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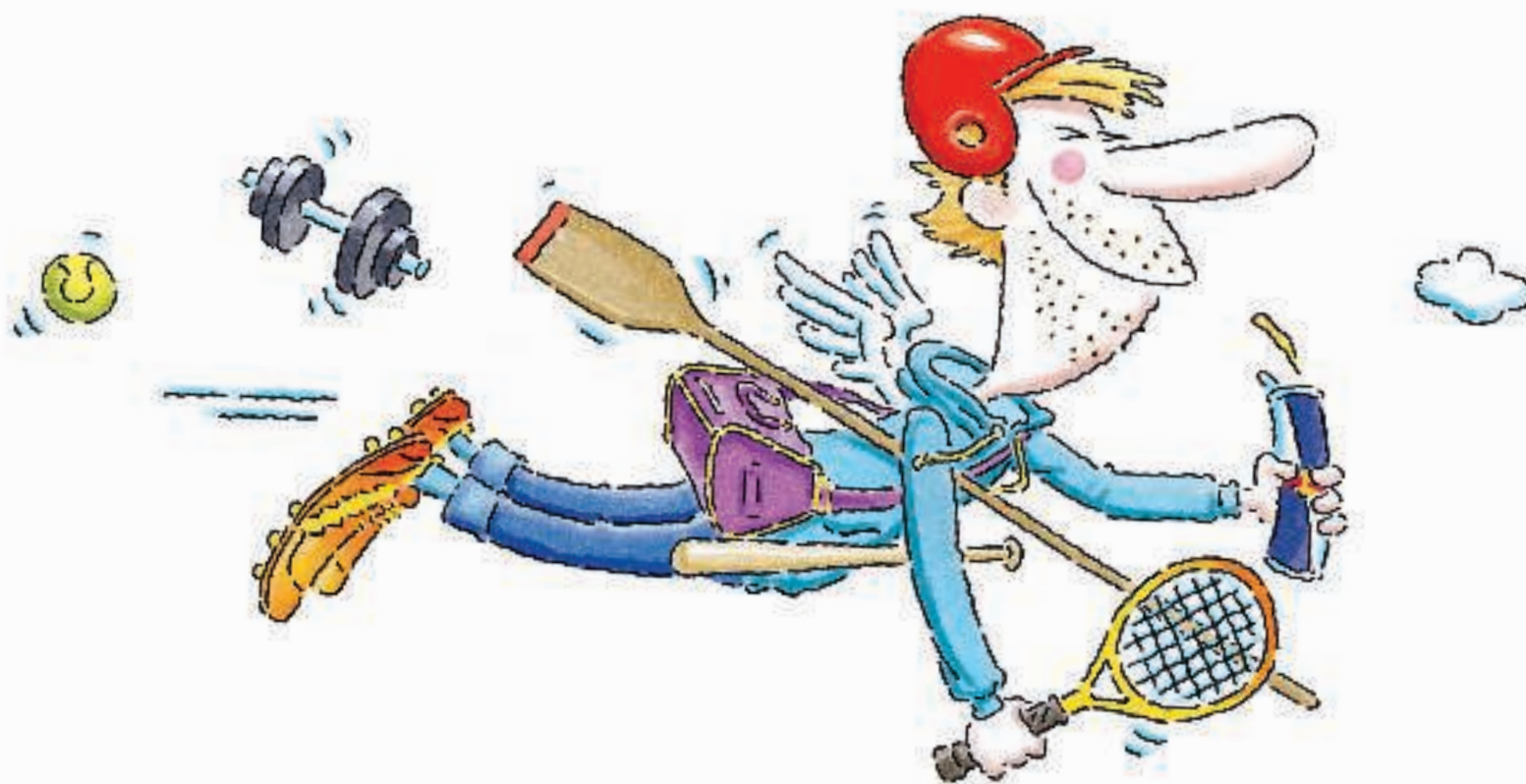
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VARSITY

