Editor in Chief for Sport (and Comment), the less sure I am of who to support.

I never truly knew who to cheer for. And now, less so than ever. Sport has helped me identify with my German half, but it has also created a growing insecurity within me.

To those who say, “just cheer for both”, this article is wasted. To be a fan is to feel with the players. To lose control when you score that 90+5 winner. And for me, that doesn’t come naturally with England, at least not yet. Only time will tell.

In any case, it has made me

for writing this article came when I thought back to three drunken brothers, sat next to us at the first home game of the 2023-24 season, asking me why I, “ein Engländer” (no translation needed, I hope), am at the game. And importantly, not in the family block with my nearly 60-year-old mother.

To which I answered: “Ja, warum nicht? *Der Club* ist *unser* Verein” (Why not? *Der Club* is *our* club).

A real part of me feels more German, just because I truly identify with *Glubberer* (supporters of *der Club*). And maybe that’s also because my father is not into sports and has never taken me to a football match. Football has undoubtedly allowed me to get more in touch with my German side.

But it has also highlighted the issue I – and many other second or third generation immigrant children – have regarding national identity.

Translation of banner from the ‘Ultras’: “Give your all for Nuremberg.” (MD2, 2022-23 season, derby versus SpVgg Greuther Fürth)

Image Credits: Oliver Sandall



aware of the role football, and sport generally, has in helping people identify. The key inspiration

Cuppers 2024: Keble’s historic treble

Adam Saxon

Following their victory in the reserve Cuppers final last weekend, Keble’s first team and women’s team (Hertble, a joint team with Hertford) looked to make history this week in a double-header of finals at Iffley. No college had ever managed the feat of winning all three trophies in the same year: doing so would be unprecedented.

In the first game of the day, Hertble faced a strong Summertown team from LMH, St Hugh’s, and Trinity. The first half was end-to-end; both teams were up for the occasion and defensively solid. However, disaster soon struck for Summertown. One of their defenders gave away a penalty via a handball in the box, and Hertble’s Megan King made no mistake from the spot, slotting it away expertly and separating the sides as they went in for the half.

After the interval both teams started strongly, with Hertble sticking away a scrappy goal to double their lead before a quick reply from Summertown ensured Keble and Hertford nerves couldn’t be settled just yet. As was the case with both games though, the fans were the 12th player, and Hertble’s excellent support relative to the low numbers brought by Summertown were crucial in pushing the team on through these nervy moments. Two further goals from Hertble sealed the game, including an incredible half volley which flew into the top corner to

make the score 4-1. By this point, the Hertble support was justifiably going wild, with players from both teams deservedly given hero’s welcomes as they returned to the side of the pitch at full time. Though they lost, Summertown had every right to be proud of the performance they had put in, admirably fighting until the final whistle.

For fans of Keble however, the job was not done. Two down, the college had its eyes on the final prize – the men’s trophy. For the dream to become a reality though, the team would have to beat a Teddy Hall team which looked to be a physical presence on and off the pitch. Supposedly, there is a historic rivalry between these two colleges, driven by the two teams being dominant in college rugby for a period decades ago. Regardless, neither set of supporters needed much excuse to direct insults at each other, and both sides quickly pulled out the classic



‘what do we think of [insert college name here]’ chant. Soon enough though, it was time for the fans to turn their attention to the pitch as the captains led their teams out to roars from the packed-out Iffley

crowd. Following a quick swap of ends after a coin toss, the referee blew his whistle, and we were off.

Teddy started on top. Their physicality was visible, and it took a Keble a while to grow into the game. A stroke of luck befell Keble though, as after a nasty 50-50 with Keble’s



striker the Teddy goalkeeper was forced off injured. His replacement appeared to be selected to go in net simply because he was the tallest player on the bench and given his struggles later on in the game it is safe to assume he wasn’t a natural goalkeeper. For now, though, Teddy continued to play well, and were generating the better set of chances. They looked particularly dominant from set pieces and were rewarded for their efforts with a goal scored from a corner at around the half hour mark. The remainder of the half was a cagey affair, with few chances to either team. Teddy roared their team off the pitch at the half time whistle, whilst the shell-shocked Keble support did their best to spur on their players, who themselves looked stunned.

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

Captain’s Corner

In anticipation of the Boat Race on 30th March, Cherwell spoke to the president of the OUWBC, Ella Stadler.

When did you start rowing?

