THE DOZEN

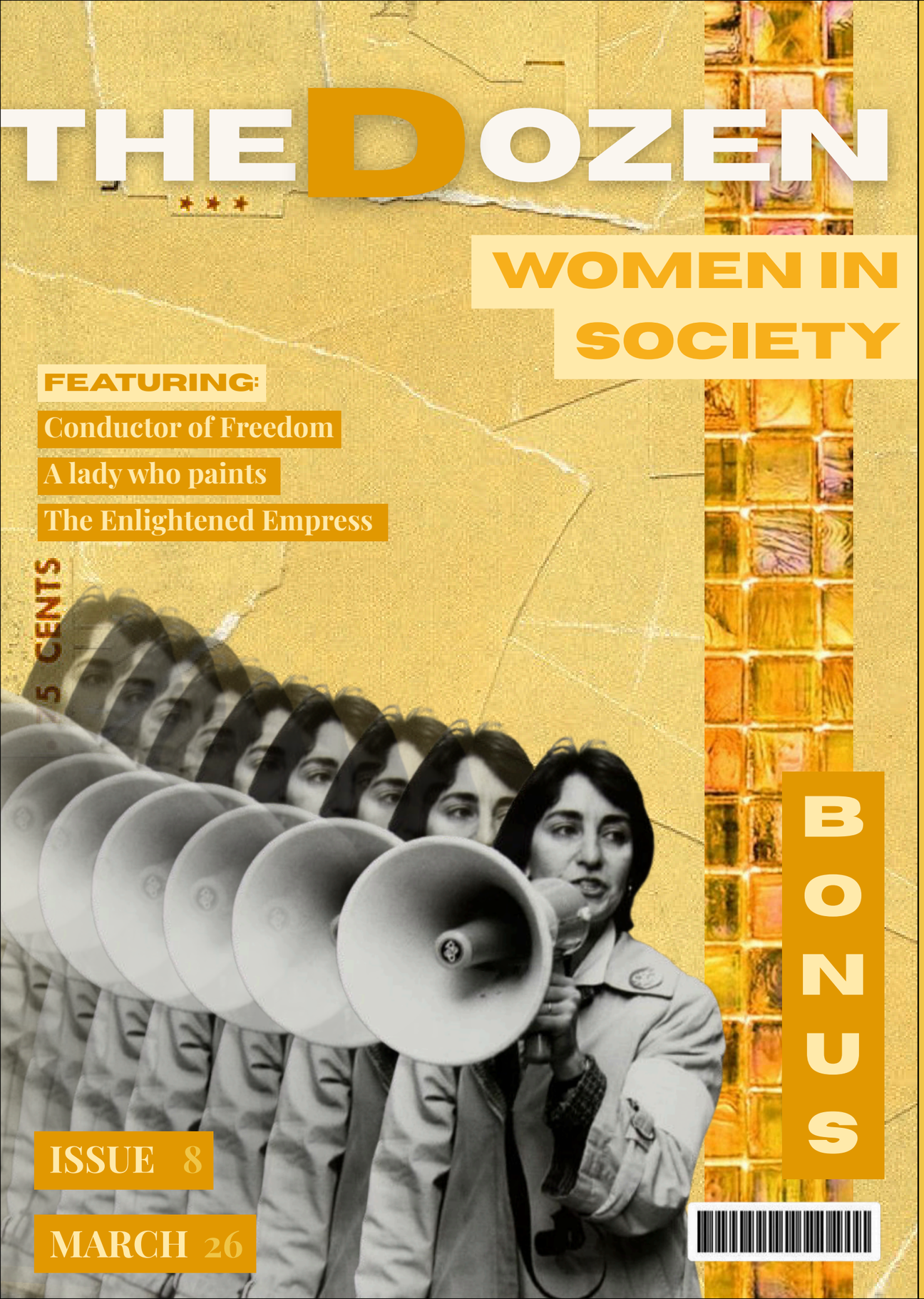
WOMEN IN SOCIETY

FEATURING:

Conductor of Freedom

A lady who paints

The Enlightened Empress



BONUS

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Women in Society

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ABOUT THE DOZEN

Welcome to the DOZEN, a monthly issue magazine by the student body, for the student body. We were tired of reading the same magazines and newspapers, regurgitating the same information with little to no change so we thought that we would give it a go! Enclosed you will discover a range of articles covering both culture, current events and academic coverage, ensuring that there is at least something here for you.

Former First Lady of the United States Michelle Obama once famously said “there is no limit to what we, as women, can accomplish”. Since the dawn of time women have been the back bone of society. Whether they were ruling ancient empires or discovering cures for malaria, women have a tremendous influence on our world and the way we live our very lives. As a result, we few at the Dozen would like to recognise the struggles, sacrifices and triumphs of women across the globe as we dedicate this issue to them. After-all, it is as Beyoncé said: “Who runs the world? Girls!”

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Not Pictured:

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CONTENTS

SEXISM IN THE MUSIC INDUSTRY

01

At an initial glance, feminism might not seem to be relevant to music – musicians are just producing music, because that's what they love. It's not immediately obvious because feminist movements are already on the way to eradicating sexism in the music industry. There is much room for improvement, however, since the setup is systemically sexist from the core. According to the 2023 UK Musicians' Census, 51% of female musicians have experienced gender-based discrimination, as opposed to 6% of men. This hasn't stopped women from being successful despite the everyday challenges that they face in the music industry. Let's take a look at some of the individuals who have overcome societal prejudice and have influenced the world through their songs.

Tracy Chapman is largely known for her eponymous album, featuring "Fast Car" and "Talkin' 'bout A Revolution". The former is famous for making the working class feel heard - in an era where music revolved around overdramatized romance, synths and dance, Chapman charmed the public with just a guitar and her vocals. There's a video online of her performing "Fast Car" at Wembley as a last-minute replacement.

She managed to silence the whole stadium's uproar with her music, despite this being one of her first ever concerts. It's well worth a watch. The latter has become an anthem against injustice, a struggle that Chapman has been subjected to throughout her life. She was racially abused at school as a child and has spoken out about being patronised in her job, being told that her concerns were meaningless and she was naïve because she was a woman. Despite all of this, she managed to make it to the top and now has 3 Grammys to her name.

She is still a social activist, supporting various justice movements across the world, inspiring millions.

Up-and-coming artist Olivia Dean has a similar passion for equality, which she accredits her mother (Christine Dean, a former leader of the Women's Equality Party) for. In a recent interview with Elle Magazine, she stresses that her understanding of feminism is "being equal – and I've always felt completely equal to men". She also highlights the importance of working with men to help destroy stereotypes, saying that "it's easy to say 'men are trash' but I don't think that's productive". Lack of female representation has been something she has advocated for, particularly in festivals, but in almost every sector of the music industry, before 2023, she had a policy of only hiring female directors to help give women a creative voice in an otherwise male-dominated field. She has reported similar problems to Tracy Chapman, having previously spoken about being patronised and disrespected, with her record label refusing her requests to properly categorise her own music as pop music, not RnB. Anyone who has listened to her music will know how outrageous this proposal is. Even today, women's voices are considered less important, and not a lot is being done against it.

There are, sadly, countless other examples, including Taylor Swift's experiences of personal attacks and having her royalties stolen by her record label, Dolly Parton overcoming stereotypes of blonde women in the media, and many, many more. It's a very interesting field to look into and is well worth your time. Things have improved for women in the music industry, but there is a long way to go yet.

WHY NOSTALGIA IS EVERYWHERE 02

Nowadays, it seems like every other movie is a sequel, remake, or prequel, often to an older or already existing movie or franchise. Modern films seem increasingly obsessed with the past: from revived action heroes to returning childhood favourites, nostalgia has become one of the most powerful forces shaping what audiences watch.

