Dorothy’s Lip

Educate. Agitate. Organise.

wadham women’s magazine  trinity 2018
First created by the women of Wadham College in 1993, Dorothy’s Lip was a pioneering forum to express creativity and address women’s issues within the college and wider university. 15 years after the last issue, we are carrying on the radical tradition of Wadham and launching the new, up-to-date version of the magazine.

The decision to bring Dorothy’s Lip back was an easy one. I realised that 2018 is truly the year of women: some women have had votes for 100 years, Times Up and #MeToo have brought movie mogul Harvey Weinstein to his knees (at last), and you can’t scroll twitter without seeing the word feminism. How better to celebrate than with a collection of writing and artwork from some of Oxford’s finest feminist gals?

The women’s movement is more alive than ever before, and is finally beginning to be intersectional and inclusive. I hope that the diversity and originality of these articles, poems and artworks reflect the feminist movement as it is in 2018, and encourage readers to engage positively with issues raised. I hope it provides an opportunity to reflect on the position of women both in Oxford and society, showcase the creativity of women* past and present, and inspire feminist activism in all forms.
## contents

### articles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Why does Childish Gambino fancy Asian women so much?</td>
<td>Chloe Lim</td>
<td>p.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowerlifting</td>
<td>Francesca Best</td>
<td>p.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A confused feminist?</td>
<td>Anonymous</td>
<td>p.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why Have There Been No Great Women Headliners?</td>
<td>Chloe Whitehead</td>
<td>p.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review: Nashville</td>
<td>Billie Esplen</td>
<td>p.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seventeenth Century Widows</td>
<td>Judy Stevenson</td>
<td>p.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stop Fixing Women</td>
<td>Juliane Borchert</td>
<td>p.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mind the Gap</td>
<td>Rachel Collett</td>
<td>p.24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### poetry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WOMXN</td>
<td>Sophie Hardcastle</td>
<td>p.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoidance ~ December/January</td>
<td>L.S. Krol</td>
<td>p.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confused, aged 16</td>
<td>Verity Babbs</td>
<td>p.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free from Persecution ~ 'Berlin is less gay than I thought'</td>
<td>A Sapphist</td>
<td>p.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am worthy</td>
<td>AJB</td>
<td>p.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She is in Love</td>
<td>Kei Patrick</td>
<td>p.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Other Others</td>
<td>A Sapphist</td>
<td>p.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real Threats ~ Girls Who Fall</td>
<td>A Sapphist</td>
<td>p.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FEMALE FRIENDSHIPS ARE MY MEANS OF SURVIVAL
**Why does Childish Bambino fancy Asian women SO MUCH?**

Fans of the multi-hyphenate Donald Glover, most commonly known by his (now-forsaken) stage name of ‘Childish Gambino’, would know of his recent signing with RCA Records earlier this year. The move came after his casting as Simba in the live action *Lion King* and his unrelated termination of his singing career. Following the move, Glover decided to re-release his 2011 EP (creatively titled *EP*), giving the album a new lease of life on streaming sites. It was while listening to this that I noticed a curious, disturbing trend. In four out of the five tracks, Glover makes references to Asian women, a trend that is apparent in other songs like ‘Break (All of the Lights)’ where he asks ‘is it too soon for Japanese girls? Too tsunami? / Is it racist if I say she taste like edamame?’ To Glover, ‘Whiskey shots and doing Asian bitches is the status quo’ (‘It’s On’). His continual insistence on categorising women by race is followed by a weak excuse in ‘Not Going Back’ where he writes; ‘Relax, black chick, I think that I have offended thee / I got nothing against the sisters I just don’t think they’re into me’. While the sexualisation of women and racial politics are topics familiar to rap, Glover’s particular fascination with (at best) and fetishisation of (at worst), Asian women, is remarkable enough to stand out. It is true that *EP* was released in a different time where expectations were different (read: lower) when it came to liberation politics, the re-release of the album today demands that we pay attention to the history of Asian fetishisation in American music and beyond.

Glover’s racial preferences are no secret to interviewers and listeners of his songs alike. In 2011’s *Camp*, he opens ‘You See Me’ with ‘I’m on my ballin’ each and every day / Asian girls everywhere, UCLA’, punning on ‘ballin’ each and’ (Polynesian) and referencing also the stereotype of the University of California, Los Angeles being populated by Asians. He goes on to say ‘Forget these white girls / I need some variation / Especially if she very Asian’ - really? There are many more rhymes for ‘variation’ up for grabs. In ‘Kids Keep Up’, Glover defends himself saying: ‘finding you is like finding Asians that I hate / they say I got a fetish, nah, I’m skipping all of it, / Black or white girls come with a set of politics / That’s all I was saying’. This is a sentiment that he repeats again in a 2012 interview, where he excuses himself saying ‘I had a long term relationship with a Filipino girl (DJ SoSuperSam)’ and ‘it was also a symptom of me not liking dealing with the politics [of dating girls of other races]. When I would date an Asian girl, it wouldn’t even matter’. What might superficially appear to be a compliment is instead a jarring reminder of ‘yellow fever’, a phenomena of men from other races preferring East or South-East Asian women, purely based on their physical characteristics or stereotypes. What Glover might be forgetting is that while Asian-Americans certainly are relatively forgotten in discussions about racial politics in America, their objectification bears its own political history.

It is not just Donald Glover however - a closer look at the American entertainment industry reveals a tendency to use Asian culture and Asian bodies to make jokes, promote a product or steal aspects of artistic inspiration, without depth or credit. Degrees of racism range from questionable to serious. In One Republic’s music video for ‘Wherever I Go’ (set
of subservient, ‘unconditionally’ devoted Asian women. The list goes on - including Day Above Ground’s song ‘Asian Girlz’ to Chris Rock and Ali G’s racist comments at the 2016 Oscars, comparing Asians to minions, ‘hard-working little yellow people with tiny dongs’. This is appreciably different from collaborative and appreciative projects such as Fall Out Boy’s recent remix of ‘Champion’, featuring Korean rapper RM. Based on an appreciation for individual talent and style, as well as an openness to trans-national cooperation can result in pieces like Takashi Murakami’s artwork for Kanye West’s Graduation album or the admittedly funny sitcom Fresh Off the Boat. Such productions are rare however, and representation for Asians and Asian-Americans remains paltry, while ‘othering’ and fetishisation make the news far more often.