Issue 797 | Friday 6th November 2015

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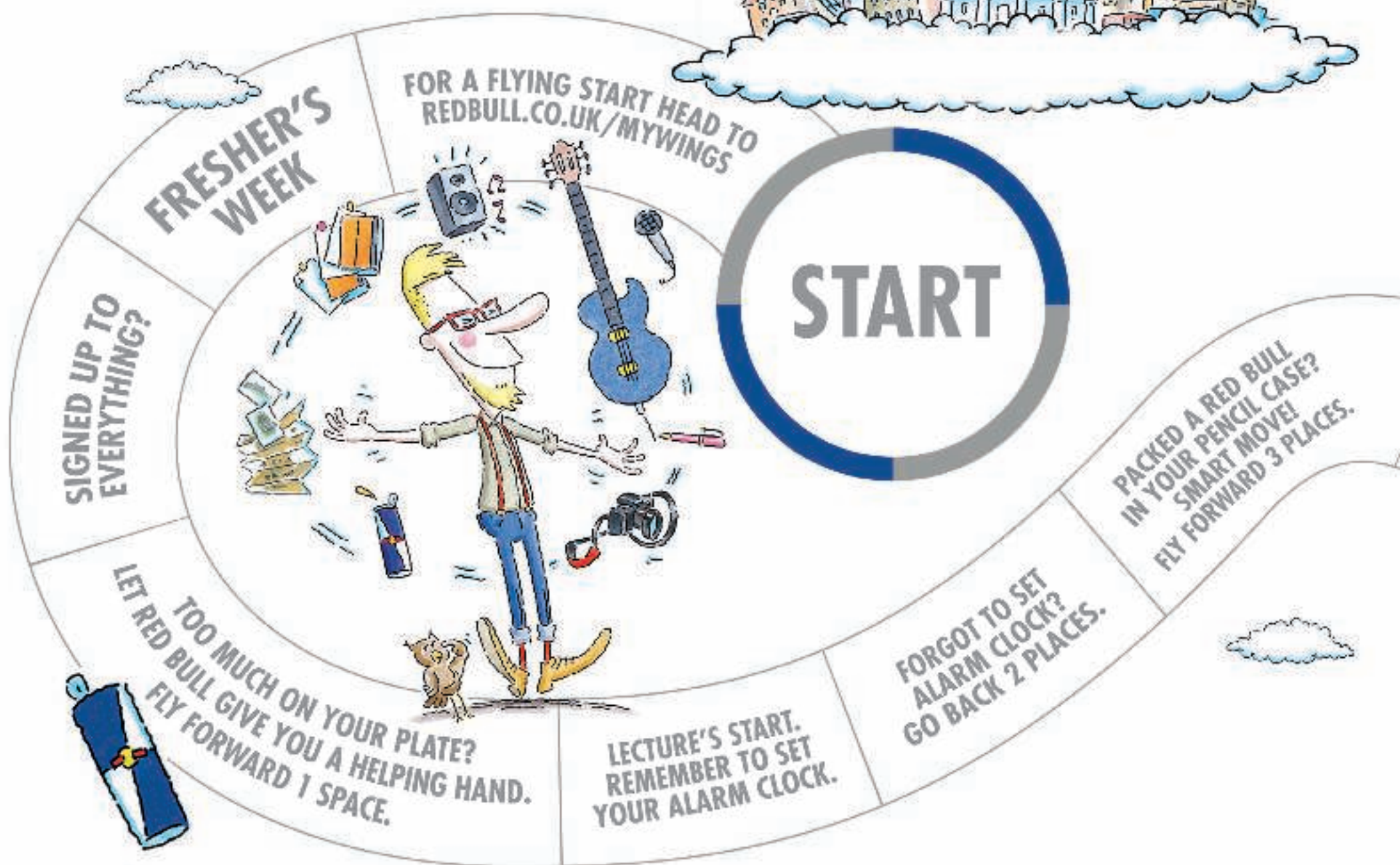
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Issue 797

Friday 6th November 2015

VARSITY

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'Grossly incompetent'

Senior uni figures launch attack on management of NW Cambridge development which is 'haemorrhaging millions of pounds a month'

Tom Wilson
Senior News Editor

The management of the North West Cambridge development has been strongly criticised by academics and past and present members of the university's Board of Scrutiny in a meeting at the Senate House on Tuesday.

The meeting, chaired by Pro-Vice Chancellor Graham Virgo and attended by the Registry, Senior and Deputy Proctors and members of staff from the Board of Scrutiny, and associated Syndicates and Departments, saw university members attacking the management of the £1 billion North West Cambridge Development.

Last month *Varsity* reported that the project had been criticised in an audit ordered by the university's Finance Committee. The audit slammed "systematic failures" in the development.

Heated exchanges at the meeting included questions of responsibility, the prospect of spiralling costs and similarities with previous project failures.

Among these were repeated references to the £9.19m CAPSA project from 2001, which saw the university attempt to establish an online

accounting system. Managerial difficulties during the CAPSA project saw tensions between management and departments rise and costs to spiral to almost double the budget.

It was felt that the lessons from CAPSA, described in the 2001 Finkelstein Report as "simple" and "well within the capacity of the university to learn and act on," had been neither acted upon nor taken on board.

One Gorton district and parish councillor claimed that "[the university] have learned little about project management from that debacle."

Summarising the problems outlined in the original report, Senior Proctor David Goode said that the problems were "[the] symptoms, not the disease".

"It looks as though the North West Cambridge project was not planned and set up properly, led by an executive that was not full-time and was without sufficient accountability, which did not manage risks properly, and whose reporting was so poor as to misinform a syndicate which was itself unsure about its role and a majority of which had no experience whatsoever of large building projects," he said.

Continued on page 4



Explosive: Cambridge students celebrate Bonfire Night with fireworks on Midsummer Common

Hunt hits back at elitism claims

Jack Higgins
Deputy News Editor

Labour MP Tristram Hunt has defended the comments he made to the Cambridge Universities Labour Club (CULC), which were initially reported in *Varsity* last week and have since

been widely criticised in the national media.

The criticism largely focused on Hunt's comment that "you are the top one per cent [...] It is your job and your responsibility to take leadership going forward." *The Times*, *ITV*, *The Guardian*, *The Daily Mail*, *The Independent*, *Sky News* and *The Sun*

have covered the story.

Hunt responded in *The Spectator*, saying that his "clear" message to Cambridge students was that "Labour has a mountain to climb if we are to recover from our defeat in May, and as the next generation of Labour activists they are absolutely central to our efforts to renew." He added that activists "from across the country" and "all walks of life" could build a "strong, credible and forward-looking

movement".

Responding to an article by Owen Jones which levelled criticism against him, Hunt has endorsed a blog post which argues he was misrepresented, saying that "some ppl [sic] actually took the time to understand my point". The blog post, written by Tom Wilson, the author of *Varsity's* original article, calls criticism which labelled Hunt an elitist "bollocks" and highlights the way in which his comment of "it is

your responsibility" was changed to "it must be your responsibility".

Wilson argues that in doing this "you change a statement of fact, an acknowledgement that society is elitist [...] to one of endorsement. [...] Clumsy language that is easy to take out of context? Yes. Elitism? No."

Wilson added that the claims attributed to Hunt, including that he wanted the top one per cent to take over Labour, are all "utterly fictional".