Part of this trend comes from the film industry itself. Big studios are far more likely to invest in stories that already have an established fan base: a familiar title carries less financial risk than a completely new idea, which is why franchises such as 'Top Gun: Maverick' or 'Ghostbusters: Afterlife' have been revived years after their originals. These films rely on audiences remembering the earlier versions, turning that emotional connection into box-office success.

However, nostalgia also works because of the way audiences respond to it. Seeing a beloved character return or hearing a familiar theme song can instantly transport viewers back to a different time in their lives. Films like 'Spider-Man: No Way Home' thrived on this idea by bringing back characters and actors from previous versions of the franchise, creating moments designed specifically to trigger recognition and excitement.

Another reason nostalgia dominates modern cinema is the rise of franchise storytelling. Hollywood has increasingly moved toward long-running cinematic universes, where characters and stories continue for years across multiple films. Studios such as Marvel Studios have perfected this formula, turning characters like the aforementioned Spider-Man into multi-generational icons that can appeal to both older fans and new audiences.

There is also a cultural aspect to the trend. In uncertain times, audiences often turn to familiar stories for comfort. Nostalgic films offer a sense of stability, reminding viewers of childhood favourites or earlier eras of cinema. Revisiting the past can feel reassuring, especially when the modern world seems unpredictable.

Of course, nostalgia in film isn't always a bad thing. When used well, it can create meaningful connections between generations of viewers and celebrate the history of cinema itself, especially in period pieces that are based on more recent times. But there is also a downside: an industry that relies too heavily on the past may struggle to take creative risks, and if studios continue prioritising recognisable franchises over original ideas, the future of cinema could start to feel as repetitive as its past.

In the end, nostalgia dominates today's movies why? Because it works - mainly financially but also often culturally. The challenge for filmmakers is not to abandon nostalgia entirely but to balance it with originality, ensuring that tomorrow's films give audiences something new to remember.

ART UNCOVERED

03

MOTHER OF AMERICAN MODERNISM

The imbalance provided by gender is an issue that, though far from being solved, has become much more visible to the world. Throughout this article alone, you will see a diverse and deep exploration of the multitude of consequences of a patriarchal society, many of which you may know of from prior experience. But what happens when a silenced demographic meets an unappreciated craft? An absolute stifling of creativity.

Complete invisibility blankets the achievements of the many historical women in art. Where the male greats are more than just well known, many are unable to name further than a few female visual artists. For most, the list ends after Frida Kahlo, perhaps Georgia O'Keefe or even before those two. Even then, the attention given to even such great artists as these is underwhelming.

As mentioned before, Frida Kahlo is perhaps the most well-known female artist. The Mexican became an icon in the art world primarily for her famous self-portraits. Many of these feature unique natural forms (as can be seen in 'Self-Portrait with Thorn Necklace and Hummingbird') in such a way that they do not distract from the focus of the artwork but rather augment it with additional beauty and detail. The warm and fleshy tones of her face are well-contrasted by the greens and blacks of plants and animals.

Though this type of image is seen multiple times throughout her catalogue, her work is far from repetitive. Many of Frida Kahlo's works present surreal compositions that break her self-portrait trend. A particularly strong example is 'The Love Embrace of the Universe, the Earth (Mexico), Myself, Diego, and Señor Xolotl'.

Besides its confusingly long title, this piece shows a sequence of hugging figures representing each of the members of the title. It boasts a beautiful color palette of whites, browns and greens which create a beautiful contrast that displays the layers of the piece. This is all to say that throughout Frida Kahlo's work, there is a clear sense of love. Whether for others or simply self-appreciation, Frida Kahlo is a master of representing such heartfelt emotion as this.

Georgia O'Keefe is one of very few women who have a hope of beating out Frida Kahlo for the title of most famous. She is well known for two main types of paintings: flowers and skulls. Before even looking at the artwork, there is something beautiful in that dichotomy between the most recognisable symbols of life and death. Georgia O'Keefe's excellence has led to her being known as the "Mother of American modernism". Her flower paintings often showed extreme close-ups, focusing on colors and shapes rather than the full form of each flower. This gives an effect of immersion and beauty unlike the work of any other. Her work also displays the work towards finding her style.

The piece 'Red Canna' was painted and repainted by Georgia O'Keefe across the years 1915-1923, moving from a much blander work to the bright and focused works she is known for. Later in her life, O'Keefe moved to Ghost Ranch and her works took on similarly grim motifs. Georgia O'Keefe began painting skulls of rams and similar animals. These works abandon the 'zoomed-in' perspective of prior works, focusing more on representing an object in its entirety. This is a display of her awareness that when using a duller (in terms of color) object as the subject of a painting, form becomes far more important.

Despite these themes, her artworks still featured vibrant flowers accessorising her dead subjects. Georgia O'Keefe's work beautifully displays growth, and the refusal to be restricted to one image. They also show adaptability and the ability of the best artists to reflect their world in their art, and pivot to fit those reflections.

Though I could write a whole magazine about the most incredible female artists to grace the craft, only through your curiosity can appreciation be equalised. I hope the work of two greats can inspire some to explore further. There are many more names whose art is greatly underappreciated: Yayoi Kusama, Tracey Emin and Leonora Carrington to name a few. Learning about art is the first and best step towards making it, and a huge step towards respecting the legacy of these legendary artists.

A LADY WHO PAINTS

04

Over half term, I found myself idly wandering the streets of central London with just a singular thought in my mind: the intense desire to see some art. As one could expect, I made my way over to the Barbican Centre to check out their latest exhibition, headlined by an artist I had never heard of before. Almost instantly, I encountered nine words that stopped me in my tracks:

I didn't want to be a lady who paints

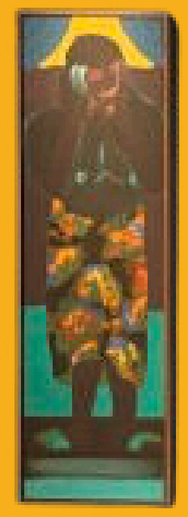
These are just nine of billions of words that painter Beatriz Gonzalez spoke over the course of her ninety-four-year tenure on this planet. Upon first thought, this seems quite contradictory; a painter who is not "a lady who paints," but under closer inspection, we can begin to understand Gonzalez's declaration.

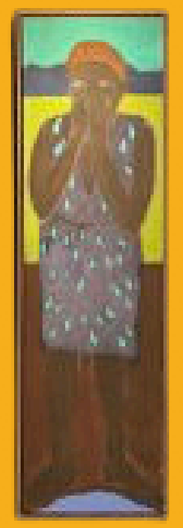
After Gonzalez found early success through her reinterpretations of Vermeer and Velazquez, she found herself at a crossroads. She wanted to create using a form of expression wholly unique to her, a style that was not yet accepted by the contemporary Colombian art establishment and through which she could define herself and her artworks.

Gonzalez's works were mostly reconstructions and reinterpretations of media that she encountered in her daily life: posters, postcards, and even newspaper clippings, all illustrating the lives of those around her. Due to the nature of her source material, the most common theme in her work was that of tragedy, her paintings often depicting gruesome scenes of murder and suicide. However, the series that struck me the most when walking through the exhibition was her collection on grief.

