

# THE POOR PRINT



# **Oriel Interviews:** 'We're always here for a chat'

Soo Yi Yun

Oriel was 16 February 2018.

spite having been in residential security Quad during the holidays. before I took the job, I had no inkling of how the Oxford college porter system College porters are usually the first point works. Though, I have heard of the col- of call before the deans to provide suplege traditions as I grew up in Oxford. I port to students. The challenges I have worked for Gillman and Soame in the encountered in my job include students past, so I knew about the gowns and endangering themselves emotionally stash, but I never experienced the tradi- and/or physically due to drug overdose, tions until I worked at Oriel. Since then, intoxication, or mental health issues. I I have started to learn the ways of col- have been trained to handle such situalege, including going out and flying the tions, as well as in providing first aid,

Memorable moments at Oriel include forming good friendships with col- One of my bits of advice to students is to ways amusing - trust me when I say I - we are always here for a chat. have seen far too many naked boys on Finally, my last piece of advice would be the CCTV cameras! So, students - al- STOP LOSING YOUR KEYS AND eyes and the ears of college. My lowed by several exclamation marks. favourite spot at Oriel is the library, as it's a beautiful place to patrol on my evening shifts.

So far, I have witnessed two batches of freshers coming in and supported them throughout their process of settling in Shelley Billington, Oriel's first female and eventually, living in college, but I night porter, supports feminism and en- did not notice any significant changes joys her relationships forged in the col- within the student body during my time lege. Her last day as the night porter at here. However, the college scene changes quite a lot during the vacation. Working here was like running a hotel started working at Oriel in July when Oriel opened up 'Bed and Break-2016. I was looking for a job fast' for the first time during summer of with different challenges, so I 2016. Many weddings were held at the decided to apply for this position. De-chapel, followed by drinks at the Second

> but it is always difficult to see students going through a tough time.

leagues and interacting with the students. not be afraid to seek support. It is quite There were students who brought us sad to witness mental breakdowns among [porters] nice gifts at Christmas and the students: too many students struggle popped by for friendly chats. I like with stress during the exam period, parwatching the students performing the ticularly at the last minute. Remember to Oriel Garden Play and having summer seek support from your friends, the parties on the lawn. Bop nights are al-deans, or even drop by the porters' lodge

ways remember that the porters are the BOD CARDS!!! - capitalised and fol-

# **Shorter Every Time**

Fanxi Liu

### DREAM THE FIRST

There's a man in your soap bubbles, you notice on Wednesday. You almost swirl him down the drain with the rest of your day, but snatch the suds out in the nick of time. Indigo-gold-dogwood membrane films his features; nonetheless, you get the distinct impression that he's addressing the arch of your left nostril with some intent. Strain as you may, you can't make anything out but a faint crackle, and eventually you tip your palm, wash your hands of the whole matter. Semiintimate wink of shared disappointment into the plughole; the tap spatters on. Quiet human connection always gets your day off to a pleasant start.

### DREAM THE SECOND

A cart, a grass verge, dust dry on your feet. You can feel the edges of the air where the donkey's ears should be. There are two black dogs by the roadside, tongues scudded with foam, but they don't concern you. The cart creaks along in the hands of an old woman in wooden sandals; as you draw closer, you see the soles are almost worn through. You wonder if she ever sold whole dreams, lightmolten shimmer intact, instead of a bundle of deflated skins to blow up at the cost of what little hope, dignity you have left. You wonder if anyone would touch her, then, even in their minds.

### DREAM THE THIRD

Two men in white coats, one crouching before a dome bigger than the both of them, one kneeling. Hearts suspended anywhere but in their chests. The page turns with an almighty crack across the glass, sea-sharp bitter-blue. They fall back, ears ringing with the sound, knowing that no amount of fingers crammed into the fissure can stem the rush of ammonia. Two men with brown on their hands. Walk away with palms stinging.

# **Potential Power**

Michael Angerer

ur life in a modern state is made comfortable by our trust in the power of its institutions: we know that administrative difficulties are not our problem, but that of the civil service; the presence of the police makes it so much less likely that we will have to defend ourselves against muggers and pilferers; and the legal system makes it possible to have those who break the peace charged, tried, and sentenced. But vital though these institutions are, there is such a thing as tant political disputes for us, or we hope to for the arrest of both Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton. But these demands that our rescue betray a dangerous misunder-

This misunderstanding can be illustrated using the different definitions of the word 'charge'. The Oxford English Dictionary gives two widely different senses; the first is derived from the Latin word for cart and means, broadly, 'load', both literally and figuratively. The process of loading, or charging, something onto something else instead like to see.