INSIDE:

FREE EDUCATION DEMO, DODGY DONATIONS, ADMISSIONS RETHINK

The kids aren't alright

There is panic at the Senate House.

Two weeks ago it was revealed that the North West Cambridge development was forecast to run significantly over-budget after the Vice Chancellor commissioned an audit to examine the project's failings. This week saw a meeting of the Estates of the development and the university's Board of Scrutiny – its version of a Commons select committee – to discuss the findings.

For the most part, their critique is scathing.

Various members of the Board of Scrutiny and the Council, the university's governing body, take it in turns to deplore the managerial failings and difficulties this project has faced. Two issues stand out in particular. The first is the repeated assertions by various parties to the discussion to learn the lessons from the "CAPSA debacle". This was the attempt in the late 90s to roll out a centralised

system for accounts which, like many large-scale IT projects, initially failed, causing what contemporary news reports called "chaos".

A *Varsity* article dated 16 November 2001 quotes the author of the report, Professor Anthony Finckelstein from UCL: "CAPSA has cost a lot of money, damaged the integrity of the university's financial processes and soured relationships between academics and administration." A spokesperson for the then Vice Chancellor was quoted as saying that the university accepts the "significant recommendations about management responsibility and accountability, and the university's corporate governance". *Plus ça change...*

The second concern is the worrying suggestion about the threat to the lives of the children attending the university's new primary school because of infrastructure issue. When a senior academic has "the gravest concern about the possibility of a trag-

ic accident", there is a significant problem.

It is important to stress that blame is not solely to be laid at the university's door, as the County Council has overall responsibility for highways, and the university is expected to release a full statement in due course. But this part of the discussion was not even meant to take place – matters pertaining to the school were not included in the original audit. Had the matter not been raised, there is no guarantee that the information would have been released into the public domain. Every parent of a child at that school has the right to know that a senior member of the university harbours serious concerns about the safety of their children.

Even if the issues raised during the discussion are fully resolved and the project completes successfully, the reputational damage of the university's reticence on this could prove long-lasting. When safety is at stake, there are no excuses for secrecy.

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INVESTIGATIONS

The Invisible Safety Net

A report on the University's provision of support for mental health issues (page 8)



SCIENCE

Computer machines on the rise

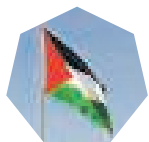
Professor Carole Goble discusses the past, present and future of computer science (page 11)



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BDS response

Patrick O'Hare responds to Jonathan Shamir's claim that it is BDS which needs to be boycotted (page 16)



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Poetry corner

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Ugly beautiful buildings

Tom Wheeldon sheds new light on the beauty of brutalism in Cambridge architecture (page 22)



REVIEWS

ARCSOC

Michael Davin thinks 'THE METAMORPHOSIS' had serious flaws but was ultimately a fun evening (page 29)



Varsity Writers' Meetings

Varsity will be holding meetings for aspiring writers, photographers, illustrators, designers and sub-editors every Monday in our offices at 16 Mill Lane at 6:30pm.

Come along, or email editor@varsity.co.uk to find out more.

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Zero Carbon stages bridges protest

Tom Freeman

News Correspondent

Members of the student Zero Carbon Society staged a protest on three bridges over the River Cam on Wednesday to highlight the university's investments in fossil fuels.

Students used bedsheets to stage a protest on Garret Hostel, Clare and King's Bridges to draw attention to the issue of divestment.

Zero Carbon wants the university to withdraw all its investments into and funding from energy companies, believing this will help in the fight against climate change.

“

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY MUST INVEST IN A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Slogans on the posters included “Fossil-free future” and “Cambridge, clean up your act” and “Where does £5bn go?”, in reference to widely-quoted figures about the size of the university's endowment.

Other sources quote a lower figure of £2.8 billion for the endowment.

The group recently started a petition calling on the university and the Vice Chancellor to withdraw all

investments from fossil fuels stocks, bonds and shares; to commit not to invest in fossil fuel companies in the future; and to “explore and implement investment strategies targeted at building a sustainable future”.

At the time of going to print, the protest had gathered over 1,000 signatures in three days.

The protest on Clare and King's bridges was quickly shut down by the colleges' respective porters, who were joined by porters from Magdalene when it became clear that many of the protesters were from Magdalene College.

Angus Satow, Campaigns Officer for Zero Carbon and a student at Magdalene, was disciplined by his college following the protest.

On the occasion of the protest, the society commented saying: “Just two weeks ago, the university issued a video addressed to the entire world, presenting donations to Cambridge as an investment in the future.

“If the world wants to invest in it, Cambridge University must return the favour and invest in a sustainable future.”

Last week *Varsity* reported on figures obtained by Greenpeace showing that the university had obtained £26 million in research funding and donations from mining and fossil fuel companies over the past five years.

The protest follows the launch two weeks ago of the university's ‘Dear World... Yours, Cambridge’ campaign, which aims to raise £2 billion.

Comment: Page 13



The Zero Carbon Society staging their protest on the bridges on Wednesday afternoon

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“I’m surprised they didn’t sack us months ago”

Continued from front page

“The project is bold and innovative”

Reacting to the criticism, a university spokesman said: “As with many projects of this size and complexity, there have been a number of difficulties and challenges. These have included the timely installation of site-wide infrastructure, inflation in construction costs, and certain aspects of the project’s financial risk reporting.

“As soon as the full extent of these difficulties came to light, the University commissioned a review into why they occurred and what lessons could be learned for the future.

“The University will use the findings to improve certain aspects of the governance and management of the project, and ensure that further investment is made in key personnel and expertise.

