



THE POOR PRINT



THE COLUMN

College Interviews

Giorgio Scherrer
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Daniel Hurn, 28, electrician and maintenance supervisor, has been working at Oriel since he was fifteen. He brews his own beer, bakes his own bread, and likes the mutual respect in his team.



I wouldn't say that I have much of a relationship with students. Sure, when I happen to be in their room we chat a bit, but I'm here to do what I'm here to do. And when I've done my job, I go. But some of my colleagues here in the maintenance department are certainly a bit chattier than me.

And yet I've been working here as an electrician for 11½ years, before that I was a waiter in the SCR, before that one in hall. I was born in Oxford and started working at Oriel during school, when I was fifteen. A friend had been working here, so I asked him if they needed someone and they did.

After doing one year of A-levels I stopped and came here full time. At some point I asked them for an apprenticeship and they offered me one, either as a plumber or an electrician. I chose electricity because I thought it would be a slightly cleaner job. In reality, all trade jobs are a bit dirty, but I don't mind that. That all took four years and after that I stayed here.

Now, since November, I'm the maintenance supervisor. At first I thought it might be difficult to supervise senior staff who have been working here for nearly twenty years, but it wasn't. I think it's because of the mutual respect we have for each other: when you've been working with someone for eleven, twelve years, you're bound to be close.

Oriel's an interesting place – there are lots of different things to do for an electrician, it never gets repetitive. But because the buildings are so old, it can also be quite challenging. Still, I can't really think of a favourite spot around here – well, maybe the Natural History Museum, I quite like that. But when you've been in Oxford for a long time, you tend not to notice things anymore – you don't even look up most of the time.

On weekends I brew my own beer and bake my own bread: my fiancé and I are quite into cooking. I also like watching rugby, though I've never played myself. Or I have a drink with some friends – my favourite pub, The Bear, is right around the corner. And actually, it's not so hard to get a seat – if you know the local people there of course.”■

Upcoming Issues

Issue 8 - *DECLINE & FALL*
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Contribute

The Poor Print is currently inviting submissions for the following issues. Please submit your article to thepoorprint@oriel.ox.ac.uk

Reflections on a fresh, green apple

Aidan Chivers

The skin yields satisfyingly beneath my eager teeth, which dive hungrily into the citrus depths. Top teeth meet bottom, and the juicy pulp is happily sucked away, leaving a perfect, circular crater in an otherwise unblemished sphere of fruit.

New things in life can bring with them immense pleasure and excitement. Fresh tastes can take us above ordinary, mundane routines and give us glimpses of intense vitality and passion. Different experiences can stop us fading into patterns and habits which deaden our capacity for excitement and the joys of life.

Sometimes, fresh starts are forced upon us. Leaving my school of 15

years forced me out into a world of exciting new possibilities; my year abroad will take me away from weekly essays and translation exercises; one day we will all graduate and be thrown outside the security of university and college life.

But not all new beginnings happen on such a major scale. We can keep ourselves fresh and alive on a daily basis with a thousand new approaches, life choices, and changes in the relationships we have with others.

Baudelaire, though supremely conscious of a long literary tradition behind him, strived with every poem to discover a new approach, a new idea, a new perspective. Famously he concludes his anthology *Les Fleurs du Mal* by renouncing even the traditional distinctions between good and evil

(‘Hell or Heaven, what’s the difference?’) and desires only to throw himself at all costs into a world of new poetry and new experiences: to ‘trouver du nouveau’, to ‘find something new’.

This freshness typically takes the form of newfound intensity of emotional experience. It is the exhilarating taste of unfamiliar passion. The new glow of shared feeling. The dizzying uncertainties of early attraction.

The leap of faith which comes with that first bite doesn’t always leave us with the taste we were expecting. It can be sharp, and leave us wincing at the sudden sting. It can be soft, and give us a mouthful of mushy disappointment. If we’re particularly unlucky, we’ll find the twitching tail of a newly-decapitated worm inside.

Yet nothing makes us feel more alive than that first moment of contact between teeth and fruit. We can spend our life munching on one apple until we’re left staring at the sticky pips, or we can keep biting on new, fresh, exhilarating experiences, and fill our lives with a rich variety of tastes and memories.