We find a view of both these senses expressed in two very well-known Victorian texts: there is, for one, the paralysed legal system of Charles Dickens' 1853 novel

Bleak House. Always charging but never impeached. And every day, those who discharging, the Court of Chancery slowly expect a quick discharge from the system, devours fortunes and lives without ever a heroic charge that will not come, feel providing a ruling in return; the dissatis- more disappointed and frustrated. faction with the slow processes of the legal system is palpable throughout. Quite another image is created by reading Lord Tennyson's famous poem 'The Charge of the Light Brigade' (1854): it depicts a senseless but heroic charge during the Crimean War; these men, doomed by an officer's mistake, are glorified in death. Successful or not, it is the discharge of power, the charge to attack, that is satisfy-

over-reliance on them. Lately, we have That too rapid discharges of power can dwindling trust in the system will ultimatecome to expect the courts to settle impor- have destructive effects can also be observed using a much more mundane ex- ly charging their supposed enemies, satishave controversial political figures ample: phone batteries. They are (excruci- fying though such a sight might be at first, charged - you will find people clamouring atingly slowly) charged to store power (for will only bring about their own destrucfar too short a time); but the sudden un-tion. leashing of that power is disastrous. In the legal system should come charging to 2016, the Samsung Galaxy Note 7 became possibly the most famous phone on earth standing as to the nature of the power of because of its tendency to explode. When charged, short-circuits in the battery led to overheating and explosion; more than 2.5 million devices were recalled. If too much power is charged onto a fragile system, the subsequent discharge of power unleashes destructive energies endangering both source and target; and who is to say that the institutions of the state are not fragile or in danger of being overburdened?

describe our mismatched expectations: the politicians personally accountable for the charged, to be effective. first sense applies to our slow, steady legal faults we see in them: the right want to see system; the second sense is what many of Hillary Clinton imprisoned for her careless those who feel somehow wronged would handling of classified emails; Donald Trump, with his usual tact, made it a campaign promise to have her jailed, not to charge her with a crime as much as to come charging at her. Now, it is the political left that supports a probe into Trump's ties with Russia and wants to see him

But it should have been made clear that the power of the state cannot work like that; a rapid discharge of power allows no time for due consideration. What is more, it also makes everyone dependent upon this power to come charging to the rescue again and again; once institutions of the state begin behaving like this, despotic rule by force is not far. And finally, courts acting in favour of one political side instead of the other will inevitably stir up civil unrest; ly lead to its collapse. Institutions reckless-

Instead, the power of state institutions must not be excessively employed. The legal system does not rule by force; rather, it functions as system of transferral of responsibility. No one will come charging at criminals wielding a flaming sword; criminals are charged with a crime, and, if found guilty in due process, must come to bear the responsibility for it. The legal system thus deals in slow shifts of power rather than rapid intervention. As for the intrinsic power of the system, this is what keeps it in place above the rest of society, describes a careful transfer of and accumu- It is certainly true at present that we expect never fully brought to bear onto society lation of goods or power. The second sense a little too much of the legal system; in and thus never used up; it is the fear that it is as old as the first, having been present in what is felt to be a post-truth world, some-could potentially be used that commands English since the 16th Century; its origins how the courts are meant to come swoop- respect, where what is felt to be an unjust are, however, unclear: this is the sense that ing in to save the day. In 2017, they were use only fosters rebellion. A sudden disdesignates an impetuous attack, effectively used to challenge the handling of Brexit or charge of the power of the legal system a sudden discharge of power onto whatev- Donald Trump's travel bans when any would essentially be the end of law and er is attacked. Between them, these conpolitical solution had become impossible. order; the power of the state must remain tradictory senses of the word perfectly Similarly, the courts are expected to hold potential, charged but never fully dis-





Cartoon by Rhiannon Savage

### untitled trio

Chloe Jacobs

We work in silent tandem as I, A spray of warm citrus, work open skin and you Lick sugared History from your spoon

'I mean, is it worth it?' As I work life back into my hands, you, the sheen of rain on a cheekbone, nod towards them, long limb over short.

'Maybe'

Stolen milk dilutes my tea as you, a joke under a fold of plastic, recline, and he, a blossom-fall of neon post-it notes, smiles, hard.