“The North West Cambridge Development is the most ambitious capital project undertaken in the University’s 800-year history. It will create 1,500 homes for University and College staff, 1,500 private houses for sale and 100,000 square meters of academic and R&D space.

“The project is bold, innovate and not free from risk. It is also an essential part of the University’s strategy to remain a world-leading place of learning and research, creating a new, vibrant and environmentally advanced community that will also bring civic benefits to the local community.”

During the meeting, multiple speakers returned to the themes of the potential for further cost increases and the project’s poor management.

Professor Ross Anderson, who was a member of the university’s governing body, the University Council, from 2003 to 2010, was highly critical of the project’s management, warning that “while senior officers dodge and weave, we are haemorrhaging millions of pounds a month”

“Unless we can get this project under control, the costs could double... In that case, the rental income from the new flats won’t even cover the bond interests, and our successors in the middle of this century will have to

find over half a billion pounds to refinance it.

“There’s always someone else who must be consulted, another committee whose opinion must be sought. We still don’t have anyone in charge,” he said.

Professor Anderson also claimed that a member of the West and North West Cambridge Estates Syndicate, the body that scrutinised the project, had told him: “It’s just a total mess; I’m surprised [the university] didn’t sack us months ago.”

“

“UNLESS WE CAN GET THIS PROJECT UNDER CONTROL, THE COSTS COULD DOUBLE”

David Goode, a Senior Proctor on the Board of Scrutiny, read testimony from Dr Susan Oosthuizen, Academic Director for Historic Environment, claiming that the true overruns were closer to £86.6 million, well over the Audit Committee’s earlier reported top projection of £76 million.

She claimed that various levels of governance, including the Syndicate, were not kept properly informed. “If [this was] not deliberate,” she said, then it was “grossly incompetent”.

The Syndicate were described as not being blameless, as “often nothing is minuted in sufficient detail”.

Further condemnation of the project’s oversight and structure came from the Chair of the Board of Scrutiny and University Information Services, Matthew Vernon, who said that “It is clear that the [Syndicate] has seriously failed the university [...] It has acted, however unintentionally, as another filter that has stopped bad news reaching the people it should have.”

Rachael Padman, a fellow at Newnham and a member of the University Council, claimed that “there are real problems with the overly complex management structure established by the [University] Council”

and that “a structure intended to produce direct accountability in fact had the primary effect of increasing risk”.

However, she also added that “North West Cambridge was and remains a once-in-a-generation opportunity” and that “this is not a cost blow-out, as some have represented.

“It is clear that with some relatively small changes to the project it will still be possible to reach essentially the same financial targets agreed in July 2014. [...] The headline sums have not been wasted, spent or even committed – they are simply a potential liability if we don’t take appropriate action,” she continued.

The lack of accurate minutes worried some as to the viability of other university projects.

Bob Dowell, a member of the University Council for eight years, and who approved the initial bond for the project, said that “over-rosy miscommunication is happening across the board, and not just in North West Cambridge.

“How many [other projects] also have similar problems with communication, with unwelcome news being carefully spun? How much confidence can Council have in the other projects from the same people who so badly misrepresented the North West Cambridge project?”

“Lives are at risk”

Although not part of the original audit, concerns regarding the safety of the children attending the primary school on the development site were also raised.

Regius Professor of Engineering, David McKay, warned that the poor design and management could put parents and children of the new primary school in the area at risk. A new rat run on Huntington Road has blocked off the route to cyclists.

“I have the gravest concern about the possibility of a tragic accident. Numerous near-misses have already occurred,” he said.

Fixing the problem would require more money, he continued, but “lives are at risk”.

“Accident statistics already show



a cluster on Huntington Road, and three university members have been killed on Huntington Road in the last 20 years. The defective designs that are now being built, combined with the new demand for crossing Huntington Road, will surely lead to more injuries and deaths,” he warned.

“

“HOW MANY [OTHER PROJECTS] ALSO HAVE SIMILAR PROBLEMS WITH COMMUNICATION?”

The issue does not just concern the university, as the County Council is responsible for highways. In response to questions about the safety of children, a university spokesman said that a full reply would be released in the coming days.

Responding to the criticism of the overall project, Professor Jeremy Sanders, Deputy Chair of the West and North West Estates Syndicate and Pro-Vice Chancellor for Institutional Affairs until September 2015, emphasised that while two-thirds of contracts are operating as planned and the school on the site is “hugely popular”, risks are “inevitable”.

“Within a couple of years phase one will be complete, and the remaining phases will be developed and for a hundred years and more, North West Cambridge will be providing secure, steady, long-term income to the University, decades after any loans have been paid off, as well as providing an outstanding place for thousands to live and work.

“The benefits to the University, particularly in terms of its balance sheet, will significantly outweigh the costs.”

He also added that “It is innovative, and, yes, it is risky, but if Cambridge cannot innovate and is not willing

to take risks, how can we be world-leading?”

Furthermore, Senior Pro-Vice Chancellor Professor Duncan Maskell, said that “the development remains broadly on track financially and in terms of delivering the strategic aims of the university.”

“The overall long-run financial return on this investment will be attractive, while the social return and benefit to our employees, and to the competitive health of the university, will be immense.”

The project had come under close scrutiny after projected costs for Phase One of the project were reported to have escalated by up to £76.2 million according to the Audit Committee.

In the report, a string of failures were identified in the project’s management, including “project setup and planning”, “project leadership”, “risk management” and “cost reporting”.