The American preoccupation with Asia, more specifically the Far East and South-East Asia, finds its strongest surge in the mid to late 20th century. A brief history traces a trend of American military occupation, and a power dynamic encouraging the ‘colonisation’ of countries and female bodies by military, masculine power. Following the Second World War, the Allied Forces occupied Japan for seven years until 1952, imposing American models of government and committing atrocities such the rape of thousands of Japanese women. The American presence in East Asia continues today with the United States Forces Korea, established in South Korea from 1952, with more than 20,000 soldiers present in the country. In South-East Asia, similar atrocities were committed by American forces in Vietnam, as Gina Marie Weaver tells in her book Ideologies of Forgetting: Rape in the Vietnam War (2010). Going further back into the twentieth-century, the Philippines was also subject to colonial rule by the United States, flooding the country with large-scale American immigration in the 1940s, with many Americans choosing to stay following the Philippines’ independence in 1946, exerting a neocolonial influence throughout the peninsula even after military withdrawal. These accounts of American violence in Asia do not even begin to account for the systematic discrimination suffered by East-Asian men who, despite working and living in the United States, could not own property or resettle because of alien land laws. While America was more than content to use the bodies of Chinese and Japanese men for cheap labour, these laws prevented men from making a home, pursuing a full life, or even marrying a U.S. citizen as American women who married these ‘aliens’ would be stripped of their citizenship. Critics today have argued that these laws and the actions of America in international relations, and in presenting Asians in media, contribute to the perceived emasculation of Asian men as the least attractive racial group in heterosexual dating today (see: David L. Eng’s Racial Castration: managing masculinity in Asian America, 2001). Knowing all of this take a second look then at pretty, romantic musicals like Miss Saigon and M.Butterfly, and their separate histories of ‘yellowface’, racism, and dramatisations of the white savour complex and the subservient Asian woman. Could you still stomach these productions? This writer can’t.

So no, preferring Asian women at the exclusion of other races is not a-political, it is a racist fetish based in a history of colonialism and violence against the Asian woman perpetuated by white men. Britain, while not mentioned in this article, is complicit too, the Empire has done enough. No amount of pseudo-praise for our soft skin, silky hair, supposedly tighter vaginas will justify that. And no, we refuse to fight against our sisters from other races either. We owe it to ourselves as the generation with more access to information about the world than ever to understand the nuances and histories of cultural biases that affect non-white communities of every shade. Violence against women has everything to do with power and the attempt to establish it against those who have the power to survive, and this is just one of many attempts that I and my communities will make to fight back.
Diving into the Southern Ocean was how it felt. Diving into her darkness.

Icebergs suspended in the grey. Diving into her ocean. Ocean as deep as the sky.

Hot air flooded and I enjoyed her Warm Sublime. Totally and Unapologetically. Was absorbed in her Vast landscape. Felt the full Force of her femininity. the scent of soft pink.

She changed my knowing
Of the world
Of the sky
Of the stars and the Clouds
She changed my air
Changed me

into her
Darkness
I unlearnt everything.
Avoidance

Avoidance, lover,
Is a day’s attempt at ending.

The sun is a sinking ship
Struggling to stay afloat in an amber sky

Out! The soldier barks,
As he forms a hole in her stern

From which she bleeds out,
Vermillion, tracing the mountain ridge

Like the melodrama
Of staged demises.

Yet; she cannot fight
The subdued moon

Seeping through
The handmade cracks of glass

In each window pane
Steering a knowing glow

Into the dark road
Of sullen living rooms.

Await the wind, lover,
Await the wind,

Await the winds of change
And the shifting tide

That the moon will bring
For

The truth of life itself
Is alive at her very core.

December/January

December is dust and smoke
In the beaten-blank hollow coves
Of memory

Burned out! We are, and cinders hang, like heads, in the air

But come January
Drops of dew will fall upon the fog light of day
Replenishing our dearest earth
With what she needs

For from ash
Comes feather,
Flame
And
Finery.

L.S. Krol
Heart racing. Palms sweating. An impenetrable cloud of testosterone swells in the air. There’s shouting, shrieking and sudden bangs. Survival of the fittest reigns. This is the weights room of the gym. It is male-dominated and I don’t know what to do here. Or at least, that’s how I used to feel.

Gyms can be intimidating: I’d look around and think that everyone knew exactly what to do, as if they were born with a dumbbell in hand. I’d resign myself to the treadmill or the cross-trainer for a mind-numbing 45 minutes and then call it a day. I’d walk out; my reddened face my trophy and any notion of weight training successfully avoided. All the while, thinking to myself, ‘I hear Victoria Beckham trains on the cross-trainer, so I must be doing something right’. In my mind, cardio = skinny and skinny = desirable. Easy. Even if cardio = boring. But how wrong I was.

In my first few weeks at Oxford, I was introduced to a group that, in no uncertain terms, changed my life: Wadham Women Weightlifting (helpfully, WWW for short). Very simply, the group is composed of 10 women who meet every week in Wadham College to get stronger. With the invaluable guidance of our coach, we train squat, bench press and deadlift - none of which I had properly tried before. We encourage each other and watch each other progress, week in and week out. We commend and advise on each other’s techniques in a gym space that is reserved for women, most of which are also recovering cardio-victims.