I look back at my apple. It is reassuring, because I know what taste is coming. Its green flesh still holds the potential for many more tasty bites. But as I look at its gaping, vulnerable centre, the flesh exposed and already starting to go brown, I cannot help but arrive at one conclusion.

Subsequent mouthfuls may be sweet and pleasant, but they will never live up to the purity, zest and enticing promise of the first.■

The Case for Zero Waste

Sophie Barnes

We have produced more plastic in the last ten years than we have over the last hundred, yet it takes approximately 500-1000 years to degrade. Zero Waste is an attempt to reduce what we throw out to zero, making our lives 100% sustainable. It’s a growing online community. The Zero Waste Bloggers Networks unites zero wasters across the world, whilst the Facebook group Zero Waste Heroes encourages and advises individuals on how to avoid packaging at Christmas, make your own mascara, and use cotton instead of plasters in your first aid kit.

It’s impressive. Many of these Zero Waste Warriors never leave home without their own stainless-steel straw, plate, fork, napkin, cup, metal water bottle, cloth bag, homemade soap, and Kilner jar. They brush their teeth with bamboo toothbrushes and make toothpaste out of coconut oil, baking soda, and peppermint oil. It’s admirable, but seems like a niche activity for the hippy, tree-hugging types, not particularly practical.

However, when you look into it you realise that not only do we have an obligation to do something, but changing our habits is much easier than we think.

Zero Waste is an effective solution. Since waste is a form of inefficiency, zero waste saves us money and shortens production processes. It supports all the goals of sustainability: economic well-being, environmental protection, and social well-being. Zero Waste helps build local communities as they work together to curb waste, and removes the problem of landfill sites.

Being a Zero Waster is simple in Oxford. Here are six ways to get started:

1. *Get a compost bin and use your blue bin.*

Oxford has one of the best recycling services in the country, so it’s no excuse not to use it. Getting compost bins is more challenging since there are concerns that students will misuse them. But if more people press for change, maybe one day we will succeed!

2. *Rethink where you shop*

In Oxford there are many alternatives to supermarkets that are significantly

greener and cheaper. At the Gloucester Green Market (*Wednesdays 9am – 4pm*) you can buy all sorts of fruit, vegetables, and bread without plastic. Deals include five avocados for £1! There are also the many Covered Market butchers, veg stalls and bakeries (*Mon-Sat 8am – 5pm*). The East Oxford Farmers’ and Community Market (*Saturdays 10am – 1pm*) includes SESI, a refill station, where you can buy all sorts of dried goods if you bring your own tupperware. Their nuts and seeds are significantly cheaper than those from the supermarket.

If you still end up in the supermarket, there are plenty of unwrapped products to buy there too.

3. *Challenge yourself on snacks*

One of the worst forms of waste is crisp and chocolate packets, as they are so hard to recycle or break down. Try to pack fruit or a snack in your bag that uses less waste or recyclable plastic. Maybe bake something and take that with you.

4. *Buy a water bottle and a coffee flask*

It is very easy to take a water bottle or coffee flask with you wherever you go to avoid extra plastic. If you do buy

coffee out, drink it in so you don’t waste disposable cups. If you do take away, don’t get the coffee cup lid as the plastic is not recyclable.

5. *Rethink toiletries*

Most simply, buy everything from Lush. All their products are Fairtrade, environmentally-friendly, and plastic-less. This includes shower gel, shampoo, makeup, and other goods. Their products also last much longer, saving you money too. If you are super-keen, you can also try making your own coconut-oil-based toothpaste: this enthusiastic zero waster will show you how: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DIpTXQI7qT0>

6. *Receipts*

This is a quite a specific issue I became conscious of over my zero waste week. This is something we can’t always control, but if given the option, always say no to a receipt.

Most importantly, try where you can but don’t get demoralised when you can’t immediately cut down your waste to one thimble a year. It’s also easy to get caught out, whether it’s covering food in cling film before it goes in the microwave or having a yoghurt with a non-recyclable lid. However, the more you try, the more you’ll realise how unnecessary so much plastic is, and you’ll start to make your small impact on the drive to a greener society.■

IN DEFENCE OF PROTEST

EDITORIAL

For an aeroplane’s aluminium and composite canister to fly serenely through the sky, two great, guzzling turbines spin ferociously on each wing. These explosive extremities provide the force to carry those in the comfortable, quiet middle toward their destination.