The lack of a defined objective or contingency arrangements meant that 85 per cent of the contingency fund had been depleted by the time the risks began materialising. An absence of full time Executive staff, with the Project Director working “approximately one day per week” due to wider responsibilities within the university, and the Finance Director retaining previous responsibilities and thus “effectively performing two roles”, meant that the project came under added strain.

The West and North West Cambridge Estates Syndicate was criticised for having an “apparent lack of clarity within the membership of the Syndicate as to its responsibilities” and was spending so much time on “minor project decisions” that it limited “its ability to provide objective challenge to, and scrutiny over, the Executive”.

Both risk management and cost reporting were also subject to heavy criticism. The framework in place led to a lack of “consistent and rigorous assessment of risk”, while cost reporting was criticised for a “lack of consistency and comparability in budget estimates and cost forecasts”.



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Reflections on the Revolution in London

Joe Robinson took to the barricades on Wednesday alongside a Cambridge contingent heading to the Free Education protest

Talking to a brick wall is an idiom often applied to the interactions of the governed with the governing to depict governments as intransigent or willfully ignorant. Seldom, though, is it literally true. On Wednesday, however, at the National Demonstration for Free Education in London, I was struck by how aptly it described the day's events both. As the march reached its climax outside the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills – the government department which is, perplexingly, responsible for universities – the limitations of direct action were laid bare.

Their chants met the glass and steel façade of the office block and reverberated back at them. Neither Sajid Javid, the department's Secretary of State, nor David Cameron, against whom much abuse throughout the day had been directed, would hear, let alone take seriously, a word of what was being said. Ensnared in the Westminster Bubble, protected by a slim parliamentary majority and the security of another five years in office, they had, and have, no incentive to change policy. The demonstrators' chant that "The people, united, will never be defeated" could just as well apply to the democratic will of the British people, who returned the first majority Conservative government in the lifetimes of many of the protestors. Despite the homemade cardboard banners, now soggy, which flopped in the mild breeze, the vigour of the chanting and the intensity of their moral indignation, their efforts will likely be ultimately futile.

But this is just a small part of the wider picture. Dismissing these efforts would be to fail to do justice to the students who voluntarily dedicated so many resources and so much time to make their voices heard. What marched on Wednesday was not a collection of students but a unified movement, which must surely, in this age of political factionism, command some admiration. There was something admirable in the earnest purity of their radicalism. Though the demonstration did not register on the conventional political scale, it was seismic in terms of student direct action. Though I remain sceptical not only of the viability of 'free education' but also of the efficacy of direct action, and despite the demo's uglier elements, there was something intangibly

and earnestly virtuous about the demonstration.

As the fifteen or so Cambridge and ARU students assembled on a rainy Wednesday morning on Queens' Backs, you wouldn't have thought that the British Left was in crisis. A palpable camaraderie suffused the group, and people bonded over a shared political viewpoint – discussions about Marxist reading groups, socialist youth camps and previous years' protests abounded. During the coach journey, funded and put on by CUSU, small squares of red felt were distributed, to be attached to our clothes. Borrowed from student protests against tuition fee hikes in Quebec, this was a sign of solidarity with the 'free education' movement. As it later became apparent, however, I was practically the only student participating in the protest who was wearing a poppy – other students were more content to cover their faces or display their felt squares in full view. The reason why no other students did so, and opted for the red square, I was told, was because wearing a poppy indicated support for "British militarism". Never mind the fact that Jeremy Corbyn wears a poppy or the fact that the proceeds of the Poppy Appeal go to the Royal British Legion and not the defence budget, it became clear that many of those protesting were sceptical of authority in all of its forms.

The website for the entity organising the rally, the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts (NCAFC), states that the police are the "bearers of violence" who are "not [the] protectors of peace". While such an intense sentiment was never explicitly restated by those on the coach, echoes of such scepticism were evident. On the coach, the claim that the "police are there in theory to look after you" was met by a chuckle that masked a deeply ingrained distrust of the police. When 'bust cards' with legal advice were handed out and marker pens were distributed to write solicitors' numbers on our arms in case of arrest, I wondered what I was in for.

The truth is that this concern with police violence was borne out by the considerable police presence in London. I witnessed a procession of riot vans, areas of Whitehall cordoned off and mounted police typically reserved for major sporting occasions. Everywhere I looked I saw several police officers, some of them community

support officers, some of them police liaisons and some of them regular bobbies. Although it is perhaps natural that the student protesters would be suspicious of the police presence, the allegations that I heard, including that the police were there to 'gather information' on protestors, would have seemed to befit a terrorist cell more than a peaceful demonstration. Nor was the atmosphere helped by the setting off of flares, or chants that included "Justice, no peace. Fuck the police!" How exactly, I was left wondering, does that further the cause of free education?

On the whole, however, the demonstration remained a peaceful exercise in direct action. As the assembled worms their way around Russell Square, through Covent Garden, down Whitehall and around Westminster, what was in evidence was a democratic exercise in protest. I kept returning to the fact that I suspected little to nothing would come of this demonstration, save perhaps ephemeral coverage in the press.

Students I spoke to were enthusiastic about direct action, with one proclaiming that "politics is in the streets" and holding the scale of the demonstration as evidence of its efficacy. One Cambridge student I spoke to, who had experience of the events in South Africa – where direct action led to a marked reduction in tuition fees – rated direct action's capacity for change above that of parliamentary democracy. He questioned whether change could ever be achieved through democratic means,

and argued that the suffragettes had shown that direct action must precede any change in official policy. When asked what the function of the demonstration was, besides aiming to influence policy, another student remarked that they hoped to "meet people and network". The whiff of champagne socialism hung briefly in the air.