I started rowing when I first came to Oxford as an undergraduate in 2019. I had been on the ergometer a few times at the gym but thought that it was the ‘Oxford thing’ to get involved in rowing. I did two years of very disrupted college rowing due to 2019/20 flooding and then the pandemic, before joining the university development squad in Trinity 2021 and Trinity 2022. I then trialled in the 2022/23 season, making the Blue Boat and this year I became the president of the OUWBC.

What drew you to the sport?

Initially I was drawn to the sport because it seemed like the sport that epitomised Oxford and the thing that I just had to try whilst I was here! I stayed because of the friends I made plus the satisfaction that I got from a sport which required so much perfection.

Were there any specific goals for this season and how has the season gone so far?

The goal for this season as president was for an Oxford clean sweep and to create a great group dynamic that incorporated both the new coach and the recently merged

openweight and lightweight women’s training group.

As an individual I really wanted to improve my own technical experience, as I am still so new to the sport. I think that both my residential and individual goals are progressing well, and I am so thankful for the coaches and the team for making it all possible!

What have been the biggest sporting successes and setbacks in your time at Oxford so far?

My biggest sporting successes at Oxford were making the Blue Boat and racing in the Boat Race 2023. The biggest setbacks for me were probably COVID and the river flooding, both now and in 2019/20.

How are you feeling about the Boat Race this year?

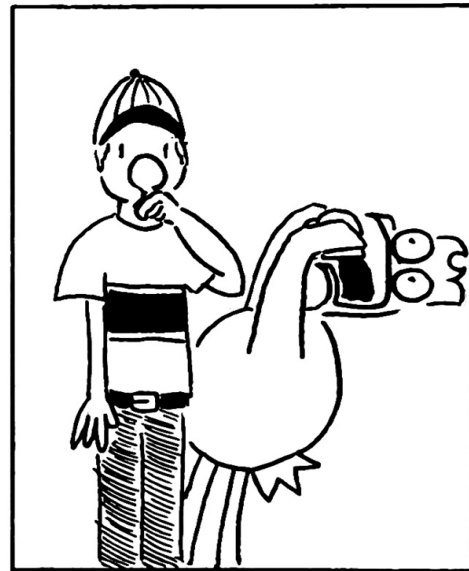
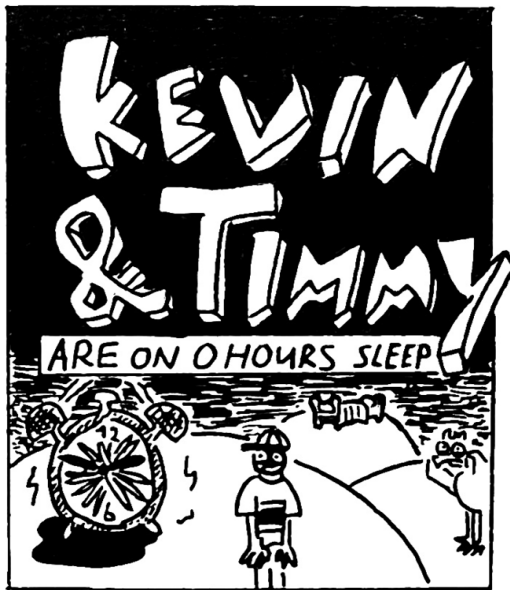
I am so excited about this year’s race! It is completely different to previous years and I think that the excitement we are feeling towards it is really driving our training on. We just can’t wait to show the world how fast we are and what we have built this year as a collective. Shoe the tabs and a clean sweep, bring on 30th March!