# In Extremis: Stones of Light

James Page

rofton's Seat was built upon an ancient rock overlooking the fields below. A low wall surrounded a single wide tower, reaching toward the sky. It seemed as old as the land itself, and as likely to be abandoned as sheltering a city from the unforgiving clouds above. The storm overhead stretched from horizon to horizon. Tendrils of light leapt and scattered above it so that it was never left in completely darkness. This was where Katherine found herself on the last day of her journey into the heartlands.

The journey here had been arduous, but ultimately much less challenging than she had expected. She had met no-one on the road, and seen no-one in the settlements she had passed. The main challenge had been finding good shelter for the nights, and keeping the horse as warm and dry as she could. Lacking any mark on his bridle, her fellow traveller had remained nameless, and so she had decided to call him Peter – a good strong name. She was sure she would need such a rock in the days and nights

Arriving in the tower's courtyard, Katherine took a moment to dismount and tie up Peter by the remains of a small stable. Whatever lay beyond, this loyal animal did not deserve any part in its risks.

The doors of the tower were made of old, rusted metal. Katherine approached them tentatively. She gently pushed them, and they yielded. Only darkness lay beyond. Passing the ancient doors, she entered the pitch-black hall.

As her eyes adjusted, she could see there were some missing stones in the roof, letting in brief glimpses of light, almost enough to guide her way. The thunder sounded like the footfalls of some great spirit dancing on the roof. She took one of her few dry pieces of wood from her satchel and lit it. The floor was rock like the rest of the building, and completely bare. Ahead, beyond the great hall, there was a corridor, and several rooms on either side. This would take more than a day to search; she might have to stay here for the night.

She looked down for a moment and saw something unexpected. The gem she was carrying around her neck was faintly glowing. She took it off and lifted it up. Perhaps this was connected to why the knight had entrusted it to her.

### The Charges of **Patroclus**

Cora MacGregor

He who once, child-like, wept, seeing needless Death, now, clad in bronze, attacks a fourth time. Ablaze with another's glory, heedless, Like something inhuman, like something divine.

In costume, playing once the hero, but already The god. And dormant ambition is freed: Instinctive, his spear in his hand steady, As he splinters troops, fells men like trees.

Mindless and manless, a killing machine; Fearful and fearless, from outside he's seen. Borne by an impulse greater than himself. The impulse to be greater than himself.

Despite its beauty, Katherine started to wonder Crofton produced an object from beneath his if carrying it all this way had been a good idea.

Katherine jumped, then turned. A shawled figure stood behind her. This was the first human she had heard or seen in some time. Once her shock had dissipated, her hopes sparked. The voice belonged to a woman. Could it be this more than a whisper.

'Joanna?'

'What have you done with him?'

'He's safe, and out of the storm.' Katherine started to move toward her, arms outstretched, a torch in one hand, the softly glowing stone in the other. A flash of light swept through the room. 'He sent me here to find you.' If she could just reach-

'And how exactly do I know anything you say is true?' Joanna had a wry smile. Another spark of white light, and from beneath the woman's shawl Katherine could see the glint of a blade.

'How easily do you think he would have given me your name?' The response was instinctual, and she just hoped it was clever enough to work. Joanna seemed to falter and hesitate

Whether you speak truth or not, it doesn't matter. I'm bound here until my lord gives me leave. Doubly so now that my husband has chosen to flee.

Katherine could hardly believe such suicidal madness; but then again, had she not just ridden into a storm that had stripped the kingdom

'You can leave too,' Katherine tried to make her understand, 'There's nothing left to punish you beyond these walls.'

Joanna actually laughed. 'You really don't understand this, do you?' She pointed upwards, and another flash lit up the details of her face. She looked scared now. 'It punishes disloyalty. Especially to my lord.'

'Why would-'

A low voice rang out into the room, stopping the debate dead. From the corridor a tall, disheveled frame had emerged, draped in old purple robes. He had stopped beneath a hole in the roof, rain pattering down onto his unpro-

'You brought it to me. Good girl.'

'Who are you?' Another instinctual response.

'I am your lord. Crofton's Seat is mine. You are in my home. Now give me what is mine.'

Katherine felt a thrill of defiance. 'Why should

'Joanna,' a harsher voice now, dark and commanding, 'get me the stone.'

Joanna visibly hesitated. Katherine took a step with. On the other side of the hall, Crofton across the courtyard. One rested by the stable reached out his hand.

'Give me the stone and I will release you from my service.'

Before Katherine had even processed the words, the gem was gone from her hand and a blade pointed at her.