The Poor Print recently published a cartoon on the Rhodes Must Fall movement, in which it was suggested that central issues including a western-centric curriculum and a lack of voice for BME students were elephants in the room, lost in the noise of the protests and counter protests.

Its *prima facie* sensible idea – at least for those who think there is little chance of the statue coming down – is that such distractions hinder rather than help bring about change.

What the cartoon did not acknowledge was the chaotic processes by which change is wrought.

Every protest needs a symbol. And without the intense response to the potential removal of this historical artefact, we would not have had this debate on a collegiate, campus, national, and even international level.

In Oxford of all places, where institutional inertia is not easily overcome, it may be that the kind of reforms needed to make this university more open and more reflective of the world in which we actually live can indeed only be brought about by these great fiery turbines of protests raising awareness and powering discourse.

In any movement, the actions of those considered disruptive, extreme, or troublesome are the ones who provide the energy for reforms. Those on the inside, those who have the capacity

to make change, can only do so when there is some force, usually external, that creates an impetus to act differently, change policy, hire someone new, and redirect funding.

For those of us at Oriel the protests have been disruptive and uncomfortable. But education should be these things. It would be a shame if we left here unchallenged, effectively the same as we arrived.

The Rhodes controversy may have been exactly the crisis Oriel College needed to bring about change.

And if so, then, after all this, our college will be more diverse, ethical, and responsive to a rapidly changing world in which we must face inequality and inaccessibility wherever and whenever it is found.■

‘Green’

Jacob Warn

Green was the colour of day when clods stuck to corduroy on cool mornings as a boy.

Green was aching for envy at the daisy chain she’d plucked and his chin gleaming with buttercups.

Green was the lie of sucking grass – a child’s drug – and sap that boys claimed an aphrodisiac.

Green hued in the teens for crack, and the Mac, and the jack and the grey-cited album-track.

Taiwan’s Greener Pastures

Zixin Jiang

Taiwan’s president-elect, Tsai Ing-wen, is a skilled politician who brought her party from its worst scandal to its greatest electoral victory, and she is the first woman to officially lead a Chinese-speaking nation since the eighth century.

Ms Tsai, who was introduced in one British newspaper as a ‘democracy campaigner, gay rights champion, and cat lover’, leads the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and the pan-Green coalition associated with it. The coalition derives its name from the colour of the DPP’s flag, which depicts a green Taiwan on a white cross. In contrast to the governing Kuomintang (also called the Chinese Nationalist Party), the pan-Greens emphasise the island’s separate identity from the mainland.

Beijing has hardly acknowledged Ms Tsai: ‘We have noticed the election results in the region of Taiwan,’ read an official statement, which did not even bother to say what those results were.

A quick survey of mainland state media articles reveals far less interest in Ms Tsai herself than in explaining why the Kuomintang lost the election. Government incompetence and party disunity are offered as the main reasons for the loss; hardly any of the

articles suggest that Taiwan-mainland relations could be a factor.

The articles also praise current president Ma Ying-jeou, who has been friendly towards mainland China, for his response to the recent Kaohsiung earthquake and his tough rhetoric towards Japan. In contrast, Ms Tsai’s response to the earthquake is deemed unsatisfactory, ‘not achieving a passing mark’. ‘When she’s head of the household she’ll know how expensive rice is,’ predicts one editorial, paraphrasing a Chinese proverb.

‘The people of mainland China are sensitive towards issues regarding Taiwan, so the focus has not been so much on the female leadership,’ one Chinese student told me. ‘If that is mentioned at all, it is spoken with ridicule.’

Despite the dismissive rhetoric, Beijing will doubtless pay close attention to Ms Tsai. The DPP hopes to make Taiwan less financially dependent on the mainland, which means the island will have to build stronger relationships with other countries. This should concern Beijing because it needs Taiwan as an ally for its disputes with Japan and in the South China Sea.

Taiwan is also an inspiration to others who wish to gain more political freedom from Beijing. Hongkongers are particularly aware of the contrast between its elections and Taiwan’s. Ms Tsai won with over 6,890,000 votes; Leung Chun-ying, Hong Kong’s

current leader, won with 689. Radicals in Hong Kong are frustrated because they think the city is not willing to go to the same lengths as Taiwan for the sake of democracy. They call for more radical action.