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



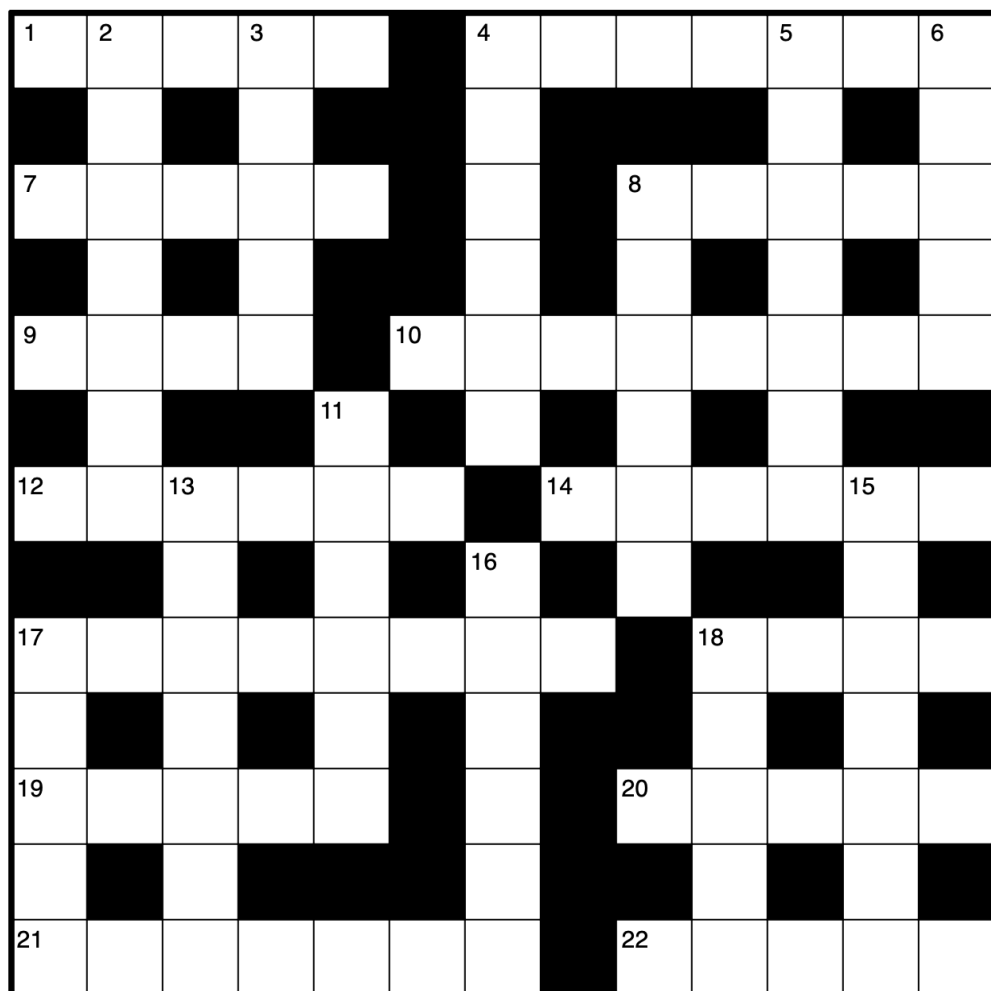
Kaffeinated Kevin and Timmy

by Sean Hartnett



Thank you so much to all readers of Kevin & Timmy! I'll see you sometime soon again. - Sean

Cryptic Crossword by Sarah Beard



ACROSS

- 1. Love enters a room? (5)
- 4. Care about library demonstrates merit (7)
- 7. Makes voice louder at end of copy (5)
- 8. Yearn for a hundred at techno party (5)
- 9. Dig up what I possess (4)
- 10. Carnival drama results in equal treatment (4, 4)
- 12. Sin after promotion, get counselling! (6)
- 14. Wood for relaxation (6)
- 17. Marked down, count on diss! (8)
- 18. Dull poet travels west (4)
- 19. Initially, nervous artist

talks a lot about babies (5)