Titled 'Las Delicias' or 'The Delicacies' for those of us who are not learned in Spanish, the 1996-1998 series features paintings, sketches, and charcoals that show the aftermath of a tragic FARC (The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) guerrilla massacre at the Las Delicias military base in Colombia. The pieces place heavy emphasis on the forgotten victims of conflict - the family. In almost every piece, Gonzalez depicts a woman grieving the loss that conflict brings. They are the mothers, daughters, sisters, lovers, wives - those left behind in an unfamiliar wreck after the lives of their loved ones had been cut short. Through her shift towards depicting female protagonists in this series and others of the 1990s, Gonzalez brought a stage and a voice to what had previously been a silenced demographic. She used their pictures to demonstrate just how detrimental conflict is and its widespread impacts, often giving the women symbolic clothing such as teardrops running down a skirt or dress in some paintings, while picturesque pastoral scenes acted as repeated designs in others. Gonzalez even went as far as to confront her own role in the sharing of grief in "Autorretrato desnuda llorando" (nude self portrait, crying), offering a radical act of empathy for these women.

If there is one takeaway from the later works of Beatriz Gonzalez, it is the need to give the silenced back their voices. Just as the voices of mothers, daughters, sisters, lovers, and wives went unheard through their struggles in 1996, millions of female voices go unheard in the world today. Although Gonzalez's work may not fit common and narrow views of feminism by not directly standing up for women's rights, it serves as a shining beacon of an empathetic form of feminism, illustrating the unspoken struggles of female grief, validating and empowering millions of women across the globe. Acting in her stead, we must ask ourselves what we can do in our daily lives for those with silenced voices.



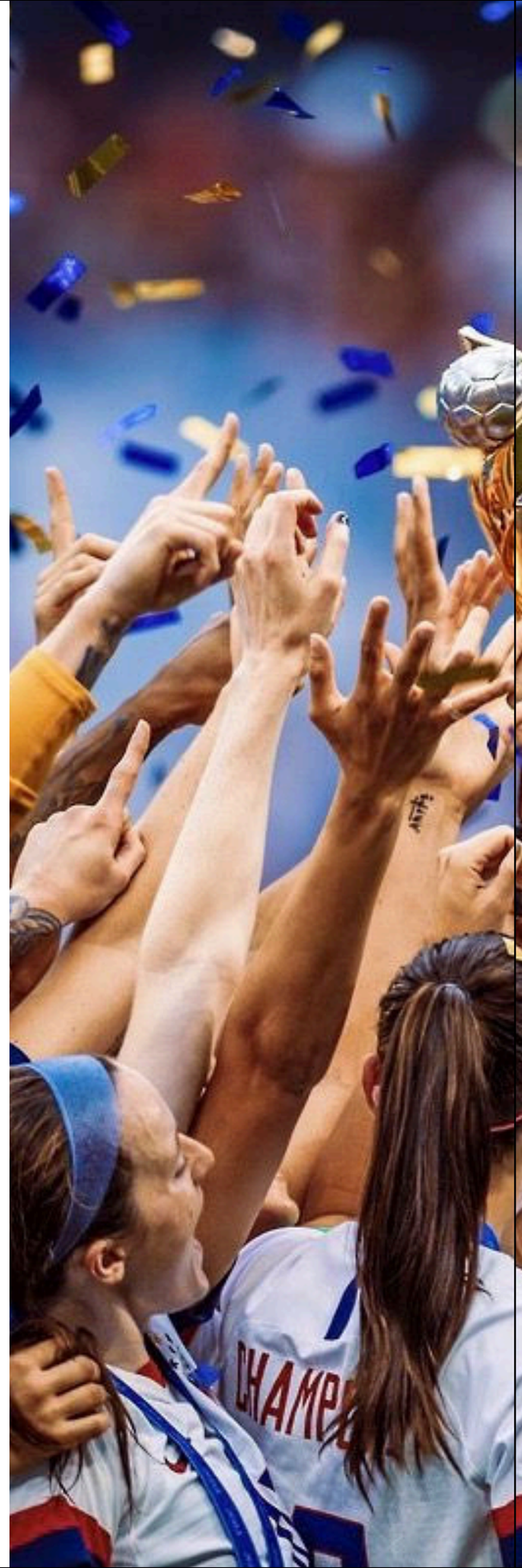


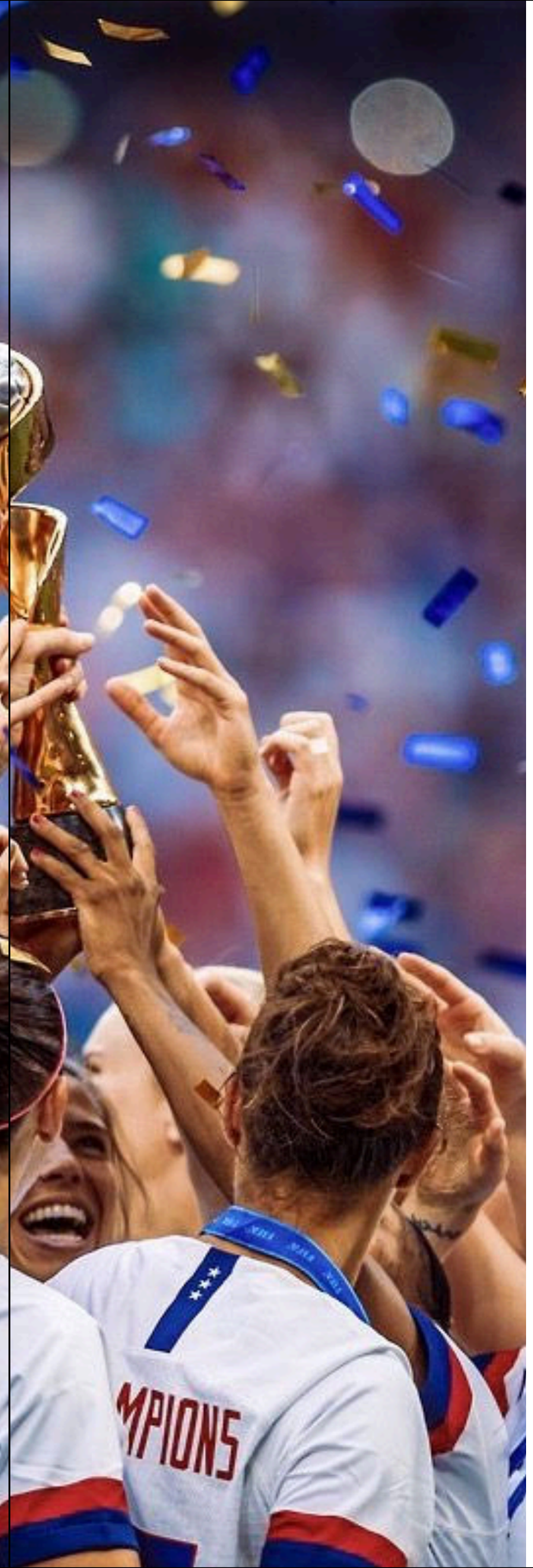
WOMEN'S 05 SPORT

Many of you who have spent even the briefest time in my company will be aware that I am a big fan of women's sport. Tom and I are in our 3rd year of holding Reading FC Women season tickets (even though we regret it invariably as we toil away to a promotion push to try and make it to the mighty 4th tier...) and are obsessed with all kinds of football - recently getting the opportunity to go to the Women's Champions Cup in London (like the female equivalent of the Club World Cup) and dancing and partying with the Corinthians faithful, getting to know new chants, meet new people and experiencing the pure jubilation of Gabi Zanotti's late strike to send them through to the final, with a Corinthians fan falling down from the row above onto our backs (and they say women's football lacks passion...?) To celebrate women in sports, I'm taking a look back over what in my mind stands as the best women's sporting moments ever.

USA women win the 1999 World Cup

Picture the scene: Brandi Chastain steps forward to take the 5th penalty of the shootout for USA Women. Score and they are world champions, something that becomes considerably harder with 90,000 expectant home fans watching on inside the Rose Bowl, the site of Baggio's famous penalty miss 5 years prior. Chastain runs up and smashes it past the Chinese goalkeeper, before whipping her shirt off over her head in jubilation and sinking to her knees in near disbelief, her delirious teammates sprinting over to embrace her. This was the moment where women's football took off in America, turning players like Abi Wambach and Mia Hamm into nationwide celebrities and household names and properly introducing the sport to the country.