Ms Tsai says she hopes to continue the status quo for Taiwan’s relation-

ship to the mainland. By using this language, she can maintain what is in effect an independent Taiwan while not explicitly defying Beijing.

‘The mainland can’t go up in arms against Taiwan,’ my friend told me. Faced with Tsai Ing-wen’s strategy, ‘Beijing can’t pursue unification, and all it can do is to prevent Taiwan from formally declaring independence.’

‘In this scenario, the mainland has the downside.’ ■

Corrections

The Poor Print apologises to Dr David Maw for a grammatical error in Issue 6. One of the editors, despite reading Classics at Oriel College, Oxford, failed to spot an incorrectly declined noun (‘memoria’), which read ‘in memoriem’ rather than ‘in memoriam’. We thank Dr Maw for drawing this to our attention, and for not being too accusative about it.

8 Green Bottles: A Drinking Song

Aidan Chivers

Wondering what to have to accompany your steak next Monday formal? The highly-regarded freshers’ wine team give you the definitive verdict on the range of wines on offer, with a single adjective on each and a score out of 111:

- 8 green bottles, standing on the wall
8 green bottles, standing on the wall
And if one green bottle should accidentally fall
(La Promenade Syrah, £6.50, “tangy”, 54)
There’d be 7 green bottles standing on the wall
- 7 green bottles, standing on the wall
7 green bottles, standing on the wall
And if one green bottle should accidentally fall
(Allamanda Puglia Sangiovese, £6.40, “berry”, 63)
There’d be 6 green bottles standing on the wall
- (Montepulciano D’Abruz Class, £7.30, “jarring”, 65)
...5 green bottles...

- (Andersbrook Shiraz, £6.50, (SA) “boer-ish”, 73)
...4 green bottles...
- (Los tres Curas Carmenere, £6.50, “woody”, 75)
...3 green bottles...
- (Pech Roc Merlot, £6.95, “understated”, 82)
...2 green bottles...
- (Hoopenburg Cabernet, £7.20, “strong”, 82)
There’d be 1 green bottle standing on the wall
- 1 green bottle, standing on the wall
1 green bottle, standing on the wall
And if one green bottle should accidentally fall
(Estola Reeserva Bodegas Ayuso, £8.50, “silky”, 84)
There’d be no green bottles on the wall.

Performed with special thanks to ænophile Kaz Bąkowski, Josh Hutchinson and self-proclaimed ‘assistant editor-in-chief’ William McDonald) ■

SLOW TRAVEL: The Waters of Life

Tobias Thornes

The Hunza Valley stretches out before me, reposing upon my vision like a verdant dream. Except that no dream could conjure such sparkling, vivid colours, nor invoke such unimagined beauty as that possessed by this high Green Heaven. Around it, a crisp crown of snow-capped mountains dazzles in the shimmering summer sunlight, completing the perfect picture of a true paradise. It was worth the long, slow climb into the Karakorum, high above the plains of Pakistan, to find this overawing treasure at the top. Yet the genesis of Hunza is a story more subtle than it might at first appear. For how could such a haven of fertility flourish amidst these rocky, barren heights? The truth is that these trees, these flowers, these fruits and fields of plenty are all mankind’s making – the happy result of humans working hand-in-hand with Nature, for once, to bring a landscape alive.

Centuries ago, the ancient Hunza people, who until then had relied on raiding and plunder to survive where sustenance was scarce, carefully carved out canals at just the right inclination to carry meltwater from the glacier to quench their thirsty fields: a natural flow diverted through human skill. Hidden in their mountain home, they remained for decades an isolated but self-sustaining, prosperous community, blessed with the joys of a simple life in their lofty Eden.

Ascending to the valley in 2018, I find that little has changed. I come as one of a small but growing number of travellers and tourists who take the long road, by bus or on foot, into these magnificent mountains, to climb the slopes or simply look upon an unspoiled green ambrosia now so rare in the world. The people are gracious and giving, well-educated in spite of their

remote position, and seemingly in a state of near-perfect contentment, the secret of joyful life that humanity once held but let slip from its grasp. Having all the simple things they want or need, they crave for nothing more. My visit here has filled my own heart with a joy unparalleled, and it is with refreshed inspiration that I take my leave and begin my descent towards the plains. If only that ‘green’ vision – that sustainable contentment and reverence for nature – pervaded our world more widely, I wonder wistfully, could we not all live in such peaceful bliss?