Increasingly, strong is becoming desirable; strong is the new skinny. Forget stringent calorie counting and being permanently hungry - leave these oppressive behaviours to the emaciated supermodels of the ‘90s. In the past, if I struggled to get into my pants, I probably would have had heart palpitations and vowed to cut out all carbs.

Now I celebrate, for my bum has grown. My body tells me I am healthy; my muscles are growing and recovering and growing some more.

This small group of woman is empowered; members have gone on to compete for the Oxford University Powerlifting team and two members of the group recently qualified for nationals. We are defying stereotypes as we gain both confidence and strength. But above all this, it is a form of exercise that makes us happy - it is not a punishment for consumption. I still enjoy running and, admittedly, the occasional cross-trainer session but I do it because I enjoy it- not to grind down my calorie intake in order to preserve a skinny aesthetic. This is how powerlifting has changed my outlook.

Of course, it may be argued that the pursuit of a ‘bigger bum’ and ‘rock hard abs’ is no better than the depressing pursuit of ‘skinny’; idolising body types is as useless as it is dangerous. But powerlifting can be different because the focus is on getting stronger; the inevitable positive changes in your body are just a fortunate side effect. And it doesn’t matter what body shape you are - powerlifting will make you stronger.

Empowerlifting
Francesca Best
The other day during a rare occasion when I was discussing sex with my female friends I mentioned that I liked being told what to do during sex, to which one of my friends jokingly responded “of course, **** sets the feminist movement back about fifty years!”

This was not an entirely unexpected comment; my friends have always joked about the fact that one of my main ambitions in life is to be a mother and that I had always been attracted to sporty men with strong and assertive personalities.

However, they’d never before suggested I was an antagonist to the feminist movement – an anti-feminist for want of a more explicit name. I was pretty shocked. I guess what disturbed me the most was the implication that my sexual and professional desires were incompatible with the committed feminist I had always viewed myself as.

In my eyes, my preference to be submissive during sex was just a type of sexual fetishism, not much different to a foot fetish; it’s a means to sexual pleasure. Yet for my friends this sexual preference seemed to represent my entire view on gender power relations. Of course, their conclusion was impacted by their knowledge that I had always treasured the thought of being a stay-at-home Mum.

It doesn’t surprise me certain women are disappointed when people, like myself who have such an array of possibilities before them fling themselves back into the very same role women we have spent over 100 years trying to emancipate ourselves from.

But my question is: will Betty Friedan and Simone de Beauvoir really be turning in their grave at my future plans?

I admit that in my image of myself as a 34 year old stay at home Mum I have assumed that I will be in a strong and privileged financial position, but as much as this is an assumption it is also based on the hope that after eleven years of career building I might be have the funds to have a break from the world of work for the first six years of my child’s life. Bear with me and follow this hypothesis through, if after giving birth at age 34 I am in the financial position which permits me to choose whether I stay at home with my children or whether I continue to work, and I opt for the former am I turning back the clocks? Might I as well have been living in the 50s?

I would argue no. For the simple reason that in the 50s I most probably would not have had the choice and it is the ability to choose what we do with our lives that is, in my opinion, so central to the feminist movement. I am not so naive to think that this freedom of choice has been sufficiently achieved and acknowledge that is so far from being universally achieved. However, if committed feminists cannot accept the plurality of female choices how can we ever expect the rest of the world to?

At the end of the day I don’t think (for the time being at least) my sexual preferences and hopes that at some point in my life I will be able to devote all my time to my children has impacted too much on my friends’ view of me as a liberal and open-minded individual, they probably don’t even remember the conversation. However, as my own friends light-heartedly excluded me from a supposedly collective and inclusive movement that I have for so long identified with and found support in, I am left questioning

Anonymous

“I do not wish women to have power over men; but over themselves” - Mary Shelley
Confused, aged 16,
I email the Plush Nightclub:

“Hello Plush,
I’m 16 and from a village near-ish to Oxford. At the moment I’m struggling with whether I’m bisexual or not?
I’ve only fancied men and don’t find women sexually attractive, like when they pass me on the street?
My best friend and I are really close and everyone jokes that me and her are a couple, and yesterday at a party when we were both a bit drunk but not drunk enough to dismiss anything that was said, she asked me what I wanted from our relationship and I said that I’m all confused, but she’s definitely straight and was just being nice! I think I kissed her but it’s not weird between us now or anything.
Can you go to gay bars if you’re under 18 (I’m 16)?
Can you give me any advice on how to experience being with a woman?
Sorry for bothering you!
Verity x”

They were very nice.

Verity Babbs
Two girls shouldn’t hold hands
But they’re not as threatening, right?
So many ‘love lesbians’
or so I’ve heard

Men – they are too far gone
These little girls
are salvageable
Lesbians are not REAL gays, you know
They can be corrected
turned around
and re-versed
in the world of men

Make sure to let them have their fun first, though
The others want to watch

Or am I misremembering?
Did we forget
a caress
could be lethal

No worries, they still do not pose
a threat
They are just women, you know
An easy fix

Unless she talks back
What a waste

No, honey
You’re doing it wrong
Sit pretty, keep that body still
Open your mouth only for me
I love to see you

A Sapphist
Why Have There Been No Great Women Headliners?

"Who run the world? GIRLS"
- Beyoncé

Festival season is a wonderful time of year: music in the blazing sunshine, overpriced alcohol, and dancing until sunrise. Every year I wait with great trepidation for the line-ups to be released, excitedly deciding which one I’ll spend half my life savings on. But this year – although it’s been the same for decades – I noticed that pretty much half the population was missing from the line-up posters. The question I asked: where are all the female acts?