My strong suspicion is that, when the inability of the demonstration to change anything substantive is laid bare, its purpose is akin to group therapy, writ large. It consisted of the articulation of shared frustrations on the part of students who simultaneously abhor Conservative policy and yet are powerless to change it. Powerlessness led to a loss of focus, as cuts- and grants-related chants give way to oinking noises and "Where are you, Cameron?". From refugee-related chants, including "Immigrants, here to stay. Let's deport Theresa May!", to an incisive commentary on David Cameron's allegations of animal husbandry, the protest began to deviate from its stated theme. Neither big nor clever, really.



Faculty of Law asks current students how to improve the applications process

Anna Menin

News Correspondent

The Faculty of Law is gathering the opinions of law students about the admissions process, which is currently being overhauled following the scrapping of AS levels.

A survey emailed out to undergraduates aims to find out what they believed were the “most important factors” leading to their admission.

The survey also asks how students believe the application process to read Law “might be improved”.

Students in England embarking on A Levels this autumn are the first who will not have to take mandatory AS Level exams.

The decision to scrap AS Levels has proved controversial with university admissions tutors, who argue that the exams provide an accurate assessment of an applicant’s abilities.

“From 2016, the Colleges will ‘lose’ much of the detail they previously had of applicants’ exam grades in the senior years of their schooling,” the email, sent by Academic Secretary in the Faculty of Law Peter Turner, reads.

The email then asks for suggestions on how colleges should test whether applicants are “suited to the reading of Law at Cambridge” without this information.

Currently, 24 out of the 29

colleges which admit undergraduates to read law require applicants to sit the Cambridge Law Test, an hour-long test in which applicants are required to answer one essay question.

Previously, Cambridge had used the Law National Admissions Test (LNAT), which is widely used at other universities and contains a large section of multiple-choice questions, to help assess applicants.

However, the university discovered that applicants with high LNAT scores did not necessarily go on to achieve correspondingly high marks in Tripos, so abandoned this in 2009, claiming that the LNAT did not provide “sufficiently distinctive and useful information” to evaluate potential students.

Turner told *Varsity* that the faculty intended to provide the information contained in the responses to Directors of Studies at individual colleges.

This is because responsibility for admitting students for undergraduate degrees rests with the colleges rather than with faculties or departments.

Directors of Studies “are being asked to agree on plans for the testing of applicants seeking admission to read Law in the University from 2016”.

Turner emphasised that “all opinions are currently being considered, including the various opinions of the Directors of Studies” as well as those “gathered from students through the short admissions survey”.



Archaeology will soon be separated from POLIS, located at Sidgwick

Plans for “game-changing” Archaeology Tripos approved

Jack Higgins

Deputy News Editor

A proposal to separate Archaeology from HSPS into its own Tripos has been given widespread support by prominent academics within the university.

As *Varsity* reported last month, Archaeology is expected to become its own Tripos in 2017, with proposals for the split from HSPS being discussed just two years after the first HSPS students matriculated.

During a discussion on the issue recorded in the *Cambridge Reporter*, Professor Allmendinger, Head of the School of the Humanities and Social Sciences, supported the proposal and said that the structure of HSPS “deters excellent students” who want to specialise in archaeology and has led to an “apparent dilution of interest” in the subject, recommending that the university accept the recommendations

of the General Board’s report.

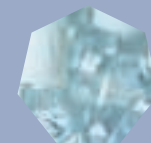
Arguing similarly, Professor C. Broodbank, the Head of Archaeology within the University, said that the “primacy of undergraduate archaeology at Cambridge” had been “diminished” and “lost to Oxford”, and that it needs to be a “thriving and visible component” of Cambridge’s offering.

Allmendinger added that the proposed Tripos, which Professor Broodbank says will be “highly successful” and “game-changing”, was “fully supported” by the involved faculties and by the management of HSPS, the Chair of the latter recognising during the discussion that “the profile of archaeology” had “suffered”.

As the plans stand, Archaeology would be both a new Tripos and remain a module within HSPS, with a flexible arrangement whereby students can move from the latter to the former if they wished to specialise later on.

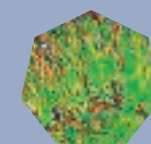
One academic stated that the planned changes will “revitalise” the teaching of the subject at Cambridge.

NEWS IN BRIEF



Cambridge water reserves running out

Dr Stephen Tomkins, a Fellow at Homerton College and a biological chemist, believes that Cambridge’s rapid growth has put unsustainable demand on the area’s natural water supply. Tomkins believes the authorities are “sailing very close to the margins of possibility”, putting future water supplies at risk.



University approves Chemistry of Health funding

The University of Cambridge has given the go-ahead to £17 million in funding for a Chemistry of Health programme. It will investigate the molecular origins of human diseases, particularly neurodegenerative disorders such as Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s diseases.

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The invisible safety net

Following Varsity's investigation into students' mental health issues, **Courtney Landers** examines the provisions the university puts in place to support them



“When I talk about health and wellbeing, it's a very important agenda within the university, and I think it's fair to say it maybe didn't have the attention it needed.”

Graham Virgo, the university's Pro-Vice Chancellor for Education, perfectly sums up the state of mental health support in Cambridge. Just as in the wider world, the last five years or so have seen a huge change for the better with regards to the priority given to mental health and wellbeing issues here in Cambridge.

Mental health at our university receives huge coverage in student, local and national press, but I've always felt it leaves several key questions unanswered. Is the mental health situation in Cambridge particularly bad? Are our support services responding adequately, or do they require improvement? And who exactly is in charge of that improvement? To answer these questions I embarked on a series of wide-ranging conversations about mental health with some of the most senior figures within the university's welfare networks. I discovered a surprisingly positive situation where staff are very aware of and open about the problems the university faces when it comes to making provisions for students' mental health, and are working hard in multiple ways to improve things.