Katie Ledecky winning 1500m gold at Paris 2024

This may not be a name many of you are familiar with – indeed, even I myself had never heard of her until (as you do) I was surfing different Olympic events in the hopes of something interesting to watch, before settling on swimming and witnessing Ledecky pull off a piece of history. The 1500m may at first seem a mundane event (after all, it does involve the competitors swimming 30 lengths of the pool over 16-odd minutes) but I was captivated by the front-runner Ledecky, who opened up a considerable lead between her and the rest of the field, before smashing the Olympic record (also previously held by her) to win gold in 15 minutes 30 seconds, a 10 second difference between her and second place - what feels like a lifetime in freestyle swimming. With this title, Ledecky claimed her 8th Olympic medal - aged only 27 - on track to become one of the sport's all-time greats and inspiring thousands of girls to give swimming a go.

Alessia Russo's backheel goal against Sweden

England Women enjoyed a Euros to remember in 2022, winning all their matches and indeed the entire tournament backed by an ever-growing home crowd who certainly weren't attracted by the prospect of a bank holiday if we brought it home, and Russo's backheel goal in the semi-final summed up the feeling perfectly. Leading 2-0 after some slightly nervy opening encounters, Russo was gifted a sitter at the back-post, the kind of chance she would dream about. After somehow hitting the keeper (and me in annoyance at home thinking the chance was gone) she scampered after the ball, before audaciously backheeling between the legs of two Swedish defenders and into the back of the net - getting England's third and sending them through to the final, not to mention the absolute limbs in my house.

What isn't important with all of these moments isn't really the sporting skill on show (although who doesn't like a cheeky backheel?) but really the way that in one way or another, they inspired women of all ages to give a sport a go and get involved - whereas they otherwise may have felt unable and unconfident to. Women's sport is not only brilliant for the moments it provides us with, but the legacy and inspiration that comes with it.

06

OXFORD'S LADY IN LAW

Today, many women fill up vital roles in the world of jurisprudence. Many excellent lawyers, men and women, are produced by the University of Oxford – widely considered to be one of the world's greatest universities. It seems impossible then, to believe that it took over 700 years for such equality to emerge in Oxford's law scene.

Oxford, as the oldest university in the English-speaking world, has an intriguing structure. Beginning in 1190, the system of academic halls, which were essentially boarding houses, emerged. Over time, the colleges we know today overtook the halls. The unfortunate fact is that between the establishment of law at Oxford in 1149 and Sorabji's admission in 1889, no women were allowed to study law in the university. "Hall Pass"

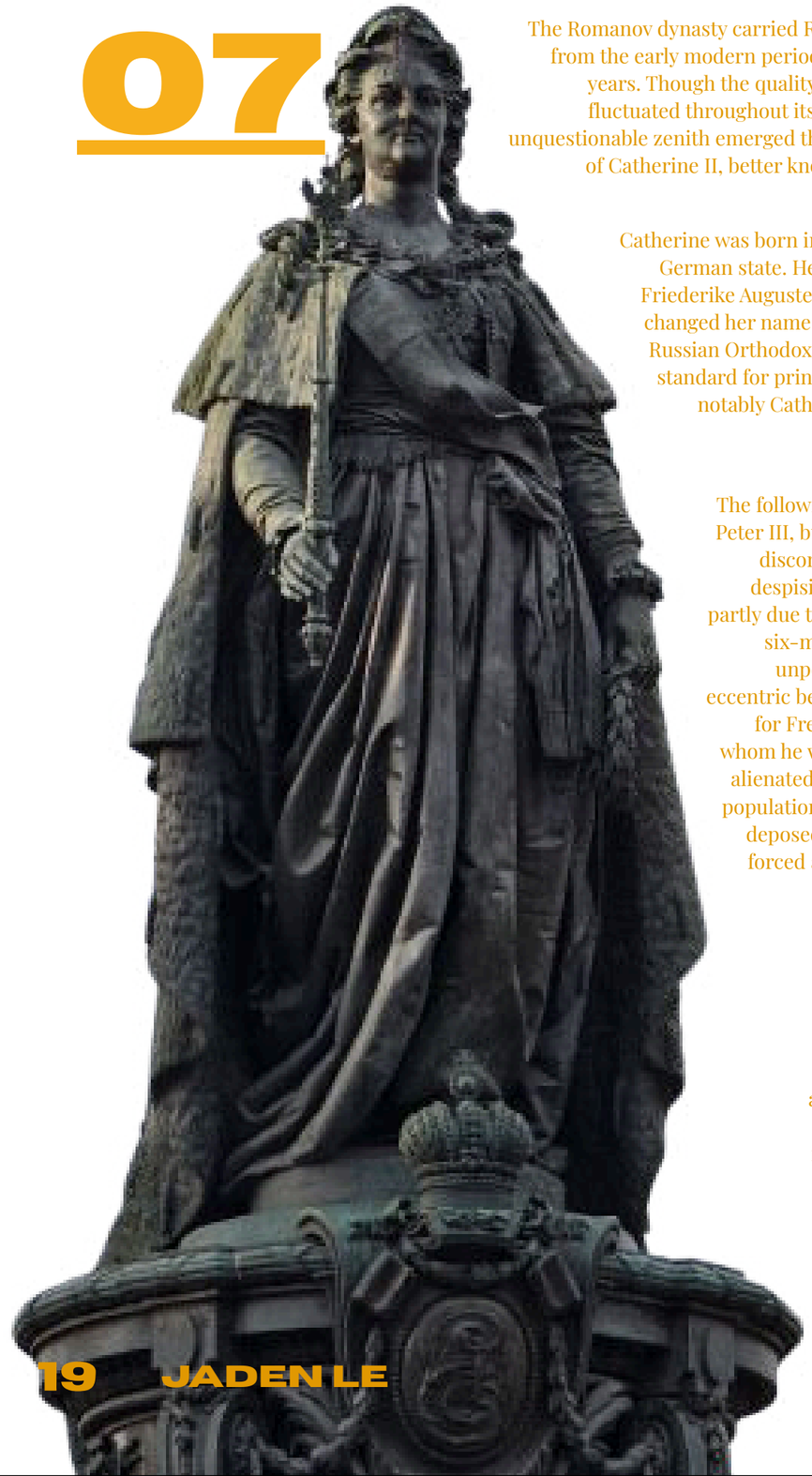
To work around this system, women had to establish their own private halls outside the collegiate system. The movement to integrate women into Oxford education began with the establishment of Lady Margaret Hall in 1878, and Somerville Hall shortly after in 1879. Sorabji's journey began in India, where she came top of her English Literature exams at Bombay University (at which she was also the first graduate) and as a result gained an English Government Scholarship to study law in the UK. However, when the administrators discovered that she was a woman, they revoked the scholarship. Fortunately for Sorabji, she had many connections who helped her, such as the Master of Balliol College, and the Principal of Somerville Hall.

When she was asked by her mother: "What will you do for India when you grow up?" Sorabji decided that practicing law was the best way forward. Growing up, she experienced how illiteracy in Indian women led to them being easy targets for legal fraud. Upon returning to India (where she was *also* the first woman to practice law), she worked to defend voluntary celibate women in India, who on many occasions owned vast land and wealth, yet due to their lack of legal expertise, did not have the skills to defend them.

While Sorabji's career was very decorated, the very fact of her practice as a lawyer, both at Oxford and in India, served as a milestone in the progression of women's rights in education and law. She managed to protect women who lacked legal expertise, made steps forward in allowing women to represent in court, and served the Indian community enormously through her pro bono (short for pro bono publico, which is Latin for "for the public good") work. She is certainly a monumental and underappreciated figure in women's history, fighting off direct attacks at her right to education and soldiering through the struggle to, in the end, achieve excellence in the world of law.