Leeds. Boardmasters. TRNSMT. On closer inspection of the line-up posters for all three of these nationally acclaimed festivals, it seems there is a noticeable lack of female artists. There are no women headlining any of these festivals, and if they are playing, their names are always further down the list. Dua Lipa is highest ranking at the Leeds/Reading festival, and Annie Mac headlining the BBC Radio 1 stage, alone amongst a sea of male indie bands, DJs and solo artists. TRNSMT tells a slightly more encouraging story, with female acts such as Jessie J and Jessie Ware making the list, as well as bands containing women like Wolf Alice and Chvrches. However, all five headliners are exclusively male, a feat similarly displayed at this year’s V festival replacement, Rize. Miraculously, Boomtown and Bestival contain women in their headlining acts – Die Antwoord and London Grammar respectively – though such acts are not exclusively female.

Predictably, this phenomenon is not restricted to UK festivals alone. The only major festival this year with an exclusively female headlining act I could find was Coachella, with Beyoncé headlining on the second day. One festival out of the thirteen I’ve mentioned here has an exclusively female act headlining. One out of thirteen. Women make up just over 50% of the world’s population, so why aren’t they represented accordingly in the festival world?

It seems evident to me that there is a lot of hugely popular, mainstream female acts out there: Rihanna, Katy Perry, Ariana Grande and Lady Gaga to name a few. You might be thinking, well, what if these women don’t want to play festivals? What if they aren’t the sorts of acts that do those types of gigs? Clearly, I have no idea whether they have been asked to play headlining slots and have refused, or whether they’re simply not on the list. But it seems strange to me that across the vast majority of the world’s popular festivals, there are almost no women to be seen.

There’s no Glastonbury festival this year, but a quick google tells me that in the last 10 years of the world-famous festival, there was only all-female headliners in two years: Beyoncé in 2011, and Adele in 2016. Florence and the Machine did headline the Pyramid Stage in 2015, but only as a replacement for the Foo Fighters, the all-male rock band who were
forced to pull out. It’s true that there have been female acts on the smaller stages, but the Pyramid stage is the one everyone can and does watch. The complete lack of female headliners at least 1/3 of the time is telling the world that women either can’t or shouldn’t be top of the bill. Evidently this is untrue, and something needs to change.

Album sales from female artists make up a huge portion of the music industry’s profits. Rihanna has sold over 230 million records since her solo career began in 2005, and is therefore one of the best selling artists of all time (selling just over 70 million more records than Beyoncé). Officially, Madonna is ranked as the global best-selling female artist of all time by Guinness World Records with over 300 million record sales, joining male legends such as Michael Jackson, Elvis and The Beatles in the worldwide top five bestselling artists ever. These facts and statistics drive home my by-now very obvious point: why aren’t women better represented in our festival headliners if they’re so successful worldwide? You might notice that all of the most successful female artists I’ve mentioned are solo artists, and that festival headliners tend to be bands. But is that because bands tend to be all male? And is it actually any wonder that the most successful women in music are solo artists, seeing as since at least the 1990s, girl bands have received their own restrictive brand?

The most popular all-female band of the nineties and early noughties were, certainly in the UK, The Spice Girls. They are the most successful girl group in UK history and the 7th biggest group of all time, despite only being together for six years. They also sparked a new wave of industry-manufactured girl bands, such as Girls Aloud, The Sugababes and The Pussycat Dolls. Yet if you look just a little more closely at the names of all of these bands, you can very quickly spot the prejudice. All the names mention ‘girls’, ‘babes’ or ‘dolls’, belittling nouns immediately screaming objectification by the predominantly all-male music industry. Their modern equivalent is arguably Little Mix, whose name is still evocative of a cutesy pop girl group (evoking memory of sugary Dolly Mix sweets).

Why do their male equivalents rarely have similarly gendered names? Such examples are Take That, Westlife, The Wanted and One Direction, with the exceptions of Irish band Boyzone, and American groups Backstreet Boys and Boyz II Men. However, this last example clearly demonstrates how boy bands are viewed (or are marketed to be) as more mature, although on the whole it is clear that there is little objectification of them within their band title. The point I’m making is that over the last couple of decades, all-female groups have received a belittling stereotype unequal to the one received by men, and as such have largely disappeared, replaced by numerous powerful female solo artists that may previously have joined forces to create a group.

Moving away from the mainstream, there are still precious few all-female bands. The most popular example I can think of from the indie rock scene is Haim, an American female trio from Los Angeles, and these women certainly make the festival circuit (though never that far up the line-up poster). There is of course a wealth of female indie rock bands, but these rarely hit the big time and so we are left with a huge gap in festival line-ups. This may or may not be purposeful, but it is an issue that needs resolving. I’m certainly not saying that male bands or artists should suffer or be solely blamed for the lack of female representation, but I think that they could do more to promote women’s music, through social media or taking a female act with them on.

Whilst this is far from ideal, and certainly not the end goal, it may in the short term encourage more women to join together and form girl groups that don’t cater to stereotypes, and could help existing bands to come to the forefront.

Scrolling through my music library, I’m saddened to see the utter lack of female artists. Certainly personal taste has a lot to do with it, but there’s also the fact that they simply don’t exist, especially not in the rock scene. Although there are probably plenty of girl groups out there, no one really knows about them. Girl bands need better promotion, veering away from tired, restrictive stereotypes and outlining their likely incredible musical potential as festival headliners. Music moguls and advertisers will only respond to popular demand, and so I suppose it’s up to public taste and opinion to support and insist on more female acts for things to change.

I hope that in the next few years, and certainly in the next decade, we will see a resurgence of all-female bands in both the mainstream and indie rock scenes, and that women are better represented as festival headliners. Women around the world need to see that the big festival stages are open to them, and whilst there may be no legislation barring the way, lack of representation and inspiration can be just as obstructive. Women Wannabe Represented.
Parks Road
Oxford
OX1 3PN
UK
Review: Nashville

“The country music industry isn’t the first place one might look in search of progressive cultural output. It is even further behind much of the rest of the entertainment business, and the demographic it caters to is one of the most conservative in the western hemisphere. It is no surprise that the diversity of the top-earning performers in the industry is virtually non-existent. Of the top-ten songs in the country music charts this week, only one of them is from a female artist. And yet, here we have an excerpt from a TV Show named after, and set in, the heart-land of country music: Nashville, Tennessee. It is taken from a scene in which troubled and hugely successful break-out artist Juliette Barnes tells her boyfriend about a radio DJ who is refusing to put her record on the air. Because she refused to cosy up to him.