For starters, it seems levels of diagnosed mental illness in Cambridge are no worse than at other universities. According to Géraldine Dufour, Head of Counselling at the University Counselling Service (UCS), levels of illnesses such as bipolar disorder and schizophrenia are around average. It is anxiety, depression and relationship issues that top the list of reasons students seek help with the UCS. In her opinion, to some degree this is to be expected; university is a time of transition and change, so “young people being anxious is quite a normal part of development.”

In

addition, Dr Diana Wood, Clinical Dean at the medical school, points out that “any university is dealing with predominantly people between the ages of 18 and let's say 30, and that's when a lot of mental illnesses will present [themselves] for the first time.”

Skyrocketing levels of student mental illness are also the result of successful anti-stigma campaigns. John Harding, Head of our Disability Resource Centre, showed me some astonishing graphs produced from data collected by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). “I think we've gone from roughly 60 students disclosing mental health five years ago to having over 350 students now on our database”, he said, and far from being a Cambridge phenomenon “we can see that mirrored across the higher education sector. If you look at the HESA stats, and just from talking to other people in my position at other universities, it's not something that is just apparent here.”

What emerged from my discussions is that rather than having a specific problem with mental illnesses, our issue is how much academic pressure we are under and the effect that has on our mental wellbeing.

In my conversation with Richard Partington and Dr Jane McLarty, Senior Tutors at Churchill and Wolfson Colleges respectively, the former emphasised that some amount of pressure is to be expected as simply ‘part of life’. “Pressure isn't something that we want students to be under, but it is something that they're going to be under.”

However, just

like everyone else I spoke to, Pro-Vice Chancellor Graham Virgo was emphatic about recognising when stress becomes too much: “some people may just say ‘that's just living in the real world, it's having to cope with stress’ but it's having physical and mental effects on people. Sometimes, good, you're going to have to deal with that, we can't be closeted away from it, but it's when it becomes negative, that's the line.” In other words, when pressure “means you're having sleepless nights, you're not eating properly, you're not socialising properly.”



ENSURING THAT WELFARE SERVICES ARE ADEQUATELY FUNDED IS CRUCIAL

Explanations for exactly why Cambridge students experience so much pressure and stress centre around students' expectations of their education and of themselves. Richard Partington put it to me that “nothing in Cambridge has changed. But the world before Cambridge and after Cambridge has changed in such a way that the way people experience Cambridge is probably a bit different.”

For example, the university is under pressure to become more instrumental in its teaching practices. Cambridge has long been a bastion of the ‘British intellectual tradition’, or as Richard Partington explained: “People come here, or they should come here, because they're interested in intellectual endeavour in something – whether they use that something for the rest of their life is up to them.” With the exception of medicine and engineering, a university degree used to be about education and personal development, not a way to get a job.

But with an increasingly tight job market students feel they need to achieve a First or 2:1, and thus seek the reassurance of an instrumental degree; memorise the course material, nail the exams, get a First, secure

a job. While some lecturers and supervisors are perhaps fanning the instrumentalist fire, Dr McLarty is one of many educators in Cambridge who are frustrated by the trend: “People from day one are saying ‘what do I have to do to pass the exam’, which I find intensely irritating. The exam just checks your engagement, your learning. It's not the be all and end all.”

Secondary education is also increasingly instrumental, raising the amount of pressure students put upon themselves to ace A-level exams while leaving them unprepared for the different learning environment they face when they are dropped into our intense academic culture.

To a certain extent, a culture of high achievement, competition and excellence is what makes Cambridge the place it is. Students are expected to respond to intense supervision and teaching with appropriate levels of work. Graham Virgo reckons this is what students expect, and they're up to the task: “Students coming in, undergraduate level and graduate level, are coming in having gone through an incredibly competitive process, so we know the students coming in are coming in with really high academic achievements and abilities.” But competition can quickly turn toxic, and achievement can come at the cost of personal wellbeing. “When you're used to being at the top of the pile, suddenly you're not. That produces all sorts of pressures and consequences. I think to that extent we're unique.” Tutors and other educators are often seen as the drivers of these unhealthy practices, but they're not immune to them. “The other point which is often forgotten in this is academics, so the teachers, are some cases as bad if not worse...it's not a ‘them and us’, I think actually it's everybody in the institution.”

From my position as a PhD student, I wholeheartedly agree. Those professors and post-docs pushing students to be in the lab all hours are doing the same themselves; they learned these unhealthy practices from their supervisors, who in turn learned them from theirs.

So if Cambridge's issue is the toxic effect that pressure has on our mental wellbeing, how then should the university respond?

Everyone I spoke to agreed that for

the most part the university is there to gently shepherd students into a healthy, balanced lifestyle. Richard Partington summed it up best: “They will need to work about eight hours a day to keep up academically, but that still leaves sixteen hours to do other things, and it's really important that they do other things, including sleep.” How exactly to encourage such healthy attitudes? By instilling them in teaching and pastoral staff, and structuring workloads to allow for balanced lifestyles.

The next level of support is to ensure that students know where to find resources, and that the procedures surrounding mental health are transparent. That means training tutors and other pastoral staff to be aware of what support is available and when and how to refer students to it. However, a few of the people I spoke to echoed an idea that I'd heard from tutorial staff at my own college while working as graduate welfare officer last year – the importance of not overemphasising or overpublicising what support is available. There appears to be a concern that too much information may lead people into assuming they will encounter problems, counter-productively raising their stress levels. Although I've never seen this personally, there is definitely a certain ‘contagious’ element to anxiety – as Géraldine Dufour put it to me, in exam term stress can spread “a little bit like wildfire from time to time.”