THE ENLIGHTENED EMPRESS

07



The Romanov dynasty carried Russia into the 20th Century from the early modern period, controlling it for over 300 years. Though the quality of the dynasty's leadership fluctuated throughout its time controlling Russia, an unquestionable zenith emerged throughout the 34-year reign of Catherine II, better known as Catherine the Great.

Catherine was born in 1729, a princess of a minor German state. Her original name was Sophie Friederike Auguste von Anhalt-Zerbst, and she changed her name following her conversion to Russian Orthodoxy in 1744. Her education was standard for princesses at the time, although notably Catherine also trained herself in swordsmanship.

The following year, Catherine married Peter III, but their marriage was full of discontent. She later confessed to despising him as soon as they met, partly due to his alcoholism. During his six-month reign, he was a deeply unpopular leader because of his eccentric behaviour and his admiration for Frederick the Great of Prussia, whom he was currently at war at. This alienated the majority of the Russian population, and in July 1762 Catherine deposed her husband, and after his forced abdication, crowned herself Empress.

Despite the interference of her mother during diplomatic visits, Catherine was engaged to the future Peter III of Russia. She arrived in Russia in 1744 and quickly integrated herself into Russian court, learning the language even whilst bedridden with pneumonia and enduring her devoutly Lutheran parents' displeasure, upon her conversion to Orthodoxy. She married Peter III the next year.

Upon taking the throne, Catherine immediately set to implementing major reforms, seeking to raise Russia to the standards of the western states who had modernised during the age of Enlightenment. One of her greatest achievements was her focus on public health. She opened multiple hospitals in her reign, and also launched "foundling homes", which were similar to orphanages. With the help of the English doctor Thomas Dimsdale, she became the first person in Russia to be inoculated against smallpox, then pushed a massive vaccination campaign that saw 2 million Russians inoculated by 1800.

Catherine was also a great patron of the arts and literature, with her personal collection, the Hermitage, containing 38,000 books and 10,000 drawings by the end of her reign. Her patronage also extended to the performing arts, and in 1774, she funded the Moscow State Academy of Choreography (a ballet school).

Catherine recruited many of the leading philosophers, writers, scientists and economists from around Europe, in order to broaden her own knowledge and help modernise Russia. She corresponded with Voltaire for 15 years – he later bestowed the great praise "The Star of the North" upon her with respect to her accomplishments.

Catherine also made use of western social theory to enact wider reforms throughout Russia. She started centralising and nationalising many institutions, partly through the Russian Statute of National Education in 1786, which provided free primary and secondary schools throughout Russia while also funding teaching facilities. Other achievements included the introduction of paper money in certain towns, a national health institute, regional administrative divisions and the granting of some bureaucratic rights to serfs, which was a step in the direction of freedom for them.

Catherine's achievements in foreign policy were also monumental in turning Russia from a backwater state into a great power in Europe. Throughout her reign, the Russian Empire expanded its territory by 200,000 square miles. The Russians inflicted humiliating defeats to the Ottomans in two wars, with battles like Chesma crippling the Ottoman Navy in 1770. From this, the Russians gained access to Crimea, and Catherine and her descendants became the protectors to all Orthodox Christians in Eastern Europe, granting Russia a high level of diplomatic power. Catherine also expanded Russia's diplomatic relations with the rest of the world, allowing her to mediate international conflicts and raise the perception and prestige of Russia as a state.

By the end of her reign in 1796, Catherine had transformed the Russian Empire into a major international power, whilst enacting major internal reforms, that stabilised imperial control over Russia and pushed the empire into the age of Enlightenment. Her many contributions to Russia in numerous fields sparked a golden age for Russia, cementing her as one of the foremost rulers in Russian history—she undoubtedly deserves her title as "The Great".

BREAKING THE GLASS CEILING

08

The boardroom used to be a boys' club. Emphasis on used to be. Walk into any major corporation today and you'll find something that would have been unthinkable fifty years ago: women calling the shots, making the deals, and running the show. But this isn't just some feel-good diversity story. This is about cold, hard economics and how women are fundamentally reshaping global finance.

Let's start with something concrete. Female-led companies consistently outperform their male-led counterparts. Not by a little bit either. We're talking measurable differences in profitability, innovation, and long-term sustainability. Yet somehow, women still only hold a fraction of CEO positions at major corporations. The disconnect here is absolutely staggering. Businesses are literally leaving money on the table because of outdated assumptions about who should be in charge.

Finance itself has been transformed by women breaking into traditionally male-dominated spaces. Investment banking, private equity, hedge funds. These were gentlemen's clubs for decades, operating on handshake deals and old school networks. Women entering these fields didn't just add diversity. They fundamentally changed how these industries operate. Risk assessment became more nuanced. Due diligence became more thorough. The aggressive, short-term thinking that nearly collapsed the global economy in 2008 started getting challenged by longer-term strategic perspectives.

The venture capital world tells an even more interesting story. Companies founded by women receive a pathetically small slice of total VC funding, but here's the kicker: they generate higher revenue per pound invested than male-founded companies. Read that again. Women entrepreneurs are more efficient with capital, deliver better returns, and yet they're still fighting tooth and nail for investment that should be flooding their way based purely on financial merit. It makes absolutely zero economic sense.

ONE BILLION AT A TIME

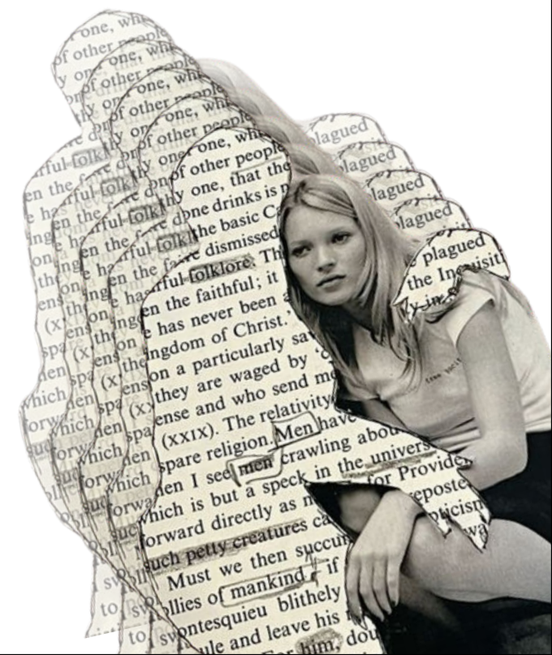
The pay gap remains one of the most persistent economic injustices in modern society. Same work, different pay, purely based on gender. Every economic argument against closing this gap falls apart under scrutiny. It's not about qualifications because women are now more educated than men on average. It's not about experience or hours worked because controlled studies account for those variables. It's simply about outdated power structures refusing to budge, costing the economy billions in lost productivity and consumer spending.

Microfinance reveals something fascinating about women and economics. Give small loans to women in developing economies and they invest it differently than men. The money goes towards education, healthcare, and sustainable business growth. Repayment rates are higher. Community impact is broader. Muhammad Yunus figured this out decades ago with Grameen Bank, proving that women aren't just better credit risks, they're better investors in long-term prosperity.

The pandemic exposed just how precarious women's economic position remains. When schools shut down, who left the workforce to handle childcare? Predominantly women. When industries collapsed, which jobs disappeared first? Service sector roles disproportionately held by women. The economic recovery has been uneven precisely because we've failed to build systems that support women's full participation in the economy. It's not just unfair, it's economically inefficient.