This episode aired in November 2013, pre-dating the #MeToo movement by almost exactly four years. Of course, the point is that the outburst of awareness surrounding sexual harassment in the entertainment industry is just that: awareness. The issues have existed as long as the industries themselves. But Nashville’s series creator Callie Khouri chose to make it an explicit part of the show’s narrative at a time when it wasn’t a hot topic, or even being widely talked about. And this is only one aspect of Nashville’s surprise woke-ness. As the series’ have gone on (the second part of the sixth and final season will be airing this summer), they have begun to include more and more narratives which deal with topics considered deeply taboo on the country music scene. LGBTQ+ issues, women’s sexual health education, mental illness and structural racism are all tackled by, though not necessarily comprehensive, thoroughly thoughtful and intelligent storylines.

All of this becomes less of a surprise with the realisation that Khouri, the heart and soul of the show, was also the mind behind feminist classic Thelma and Louise (1991), which won her an Oscar for Best Original Screenplay. She is, by all accounts, a giant in the world of female storytelling. The show is rooted between two female protagonists, mature legend Rayna Jaymes and the comparatively upstart Juliette, whose narratives and emotional journeys unfold in the complex a fully-explored way that could only be the product of a brilliant female mind. The kind of mind that can come up with something like that opening quotation, because they know exactly what they’re talking about.

As the show goes on, Jaymes continues to struggle masterfully with the image of perfection that is both projected onto her and expected of her, raising two daughters whilst suffering the break-up of a marriage, threats to her music rights and control over her career, and a continually difficult and exhausting involvement with her friend and band-leader Deacon Claybourne. Some of the finest writing in the show comes at moments in which Rayna explains emotionally twisted situations to her children. She is - in every sense - the mother of the show, and when she explains how she wishes she could make everything better, it feels like the show itself – or, perhaps more accurately, Khouri – has sat us down and had a chat with us about life, and what it means to be any form of underdog in a world that is tough enough on the winners.

Alongside moments of pure female joy, such as scenes in which Rayna jokes with her sister about her sex life and the lingerie she has packed for a weekend away, the character also has her moments of panic, pain, and suffering. One of her songs, “Stronger Than Me”, which was written for the show by Sarah Buxton and Kate York, features the lyrics “Pour me something stronger/ Pour me something straight/ All these crooked voices, make them go away/ I can barely stand up/I can hardly breathe/ Pour me something stronger than me.”

Nashville’s original music, much of which was written and produced by Khouri’s husband, country music legend T-bone Burnett, is able to play both with the commercial and the artistic factors which are always at play with any music. The artists are constantly struggling to maintain their integrity in a market that wants to pimp them out to the highest bidder, and the ones who choose to – most interestingly a closeted gay singer Will Lexington – are able to play off their own stereotypes and milk them for all they are worth.
Nashville mocks, playfully but with razor-sharp accuracy, the output of country artists like Toby Keith, who released, in full seriousness, a hit song a few years ago called “Beers Ago” and starred in a 2008 film called Beer For My Horses which was named after another one of his songs. In 2003 Keith entered into a public feud with the Dixie Chicks after they openly criticised one of his songs for mindless militaristic patriotism during the Bush Iraq War controversy. The song in question, entitled “Courtesy of the Red, White and Blue (An Angry American)” contains the lyrics “And you’ll be sorry that you messed with the U.S. of A/ ‘Cause we’ll put a boot in your ass, it’s the American way.” During his contemporaneous tour, Keith used a doctored photo of the Dixie Chicks’ lead singer Natalie Maines next to Sadam Hussein as his stage back-drop.

The show of course, could never deal with bigotry on this level. Will Lexington comes up against the forces of record labels who dump him once they decide they can’t sell him to a ‘traditional’ market as an openly gay artist, and indeed in later seasons, his own internalised homophobia and self-hatred. Rayna’s daughter Maddie falls in love with a singer called Clayton Carter, who is black and struggling with bi-polar disorder. When they get pulled over by the police for no reason, a video of Maddie questioning the stop goes viral. Juliette Barnes decides, after surviving a near-death experience, that she wants to write a gospel album, with the backing and help of a local gospel choir. Whilst her appropriation of the music of the black community is overtly brought into question, it is not painted in the sinister and cynical light which it absolutely could, and should have been. Christianity is always tiptoed around like a sleeping baby. But, by managing to slip all of these questions into the show in the context of gentle but almost universally acceptable questioning, Khouri and the co-writers and actors have been able to create one of the most quietly subversive pieces of television of the last ten years. By tackling these issues, however imperfectly, they tackle an industry which is, in itself, immensely imperfect. And, in doing so, they make it a world which seems somehow even more appealing for those imperfections – like a healthy challenge almost.

When ABC decided to cancel the show following Season 4, an outpouring of horror from fans of the show worldwide led to it being picked up by Country Music Television for the following two seasons. Not only does this demonstrate the force of emotional attachment which the show garners amongst its devotees, but also that the progressive attitude which Khouri came into Nashville with via an East-Coast entertainment business has actually penetrated the country establishment. They have now created at show which is asking country music listeners, as well as millions of people all across the world, to consider gay rights, racism, contraception, basic human kindness and the strength of female emotional intelligence. Thank god for Callie Khouri. This is the kind of ‘trashy’ television that we need.