But greed, not gratitude, is the attitude that prevails in most of the corporate-controlled world that I witness, and there is little such enlightenment in lowland Pakistan. A bus carries me south into the country’s agricultural heartland, the largest area of artificially irrigated cropland in the world, and a monument to the ‘Green Revolution’ imposed by the British in colonial times. The Empire greened the Indus desert by taming the mighty rivers of the Punjab – literally, the ‘land between five rivers’ – in their greedy thirst to expand their cotton plantations. This was no careful, reverent redirection like that carried out in the Hunza hills, but an industrial-scale onslaught of over-irrigation that, over the decades, has released a deadly poison in the soil they sought to enrich: salt. At the edges of the farms and fields, a vast swathe of white death encroaches year by year, land spoiled by a rising water-table that has dragged up this demon from the deep. Entering this man-made wilderness is stepping onto an alien world, dotted here and there with lifeless lagoons of brine that speck the sordid moonscape like craters of an undrinkable extra-terrestrial soup.

And that’s not the sum-total of Pakistan’s water troubles. In the pleasant, soft warmth of a golden early-sum-

mer’s evening I find myself being led down, at last, to the banks of the river Indus to see and touch the life-giving water for myself. By the time it reaches this far south the river has already been diverted and somewhat polluted – enough to kill off the Indus river dolphin, and I certainly shouldn’t choose to quench my thirst with this water. But it remains the well-spring of all life in Pakistan, fed by another melting glacier high up in the Himalayas. Perversely, in their greed for more water, some even suggested burning coal atop the glacier to speed up the process. Although this proposal has thankfully not been implemented, the glacier’s usual cycle of melting and regrowth is nonetheless under threat from climate change, and its disappearance would mean disaster for Pakistan.

Tied into all these water issues, I realise, is the recurring inability of humanity to transcend the present moment. By looking to the past, Imperial and Pakistani governments could have seen the spectre of salination foreshadowed in the collapse of the great Indus Civilisation nearly four thousand years ago, a victim of its own extraordinary irrigation technology. If only the world could look to the future, we would see our own climate doom in the needless waste of today’s materialistic lusts. And there is no better place to witness the emergence of this dangerous duality of short-sightedness than across the border, in India.

‘Subcontinent’ is a good word to describe the Indian peninsula, a land almost as varied in climate as any continent. While the south-west is deluged by up to eleven metres of rainfall per year, in the north some parts receive barely ten centimetres. The common culture that still pervades much of this country is a tradition with water at its heart. Through centuries of flood and drought Hindus especially have venerated India’s rivers, but only since colo-

nial times has man actively sought to control them. The coming decades could see the revival of a great proposal of characteristically reckless nineteenth-century ambition to join together the rivers of North and South India in a ‘River Link Project’, aiming to water dry Rajasthan. Rather than venerating the powers of nature, the project’s advocates seek to ‘dethrone the Monsoon’, stripping it of its power to impose a geographical water inequality on the country. Entering the dry north before its brief rains arrive to cast their spell of green vibrancy on the parched Earth, I can see the origins of this temptation.

I am travelling on the famous Lahore-Delhi bus, the ‘Call of the Frontier’ instituted in 1999 to increase accord between two uneasy neighbours. It’s an eight-hour drive to the Indian capital. Stepping off the bus in Delhi, I find it difficult to breathe. This has

been called the most polluted city on the planet, any remaining greenery hidden beneath a heavy toxic smog. There are more than ten thousand people per square kilometre here, a city of seventeen million, and they soon demonstrate that the true water inequality in India is not geographical but social. While the wealthiest gobble up as much water in a day as the average European city-dweller uses in a month, the squalid lower classes queue for measly morsels at communal pumps. Even the lower-paid amongst the middle classes, dressed to impress in their clean business suits, betray their true, lowly status by standing in line. The rancid heart of this new India, descending in a smog of pollution, climate change and rampant inequality, is neither the river blue nor the forest green of the civilisation it is slowly choking, but black – coal black, as I shall soon witness for myself. ■



Tacita McCoy-Parkhill