Tech and finance are finally waking up to what should have been obvious all along. Diverse teams make better decisions. Companies with women in leadership positions are more profitable, more innovative, and more resilient during economic downturns. This isn't political correctness gone mad. This is basic economics. Excluding half the population from leadership positions is like trying to run a race while hopping on one leg tied.

The next generation of female economists, traders, and entrepreneurs aren't asking for permission anymore. They're building companies, launching funds, and reshaping industries whether the old guard likes it or not. The economic case for women's leadership isn't theoretical anymore. It's proven, measurable, and undeniable. Markets are supposed to be rational, allocating resources efficiently based on merit and results. For too long, they haven't been. But slowly, painfully, the economics are winning out over the prejudice. Women aren't just breaking glass ceilings anymore. They're rebuilding the entire structure from the ground up. The revolution won't be televised. It'll be audited, reported in quarterly earnings, and reflected in stock prices. And it's already happening.



CONDUCTOR OF 09 FREEDOM

The story of Harriet Tubman remains one of the most inspiring narratives in American, and indeed, world history. While many have at least heard of her name, perhaps because of her immortalisation in the film Harriet (2019), starring Cynthia Erivo, or the general reverence paid to her as a hero of the abolitionist movement, it is also the case that very few know the intricacies of the trials and tribulations she went through or her heroic deeds in the face of them. So, what did Harriet Tubman do, and why do we, correctly, view her as one of, if not the, main heroines of American History?

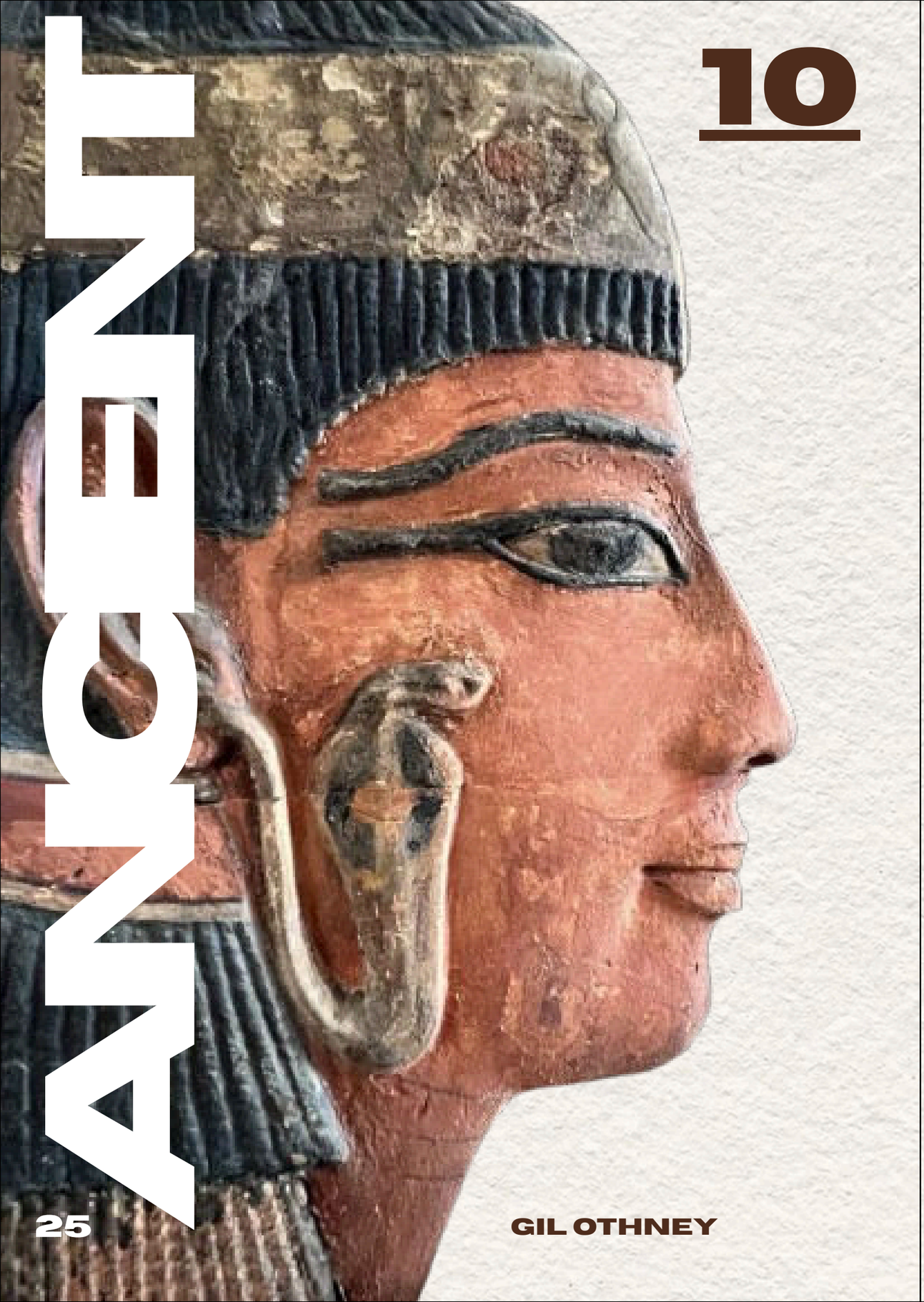
Harriet Tubman was born to the name Araminta ("Minty") Ross into slavery in Dorchester County, Maryland in 1822. The struggles she faced in her early life, which helped shape who she was, are almost unimaginable to the modern person. For example, in around 1834-5, a plantation overseer threw a two-pound metal weight at her head, intending to hit the runaway slave that she was refusing to restrain. This caused her to have headaches, seizures, and suffer from narcolepsy (sudden sleeping spells) for the rest of her life. It was because of this that she began to experience strange visions, which she believed were messages from God, making her even more devout than her Methodist upbringing had ensured. Finally, in 1849, Ross, now named Harriet Tubman (from around 1844), was able to escape to Philadelphia.

The escape from slavery alone would be a great story, an act that would require an unfathomable amount of courage. But, for Harriet, this was merely the beginning of her story. Following her escape, she became a conductor on the renowned Underground Railroad, helping to lead 70 to 300 people, including her family, from the shackles of chattel slavery. She was an incredibly prolific and effective conductor, making 19 trips and never losing a single passenger. The mental bravery required in returning to the place where you were brutally enslaved 13 times merely to help others in your position is astounding, but Harriet was just so determined, as the song suggests, to "stand up" and take her people with her. During her roughly decade-long tenure as a conductor on the Underground Railroad, she earned the nickname "Moses" for her heroism in leading enslaved people to freedom, just as the biblical figure led enslaved Israelites out of Egypt. Furthermore, she did all this while navigating her own safety after the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 and Eliza Brodess (the widow of her enslaver Edward Brodess) posting a reward for her capture and return.

In 1858, after years of being a conductor, Tubman met famed abolitionist John Brown and helped him plan the 1859 raid on Harpers Ferry. Unfortunately, though, this was not so much of a success, as the rebellion had little support and it resulted in little immediate freedom. Then came the American Civil War in 1861, a fight for the soul of the country. Would the Union States tolerate slavery in the South, or would they succeed in eradicating it altogether? For Harriet, the necessary answer was clear. She worked many jobs in the Civil War, acting as a cook, nurse, armed scout, and even spy. Her greatest military contribution came in June 1863, where she, working under Union General James Montgomery, helped to guide 150 African American soldiers up the Combahee River, rescuing approximately 750 enslaved people in South Carolina. After the Civil War, while she retired to her home in New York, she stayed politically active, especially in the quest for women's suffrage, until she was overcome by sickness and died in 1913.