Billie Esplen

“I’m a feminist. I’ve been a female for a long time now. It’d be stupid not to be on my own side”  
- Maya Angelou

I am worthy  
No matter what my father thinks

I am worthy  
No matter what my professors think

I am worthy  
No matter what my Ex thinks

I am worthy  
No matter what I think others think

I am worthy  
I am valuable

I deserve the world  

AJB 3.3.18
She is in Love

I have just been to see my friend,
And she is in love,
And she has been dipping her feet in the water,
Dangling them off of piers.

We all ate together,
Whole things,
Then sat warm and talked shapelessly.
We talked about things in their entirety.

We said, ‘small talk’ is when you talk really small —
But she spoke, and she told me the moon on the river.

Do you ever turn off music,
And still hear it?

I have been to see my friends.
They are in love,
And now I am going swimming through the sky,
As I walk home.

The Other Others

Kei Patrick

Ungrateful bitch
Why make it all about yourself?
Gay men AND lesbians, right there is her share
Better late than never, right
Aren’t we missing some?
What about those unnamed
Those with not even a plaque tucked away in the bushes to their memory
Those other letters that were never even granted shapes what about them?
We need to set a reminder for when there weren’t words
and we mustn’t forget there has been a recall of the past

A Sapphist
Seventeenth Century

Widows

Given the preponderance of media attention to gender inequality recently, as the lip of one of Oxford most influential seventeenth century women is revivied it is natural to ask, ‘was it ever thus?’ In short; ‘no’. It’s easy to fall into the trap of believing that ‘twas’ - that in the past the patriarchy was stronger, discrimination worse and harassment rife, and that in the twenty-first century we have finally made progress and are on the way to a freer future. The truth isn’t quite so simple, and Dorothy is a perfect example that allows me to illustrate why.

England had a unique legal structure for marriage and property before the late eighteenth century. Although married women were legally wholly subject to their husbands – under a system of couverture - single adult women, whether widowed or spinster, had the same legal status as men. Whilst a woman’s husband was alive most business was undertaken under the auspices of his name – which is why historians have only a frustratingly small body of data on married women to study. When their husbands died, their records allow us to see the ‘real’ story.

In the early modern period widowhood was common. Girls married younger than boys, and when their older partners died they inherited at least some of their estate and regained their own identity in the eyes of the law, so they inherited wealth, and they could act as executor and/or agent. English fathers also improved their daughter’s wealth. Fearing the subsuming of their hard-earned dowries into their daughter’s spouse’s estates they set up trusts and placed assets in financial instruments for their daughters. They also invested in furniture and chattels for them to hold. Such actions may have created a market for financial instruments in England earlier than elsewhere and contributed to England’s subsequent early industrialisation. We owe the foundation of Wadham not just to Nicolas’s estate which Dorothy was sole executor of, but to her own funds which came from her own inheritance in trust.

Dorothy’s use of such trusts, and her ability to manage them as well as the entire business of the foundation of the college on the basis of her adherence to her conscience, are frequently commented on. In the early seventeenth century they were probably not as remarkable. Seventeenth century women had more agency, skills, market power, education and human and social capital than their Victorian granddaughters. In urban trades we know that women were frequently managers of family firms, responsible for dealing, trading and accounting. Recent research has shown that in farming communities women were responsible for bringing goods to market, and bargaining. In other words, women were managers, and they drove the important tertiary sector of the economy – which was a key part of economic growth.

Market and house work were closely interrelated in the early modern period, and so domestic work, that of the ‘housewife’, was valued and seen as vital to the economy or ‘wealth’ in early modern times.

Of course, some of these findings about agency relate to women of property, and business – the middling sorts. But current research on waged women in the labour market more generally suggests that our current understanding of ‘discrimination’ is not adequate to model or represent women’s role. It is generally accepted that later marriage in England and other parts of North Western Europe contributed to higher human capital formation in women. Girls gained important skills in manufacturing and in service. This led to higher market participation and better education of (fewer) children when they did marry, which contributed to Britain’s growing consumer economy and to its skills and innovation. Although the early process of industrialisation exploited women and children in many ways, there is evidence that any wage gap for women can be explained by the fact they had less ‘brawn’ or upper body strength in an economy where physical strength commanded a premium before steam and mechanical power. As the eighteenth century wore on, gendered working roles became more usual, and by the nineteenth century ‘separate spheres’ precluded women from competing with men in the market. This coincided with the beginning of a devaluing of domestic work generally, so much so that it wasn’t even counted in censuses.

Female labour force participation actually began to decline for some groups in the 1990s. Although current labour force participation looks high by nineteenth and twentieth century standards it may not be by those of earlier

Judy Stevenson
Tutor for Women and David Richards
Junior Fellow in Economic History
A fetish is not acceptance
Titillation is not the right setting
for exposure
Can we shed some light
rather than skin
We may not see eye to eye
but please realize I do have eyes
in and out of the blue
Do you see me
Or do you see what you believe
is for you?
I detest how a condemning glare
hurts less
than a so-called approving stare
Shame always keeps me from shouting
When you’re hated
at least you’re real
But they survived
...didn’t they?
Isn’t that a gift
Shouldn’t we be thankful
We don’t exist
on their radar, that is
A real threat
A legitimate fear
A serious issue
Why does that have to sound
almost preferable
to dismissal
denial
and disregard
I don’t think I want to celebrate
this Pyrrhic victory

Real Threats

Who Fall

Two girls shouldn’t hold hands
but we let them fall from great heights
for other girls
To all the girls forced into uniform
like Manuela and myself
Look inside
you’ll see all colors, shades, and configurations
and yourself

Girls

A Sapphist
Twitter can be a weird place, full of silly videos, memes, angry comments, provocative and political bots and an orange haired, dangerous, reality TV show host. But it is also home to scientists, tweeting about new insights, random animal facts and lab mishaps. It is also used by many feminists, philosophers and historians who discuss and share their latest articles and revelations. A twitter conversation between Australian women in science recently sparked the STEMMinist book club. The STEMMinist book club is a global book club. It brings together people to read books that are relevant to both STEMM fields (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Medicine) as well as feminism. The book club consists of online discussions and local meet-ups in various places around the world from Sydney to Oxford. With this book club I read two fascinating books which I can enthusiastically recommend and want to introduce to you.