'This is for our own good,' Joanna pleaded previous night. even as she backed away towards her lord. As They rode away from that place as fast as they she crossed the hall, Katherine cursed herself for her weak reflexes, and for her rashness in coming here. Had her compassion managed to lead her to her own death?

As soon as Joanna laid the stone in his hand, To be concluded 'Ab Extremis'...■ she ran back across the room to Katherine. A draft flew through the room, and Katherine's

'Let's go. Now,' Joanna pleaded.

robes. At first it appeared to be a simple smooth ball, but then there was another pulse of light from above, and Katherine saw it glow. The orb itself was made of gems like the one she had been given.

'What is that?' Katherine's voice was barely

'Why we need to go.'

'At last,' the old man was almost cackling now, 'after all these years, after that blasted knight stole the last piece, I have your heart.' He held the orb aloft, looking up at the clouds above, 'What say you now, you unforgiving spirits?' He moved Katherine's stone towards the orb. Another wave of light swept across his face. He seemed some evil wizard from a fireside tale. There was no fire left now.

'Please.' Joanna was now dragging on Katherine's arm, but Joanna no longer existed. All she could see was the old man, and her gem being placed into the orb, fitting perfectly into the only defect in its structure.

And suddenly there was light.

The Orb was visibly glowing now, but that was hardly noticeable. A shaft of daylight had opened above the laughing figure. The two women had to shield their eyes, such was the brightness and their surprise. Somewhere, distant in her own mind, Katherine noted that despite the daylight the booms of thunder had

'Who's weak now, father? Who is my judge now, mother?' The triumph he spoke with was almost comical, getting louder and louder, 'This is my land, this is my kingdom, and I will not have it taken from me by any base magic. I am the ruler of my-'

A shaft of lightning darted down into the hall from the hole above. The room was filled with sudden light and noise, and just as quickly was left dark and barren once more. Crofton was gone, the daylight was gone. All that was left was the glowing orb.

That broke Katherine's trance. She squeezed Joanna's hand and they ran from the hall together. Behind them, they could feel the force building. As they sprinted through the doors, Katherine made for Peter and the stable, pulling Joanna behind her. There was wind now, pulling them back towards the hall. Katherine grabbed Peter's reigns, pulled him downwards, he complied. They all hid behind the wall of the stable, lying on the ground, as the loudest burst of thunder Katherine could imagine rang out behind them, and the world momentarily be-

The wall shook several times, beaten by huge fists, but held. When the silence had lasted for more than a minute, Katherine dared to look up. Where the hall had been, there was now empty space. The rocks that had made it lay strewn wall. Katherine reached out to touch it, but her hand was pushed back, repelled. A new layer of fear struck her. She turned round to Peter, who was already standing, with Joanna climbing onto him. She quickly joined her and shook the reins, spurring Peter on, back down the rock, back to the cave where they had slept safe the

could, away from the heart of the storm, and the orb of stones still softly glowing in the rub-

# Cosmic Background Radiation

Michael Leong

I wrote you a poem -

It was a twin fangled star's crossing the park end of the uni-

It was a covert signal, a beep beeeeep fax machine beaming quiet whispers to desert islands Where jawas, marooned in silver storms would ponder our deepest secrets

Huddled around broken words they try to put an ancient script together, raise from the dead What I could not.

For humanity had left by then, the last remnants of our civilisation taken up by a solar wind, ashes given an unceremonious wave and lost -

amongst the mountains of cosmic dust stretched out upon the far too wide space between you and me

# Weather (or not?)

Alexander Walls

The night is dark. The rain - it lashes down, Its persistent pattering, dolorous To my ears. The dull, sombre sky has drained. Hearing the downhearted drops of the rain, I think of such boundless, untold concepts. But, like the rain, I find myself discharged, Resigned to the asseveration from Above. Now I am drained, delusional.

The day is bright. The sun – its beaming light Coruscating the spires, glorifying My surroundings. The bright, glad sky charges. Beholding the radiant beams of light, I think of such boundless, untold concepts. And, like the sun, I find I'm enlivened, Energised by the benevolence all Around. Now is this still delusional?

It is twilight. The sky – it is sublime, Awash with such colour, it is calming To my soul – such serene tranquillity. Standing pensively, musing the beyond, I think of such boundless, untold concepts. Then, like the twilight, the moment is gone, Lost in the cyclical nature of thought And time. This is the most unusual.



The Poor Print Online

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