The illustrious story of Harriet Tubman's life means she is now viewed as an icon of courage and freedom, rightly so. Sometimes though, we must remember that these events were not so long ago – her death was barely over 100 years ago. Our knowledge of her heroism through tribulations must function to teach us two lessons. 1) To be grateful for all that we have and that we'll never go through comparable struggles. 2) To remind us that when we look upon injustice today, the correct course of action is just that, action. There is plenty of injustice to be found, so there is plenty of action to be taken.

ANCIENT WOMEN



10

Anthropology encourages us to look beyond modern records to recognise how women shaped societies throughout ancient history. Historical sources have often prioritised male leaders, but archaeology, inscriptions, and cultural traditions reveal women who exercised political power, religious authority, and intellectual influence. These figures show that women were active participants in shaping the cultural and social foundations of early civilisations.

One of the most famous examples is Hatshepsut, the pharaoh who ruled Egypt during the 15th century BCE. Rather than governing as a temporary regent, Hatshepsut took on the full role of pharaoh, adopting royal imagery and titles traditionally associated with male rulers. Anthropologically, her reign highlights how gender roles could be flexible within political systems when legitimacy and stability were prioritised. She oversaw prosperous trade expeditions and monumental building projects, including the impressive mortuary temple at Deir el-Bahri.

Another influential woman was Enheduanna, a high priestess in ancient Mesopotamia around the 23rd century BCE and widely considered the earliest known named author in history. Serving in the city of Ur, she composed hymns to the goddess Inanna which blended religious devotion with political messaging. Her writings illustrate how women were shaping religious ideology and political legitimacy even within those early state societies.

Ancient political leadership also appears in the figure of Cleopatra VII, the last ruler of the Ptolemaic Kingdom of Egypt, perhaps the most infamous pharaoh of Egypt. While often remembered through dramatic stories from Roman sources, anthropology emphasises her strategic leadership and cultural diplomacy. Cleopatra spoke multiple languages and positioned herself as both a Greek monarch and a traditional Egyptian pharaoh, illustrating how identity and political power could be negotiated across cultural boundaries.

In the classical world, intellectual achievement is represented by Hypatia of Alexandria, a mathematician and philosopher who lived in the 4th–5th centuries CE. As a teacher of Neoplatonic philosophy and mathematics, she attracted students from across the entire Mediterranean. Hypatia's life proves that women could occupy positions of scholarly authority within ancient urban intellectual centers, even though such roles were rare.

Women also influenced cultural traditions through poetry and artistic expression. Sappho, a poet from the Greek island of Lesbos in the 7th century BCE, created lyric poetry that explored emotion, relationships, and community life. Although only fragments of her work survive, anthropologists and classicists see her poetry as a valuable window into women's social networks and cultural life in ancient Greece.

These examples reveal that women in the ancient world were not simply passive figures within patriarchal societies. They acted as rulers, scholars, religious leaders, and artists who shaped the values and institutions of their cultures. Anthropology helps bring these figures into clearer focus by examining inscriptions, literature, architecture, and social practices that record their influence. By studying women like Hatshepsut, Enheduanna, Cleopatra VII, Hypatia, and Sappho, we see that the foundations of human civilisation were built not only by kings and generals, but also by women whose achievements shaped religion, politics, knowledge, and culture.

GIL OTHNEY

MIRZAKHANI, 11

When recalling the world's greatest mathematicians, the figures that often come to mind are Archimedes, Newton, Euler, Gauss, Riemann, but where are the women? Throughout history, women have been neglected, and so to counter this I hope to share their amazing achievements here, focusing on Maryam Mirzakhani.

Born in Tehran in 1977, Mirzakhani had extraordinary mathematical ability, distinguishing herself in national competitions before going on to achieve full marks in the International Mathematical Olympiad, an extremely rare and incredible achievement.

The Fields Medal is an award of the highest degree given to mathematicians under the age of 40 who have made significant contributions to mathematics, such as producing groundbreaking research or creating entirely new areas of mathematics. It is the maths equivalent of a Nobel Prize.

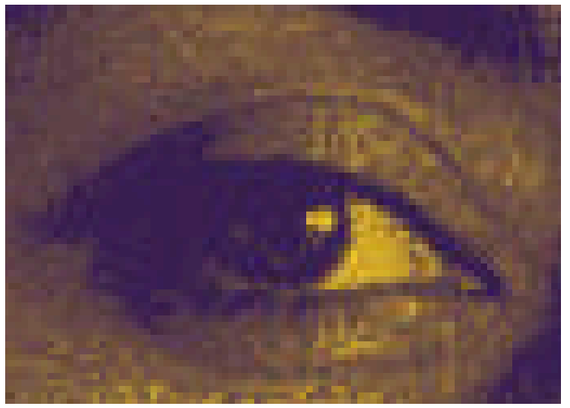
Mirzakhani was the first woman (and first Iranian person) to win the Fields Medal in 2014, awarded for her research on Riemann surfaces (a field in topology created by Bernhard Riemann). This topic links all the way back to the first Fields Medal winner, Lars Valerian Ahlfors, who won the prize for a closely related area of complex analysis involving Riemann surfaces. She is also known for her work on Ergodic theory which studies how dynamic systems change over time.

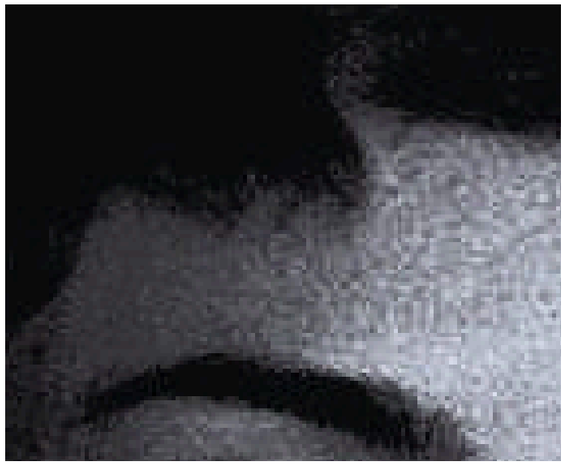
Unfortunately, she passed away from breast cancer at the age of 40 in 2017. In honour of her achievements and her legacy, the Maryam Mirzakhani New Frontiers Prize was created to promote women in mathematics – it is given to women who have completed their PhDs within 2 years. For reference, the average STEM PhD takes 3-4 years (in the UK, longer in the US), so it is no easy feat. One of the 2025 winners was Ewin Tang, who proved that non-quantum computers could achieve similar computation times to quantum computers at certain tasks that were thought to be calculated significantly quicker by quantum computers.

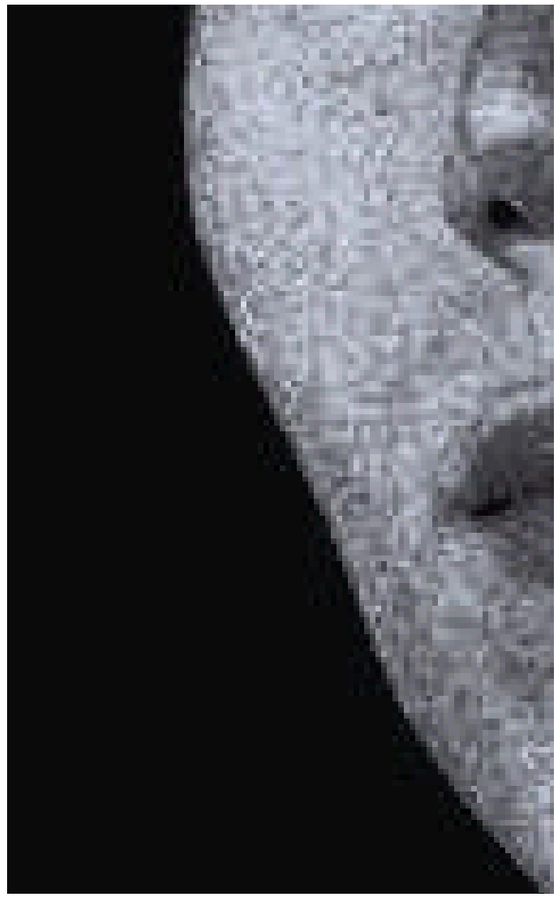
The May 12th Initiative was also created in her honour (the day of her birthday), supporting female mathematicians by bringing together online or local events from May 1 to May 15.