The first is *Inferior: How Science Got Women Wrong—and the New Research That's Rewriting the Story* by Angela Saini. In it she brilliantly dissects the scientific literature on supposed differences between cis-women and cis-men. Saini looks at studies from anthropology, biology, neuroscience and many other fields and how these studies have been perceived in the news and popular media. She finds that often the original findings of sex differences were overblown in the media, and that even the original studies were later often disproven by other studies. It is concluded that there are very little actual differences between cis-women and cis-men. She also brilliantly challenges the way in which small existing differences are used to build and justify a hierarchy. In the end it all boils down to people using science to reinforce their existing biases and prejudices, to strengthen the patriarchal system that dominates our society. *Inferior* diligently pulls these studies apart and contrasts them with other studies that contradict them. It shows that differences are often minute and predominantly not innate but can be explained by societal influences.

The second book was *Stop Fixing Women: Why Building Fairer Workplaces Is Everybody’s Business* by Catherine Fox. It focuses on initiatives that aim to get more women into leadership positions, and looks into the effectiveness of assertiveness trainings, negotiating workshops and other actions that want to change women so that they are more successful in their careers. Fox shows convincingly that these programs are often futile. Women are not held back in the workplace by their own, fixable shortcomings. In the contrary, they are held back by a society and workplace culture that is systematically sexist and disadvantages them. To achieve greater representation of women in leadership positions we don’t need to fix women, but workplaces and their cultures need fixing. The author then goes on to show a number of examples of companies and institutions who have started to take measures to change their company culture, reduce systematic barriers and train their existing employees to reduce discrimination in hiring and promotion decisions.

Together these two books make it very clear that focusing on individual women and their abilities is not going to lead to a significant change around issues like the gender pay gap, unequal distribution of care work, workplace harassment and the lack of women in leadership positions.

As a physicist working towards a PhD I study and work in a very male dominated environment. I have both attended and volunteered for activities that explicitly aim to bring more women into physics. After having read these two books I want to reflect on such activities and their effectiveness. These events typically fall broadly into three categories: outward facing events, remedial workshops and community building events.

Outward facing events aim to draw more women into the field, their target audience are mostly school girls of various ages. The idea is to engage...
and no change within the field, its atmosphere and practices is necessary. Outward facing events have their usefulness and as a pupil I enjoyed attending them. But it often appears that departments and other institutions use them as fig leaves. When asked about diversity and barriers in science, they point to their outreach activities and deny any need for change within the institutions. If outward facing events are the only thing that is done, it means more women are funnelled into an environment which is hostile to them and does not value their abilities and contributions. Additionally, the work of running these events is expected of and done by women. This work is often undervalued and the scientists who commit their time to it gain very little for their own career advancement.

Another commonly encountered event are workshops aimed at women who are already studying or working. One of the professional societies I am a member of offers time management, career planning, public speaking and entrepreneurship workshops specifically aimed at women. While I am sure they are nice workshops, I don’t understand why women are thought to be more in need of them than men. I know plenty of men who have horrendous time management and give unengaging talks. These workshops fit into the narrative that women just need to speak better, be better, work harder and ‘lean in’, then somehow the patriarchy will disappear and a more equal society will emerge. This cannot work for two reasons. Firstly, women are already amazing. We are talented, educated, determined, hardworking and resourceful. We do not need to be fixed. Secondly, what is really holding us back are deeply rooted patriarchal barriers in our society and workplaces. An entrepreneurship workshop is not going to fix that.

The final common type of activities are those focused on community building. They provide a platform for women to network with other women in their field. These come in many shapes and forms: conferences, Facebook groups, networks, coffee mornings and many more. They can be incredibly valuable as spaces to support each other against the difficulties women experience in male dominated environments. I have greatly benefited from the support, encouragement and information such groups can provide. But often these groups fail to be intersectional and often end up only being a welcoming, comfortable place for white middle class cis-women. Even women’s networks that do manage to be inclusive and diverse, do not in themselves change the culture in the institutions their members work in. A monthly coffee morning does not change the attitudes and prejudices of a company’s managers and directors. It does however make a great opportunity for the PR team to take photos of a group of women to make the company look better on its website.

What I unfortunately see very rarely are actions and initiatives that, instead of targeting women, target an organisation’s culture and the men who hold power within it. Instead of negotiating workshops for women I want fairness and ethics workshops for managers. I want to see leaders ousted because they failed to close their organisations gender pay gap. I want managers to get fired for ignoring workplace harassment. I want professors to be held accountable if they only pick white boys from public schools during admissions interviews. I want colleges who fail to admit enough people of colour and people from working class families to get sanctioned.

Because I am a woman in physics, I get asked fairly regularly to volunteer at events that aim to get more women into physics. After reading these two books I am challenging myself to be more critical and selective when I invest my time. My guiding questions will be: Is this initiative trying to ‘fix’ women or does it uplift their talents and recognise how amazing they are? Does this activity actually change the status quo or is it just window dressing so an organisation gets to feel good about itself? Is this event inclusive and welcoming for women of colour, disabled women, working class women, trans women and non-binary people?

I am going to stop participating in activities that want to fix women. Instead I look forward to real change that starts to fix universities, companies, NGOs, governments and society.

Juliane Borchert
DPhil student in Condensed Matter Physics

“We need all hands on deck, and that means clearing hurdles for women and girls as they navigate careers in science, technology, engineering, and math.”