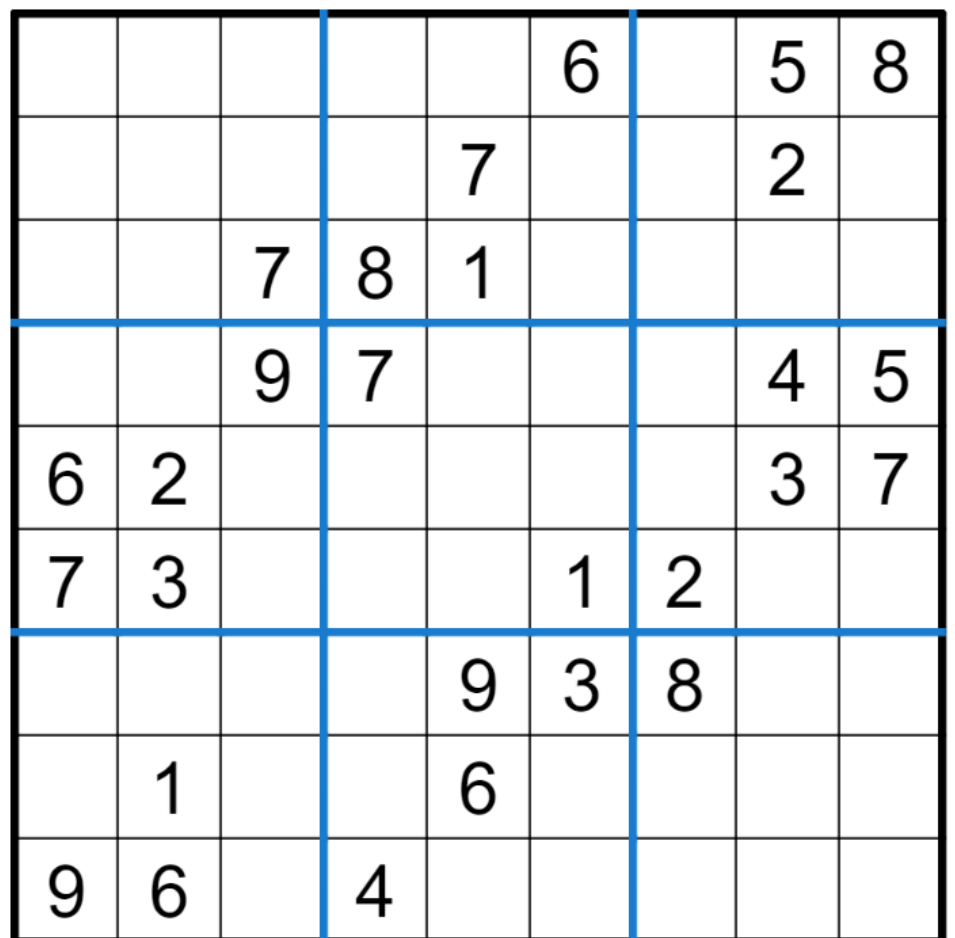
- 20. All Saints delay (5)
- 21. Serious about nearest mess (7)
- 22. Bird makes most shiny thing (5)

DOWN

- 2. Worshipped from every angle (7)
- 3. Artificial intelligence integrated in lift (5)
- 4. Fight caused by brush with a creature of the night (6)
- 5. Communication through feeling bra first (7)

- 6. Tie up Eugene, my nemesis! (5)
- 8. Clicker sounds like someone swearing (6)
- 11. Baked good wrapped up in parchment paper (6)
- 13. A guest? Is it inside? (7)
- 15. Quiet! Let it be surface-level! (7)
- 16. Make a good financial move in sleeveless garment (6)
- 17. Closing bod, you often panic the idiot (5)
- 18. Caution between the outside terrain (5)

Sudoku by Lewis Callister



Quiz by Misha Pemberthy

- 1 Four Beatles biopics are set to hit the screens from 2027, but what are the current top four grossing musical biopics the Fab Four will be looking to unseat?
- 2 The Apprentice is back on screens with Lord Alan Sugar in the executive chair, but what company did Sugar start in 1968?
- 3 What is name of Stephen Hawking's 1988 entry level physics book about cosmology?
- 4 What is the name of the fictional fox puppet that has been a childhood television mainstay since the 1960s?
- 5 What is an alliterative-hyphenated way to say that one is wasting time?
- 6 What is the name for an industrial facility that produces coins and notes?
- 7 What connects the answers for 3-6?
- 8 According to Cambridge University's Sports Website, who has won more varsity matches as of writing [27/02/24]?
- 9 Are each of the following either muscles in the human body or a role held in the Roman Empire: Levator Palpebrae Superioris; Praepositus Sacri Cubiculi; Lictor Curiatus; Longus Capitis?

10 Everton's point deduction has been in the news this week, but what is the largest point deduction given in English Football history?

Last edition's answers

5TH WEEK | HT 24
 ACROSS: 1) Heart, 3) Saucer, 6) Fraud, 8) Scared, 11) Vain, 12) Relative, 13) Magenta, 18) Incident, 11) Ace of spades, 14) Treacle, 17) White van man, 19) Driver, 21) No way, 22) Yeehaw, 23) Brake herring, 7) Ides, 9) Cedilla, 10) Bad hair day, 12) Forgive, 13) Peace, 15) A while, 16) Impala, 18) Vent, 20) Raw,

Quiz answers: 1) THE, THERE, HE, IN, REIN, HER, HERE, ERE, THEREIN, HEREIN, 2) LVIII (58), 3) SZA, 4) 7, 5) Harold MacMillan, 6) Mexico, 7) Norwich - Nottingham and Reading are second and third respectively, 8) Bolts, 9) Company,