"IF WE KNEW THINGS WOULD BE SO COMPLICATED, I THINK WE WOULD HAVE GIVEN UP," SHE SAID. THEN SHE PAUSED. "I DON'T KNOW; ACTUALLY, I DON'T KNOW," SHE SAID. "I DON'T GIVE UP EASILY."
– FROM AN INTERVIEW WITH MARYAM MIRZAKHANI, QUANTA MAGAZINE

Maryam







THE MALARIA BREAKTHROUGH

Statistics often name Malaria as the largest human killer in history, having killed half of all humans to have ever lived. Although this is likely a vast overestimate, the malaria threat is no laughing matter still causing over 600,000 deaths annually. This number, indisputably high, would likely be far greater were it not for the work of Chinese scientist Tu Youyou, whose discovery of a powerful antimalarial treatment has saved millions of lives.

Tu Youyou was born in 1930 in China. Driven by the experience of contracting tuberculosis at 16, Youyou studied pharmacology at Beijing Medical College. During the 1960s, while she was working at the Academy of Traditional Chinese Medicine, malaria was becoming an even greater global threat. The parasite that caused malaria had been developed resistance to chloroquine, the standard worldwide malaria treatment. In response to North Vietnam's request to China for help combating the disease, the Chinese government launched Project 523 in May of 1967. The project aimed to find a cure for chloroquine-resistant malaria and in 1969 Tu Youyou was appointed as the head of the project. While searching for such a cure, Tu Youyou turned to her area of expertise: traditional Chinese medicine.

Tu Youyou was so dedicated to her work that she left her 1 and 4 year old saying "The work was the top priority so I was certainly willing to sacrifice my personal life," as she spent 3 years in the rainforests of Hainan Island in southern China where a malaria outbreak was being experienced. After her time on the island over 240,000 compounds had been tested for their efficacy as antimalarial drugs to no avail. Eventually, Tu and her team started work on a plant called sweet wormwood which had been used around 400 AD China to treat intermittent fevers, a common symptom of malaria.

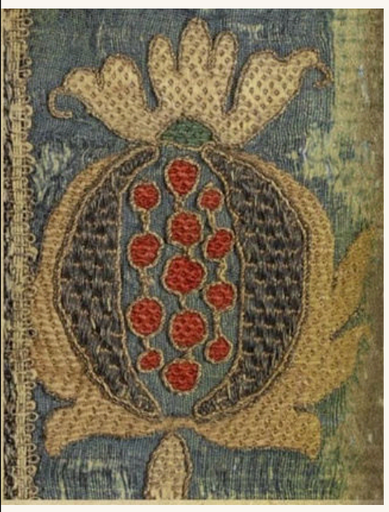
Originally, extracts of the plant showed inconsistent and poor results. After returning to the ancient texts in which the treatment was mentioned, Tu Youyou and her team managed to refine the extraction method in order to protect the active ingredient, now known as artemisinin. The extract was then tested on Tu and 2 of her colleagues further demonstrating her dedication to her work. The team then tested their extract on 21 patients resulting in a 100% success rate.

Her discovery of artemisinin transformed the global fight against malaria. Due in part to her work, China has seen a massive drop from 30 million malaria cases every year in the 1940s, to 0 annual cases now. Artemisinin-based combination therapies are widely regarded as the most effective treatment for malaria, thanks to their high success rate, low costs, and few side effects.

In 2011, The Lasker Foundation awarded Tu Youyou its Clinical Medical Research Award, describing artemisinin as "arguably the most important pharmaceutical intervention in the last half-century." In recognition of her work, she was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 2015. Her achievement not only revolutionised malaria treatment, but also demonstrated the value of combining traditional knowledge with modern scientific research alongside extraordinary dedication to one's work.

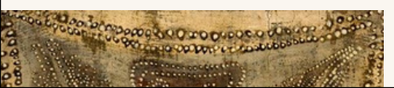










TAMAR

The ruler of a kingdom stretching from the Black Sea to the Caspian Sea, the founder of an empire, and the source of the Georgian golden age, there is no debate that Tamar the Great deserves her place as one of the greatest queens in history.

Born in 1160 to George III, the King of Georgia at the time, the details of her upbringing were not widely documented. Her father put down a major revolt when she was 17, an experience Tamar drew upon as she also put down several revolts led by her ex-husband, leading to her being designated as her father's co-ruler in 1178 to legitimise her claim to the throne. She co-reigned until her father passed away from natural causes in 1184, resulting in her coronation as the first female ruler of Georgia. However, she soon faced opposition from the aristocracy, requiring her to reshuffle her father's court in response, and replacing many of her opponents with supportive nobles.

She then married Yuri Bogolyubsky, an heir to the principality of Vladimir-Suzdal, in 1185 but soon she divorced him and married David Soslan in 1189, an Alan prince and military general from whom she would find staunch support throughout her reign. Having consolidated her power over Georgia's nobles and secured a strong ally in her husband, Tamar went about reviving the expansionist policies of her forefathers, with a particular focus on Armenia and Azerbaijan. Georgia, however, was bordered by a strong Seljuk (Turkic) state known as the Eldiguzids (northeastern Iran), which was historically considered the biggest threat to Georgian sovereignty and the largest obstacle to Tamar's ambitions. In order to combat these threats, Tamar wisely began supporting the weaker neighbouring Seljuk prince of Shirvanshahs (Azerbaijan) in his war against the Eldiguzids, uniting the two states against the Eldiguzids. Seizing the momentum, she ordered her husband to advance deep into Azerbaijan to defend the Shirvanshahs. Alarmed by the speed of the Georgian advance into Azerbaijan, the atabeg (ruler) Abu Bakr of the Eldiguzids dispatched a large army, which met the Georgian forces in 1195 at the Battle of Shamkor.

However, the military genius of David Soslan proved too much even for the larger Seljuk army and Abu Bakr suffered a resounding defeat that later led to him losing his capital Tabriz. With the Eldiguzids defeated and the Shirvanshahs now fully dependent on Georgian protection, Tamar faced little opposition in establishing the Shirvanshahs as her tributary (puppet state). Tamar had thus now asserted Georgia as a regional power and removed its biggest threat. Riding on her previous successes, she sent two Armenian generals, Zakare and Ivane Zakarian, into the collapsing Seljuk Sultanate of Rum, defeating the Seljuks decisively at the Battle of Basian. This campaign seized large swathes of Armenian land from the Turks and lasted from 1203 to 1206.

Furthermore, Tamar, having secured the area of Trebizond (modern day northeast Türkiye) in 1204, dispatched the grandsons of the late Byzantine Emperor Andronikos I Komnenos along with a sizable army to establish it as a Georgian vassal state. This operation succeeded phenomenally and the Empire of Trebizond (as it came to be called after Tamar's death) would grow to be a crucial Byzantine successor state.

By the time of her death in 1213, Tamar the Great had established the Kingdom of Georgia as a world power and vanquished the foes previously seen as unbeatable. Moreover, her reign would go on to spark a period known as the Georgian Golden Age, a time of immense prosperity for the citizens of Georgia and of great importance to modern-day Georgia's cultural identity and nationhood. It is thus unsurprising that Tamar the Great is celebrated even to this day by Georgians around the world.

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