- Michelle Obama
Mind the Gap

Throughout the education system, working class and state school women tend to do better than men at school and university, except at Oxford. It is true that we have had women's colleges since 1879, but the university remains a male space, not in admission, but in male-coded behaviour and institutions. The gender gap has dramatically declined since the 1990s due to rising promotion of gender equality in education and society, and course diversification, especially in the humanities. In Oxford, however, this shows no signs of closing, with state school women the least highly achieving, and state school men achieving the best. In an Oxford Admissions Study led by Professor Anthony Heath, candidates were asked both at admissions and in third year what class of degree they expected to obtain - men consistently were more likely to predict a First, which rose towards their end of their degrees. They were also more accurate in estimating their abilities, with only 55% of women accurately predicting the outcome. What this research suggests, is that not only do women underperform in achieving firsts by 10% on average (as shown in the annual Oxford Equality Report), they also find it more difficult to gauge the qualities expected of a First class performance.

This comes as no surprise after reading the 2015 'Mind the Gap' Report produced by Cambridge SU's Women's Campaign, which highlighted that 1 in 3 women do not feel the university provides a learning environment that allows them to work to the best of their ability. This is transferrable to Oxford; seemingly, such longstanding universities steeped in patriarchal and elitist tradition still fail to cater to 'non-traditional students', whether they be female, working class or minority ethnic. The academic disadvantage for female students at elite universities, points to a wider problem of socialisation for girls, and fundamental issues with a teaching style that caters for men. Working class students from state schools have the disadvantage of less educational provision and support, making A-Levels harder to achieve, and the Oxford applications or exams harder to do. Women, however, also face the extra barrier of being taught from a young age to be 'perfect'. While this can come at an advantage in A-Level examinations, when for example, essay subjects require meticulous learning of facts and detail, men have the upper hand at Oxford. In the Cambridge report, women describe an approach to knowledge and teaching that proves detrimental to their self-confidence and performance. Essay writing is shown to be aggressive and argumentative for argument's sake, which is valued over more considered, and less 'ballyhoo' essays of female students. The Oxford humanities system especially, which has shown to have the biggest gap in male and female attainment, encourages a detached and 'objective' approach to knowledge in the context of a male dominated university, which can be excluding to women.

Despite needing to improve its admission of state comp students, the university is pretty equal in its admission of gender. Yet, this is overshadowed by white men from a very narrow class and educational background dominating tutorials, classes, and societies. With aggressive styles of male tutors, and overconfident - often private school - males more willing to talk over females and do less work on average, there is
equation as well, and it is clear that the Oxford system does not work for everyone. The decline in female performance since they were first admitted to the university can actually be seen as a direct result of the rise in mixed colleges, with the atmosphere of previously male colleges and male styles of teaching and assessment having an impact on women. In addition to political societies and debating clubs like the Oxford Union and Oxford Forum being dominated by private school male confidence.

With women in Oxford scoring higher for anxiety and academic dissatisfaction than men, and lower for happiness, as well as similar results for other state school students, it all points to the fact that things must change. Producing an Equality Report once a year is all well and good but actually using it and acknowledging correlations is necessary to ensure something is done about inherent inequalities. The issues and barriers faced by both women and working class students are similar, and both are rooted in the nature of the Oxford system. Further research within the university is needed to assess styles of teaching, examining and assessing, so that all students are achieving the best they can, and receive adequate support. While there are some commendable successes, such as more female students than males last year achieving firsts in History finals for the first time, and changes such as allowing a 'take-home' paper instead of a final exam (thought to allow for better female attainment), Oxford is still not doing enough to tackle gender equality. Working class women in particular are in need of extra support in bridging the gap between A Level and university, and evidently there needs to be a complete overhaul of the way degrees are taught - a more diverse curriculum to enhance representation both in subject matter and reading lists, is well overdue. No longer should it be the norm for a class on gender studies or women’s history to be filled with all-female students and tutor.

Many may claim that Oxford is a meritocracy, and that anyone can succeed with hard work, but it is clear that the potential of many women and working class students especially, is not fulfilled in this environment. Barriers such as gender, sexuality, race or disability intersect with class in many ways, meaning that being deprived of the same privileges as the majority at Oxford is the same as having to work a hundred times harder for the same result. My gender, class, educational background and the fact I am first in my family to go to university have prevented me from achieving the same confidence levels and attainment as many of my peers with very different backgrounds from me, and undoubtedly there are many other women within the university who have had similar experiences. From my own perspective, as someone actively involved in Oxford’s political scene, the dominance of white public school boys is felt in every space. The atmosphere in these arenas sometimes is as though nothing has changed in a century – liberation groups continue to be treated as exterior, and struggle to raise their voices above the noise of those taught their opinion is most valid in this space.

The problems at Oxford are, however, simply indicative of a wider societal problem, in which education is segregated to class, gendered from our country’s system, which qual educations and huge the lives of Something

Rachel Collett

25
feminism is...

feminist
[fem-uh-nist] / noun
Any person who believes in the social, political and economic equality of all genders, regardless of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic class, religion,

... to quote Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, [feminism] means that I advocate for the "social, political and economic equality of all genders."

- Lara Adamczyk

... not only the acknowledgement that women deserve more, but it is to know that we can and will achieve it.

- Francesca Best

... being part of a long tradition of powerful, incredible women who have stood against sexism throughout history. For me, being a feminist is linked fundamentally to the liberation of every minority – women’s liberation can only come about with the end of capitalist inequalities and all oppressions.

- Rachel Collett

... the liberation of all genders from the shackles of patriarchal oppression. Feminism fundamentally shares a single unifying goal; a world in which outdated views on gender and sex should have no bearing on what people can do and achieve.

- Anonymous

... beautiful, empowering and inspirational. It is the equality of all human beings.

- Chloe Whitehead

Many thanks to all contributors of Dorothy’s Lip, and Wadham College for kindly providing funding. A special acknowledgement also to Dr Jane Garnett, for inspiring generations of Wadham feminists.

Please note that the views expressed in this issue are not necessary those held by the editor.
Previous Issues