When it is evident a student needs more help, Virgo emphasises that “the university and the colleges have a responsibility to intervene at some point.” Ensuring that welfare services are adequately funded and are appropriately organised to deal with those interventions, on top of provision of basic support, is crucial.

Ultimately, what students really want to know is that the university is fulfilling these responsibilities: encouraging mental wellbeing, ensuring students know where to go for support, and providing a safety net for students in crisis. Overwhelmingly, my interviews with the figures behind the university's approach to mental health have revealed that this institution is working incredibly hard to ensure that happens, though this is often taking place in ways and means not immediately visible to students.



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Cambridge benefactor criticised over alleged Putin links

Louis Ashworth

Senior News Correspondent

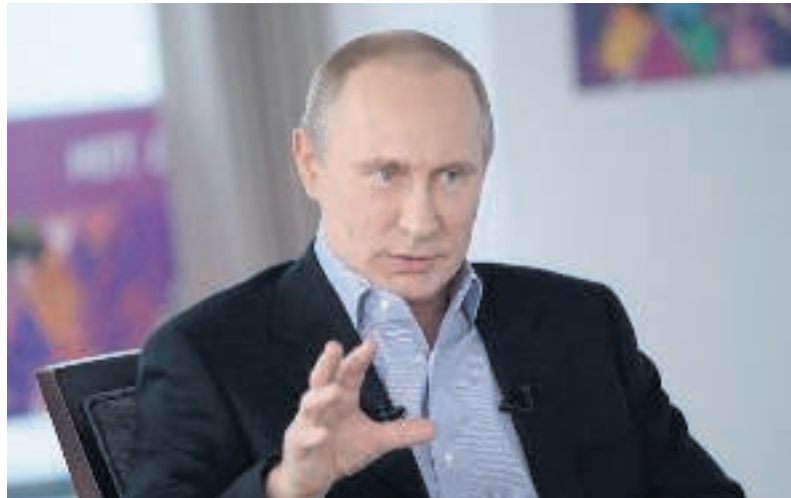
The University of Oxford has been encouraged to reject a £75 million donation from Len Blavatnik, Britain's richest man, who is also a donor to the University of Cambridge.

The signatories of a letter to the *Guardian* said Oxford "should stop selling its reputation and prestige to Putin's associates," and accused the university of having "failed to investigate" Blavatnik's alleged connection to what they deemed a "state-sponsored" campaign of harassment against BP in Russia.

It encourages Oxford to reconsider their acceptance of a £75 million donation that Blavatnik – born in the USSR but now a British citizen residing in Kensington – gave in 2010 to build the Blavatnik School of Government (BSG). The donation was among the largest in Oxford's history.

The letter goes on to say: "We insist that [the University of Oxford] should stop selling its reputation and prestige to Putin's associates. It should carry out a new and independent due-diligence investigation with clearly defined ethical norms. Until then, politicians and other prominent public figures who endorsed the BSG or the joint awards with Alfa should withdraw their support."

Blavatnik has also donated to Cambridge, giving a "multi-million pound" contribution earlier this year to provide funding for Israeli post-doctoral scientists to study at the



GLOBAL PICTURES

university, via the Blavatnik Family Foundation, which he heads. The money funds "Blavatnik Fellowships," the Fellows of which receive a £30,000 annual stipend for up to two years.

The creation of the Fellowship was criticised by the Cambridge University Palestine Society.

There was no mention of the University of Cambridge in the letter to the *Guardian*, nor any suggestion that the university's fundraising procedures are at fault.

Blavatnik, who topped the *Sunday Times Rich List* in April with a personal fortune of £13.17 billion, was named along with fellow billionaire oligarchs Mikhail Fridman and Pyotr Aven. All three are members of Access-Alfa-Renova (AAR) consortium, which the letter said has "long been accused of being behind a campaign of

state-sponsored harassment against BP". The letter describes AAR as having "close ties with the Kremlin". Blavatnik, Fridman and Aven, along with two others, held a collective 50 per cent stake as joint partners with BP in TNK-BP, which was Russia's third-biggest oil company.

The letter refers to a series of events in which BP staff were subjected to what company officials called "an orchestrated campaign of harassment", which peaked in 2008 with a police raid on the TNK-BP headquarters, and the Russian government refusing to issue visas to 148 BP managers.

One of the letter's signatories is Daniel Macmillen Voskoboynik, a writer and activist, and a former socially responsible investment officer for CUSU.

Speaking to *Varsity*, he said: "The

letter aims to raise concerns about the relationship of Oxford University to particular companies and individuals, but it also hopes to ignite a broader debate around the ethics of university philanthropy.

"The signatories share a belief that universities should not be washing machines for the reputations of questionable individuals or institutions.

"We recognise that private donations can bring vital financial assistance to universities, but there is a moral price to philanthropy that has to be considered."

A spokesman for Oxford said that the university "has a thorough and robust scrutiny process in place with regard to philanthropic giving. The Committee to Review Donations conducts appropriate due diligence based on publicly available information. The University is confident in this process and in its outcomes.

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OXFORD "SHOULD STOP SELLING ITS REPUTATION AND PRESTIGE TO PUTIN'S ASSOCIATES"

"The University is a world leader for research and education at a time of growing global competition. Generous philanthropic donations help make this possible, supporting outstanding

teaching and research discoveries of worldwide benefit."

Blavatnik, who describes himself as a "major American industrialist", is well-known as the owner of Warner Music Group, whose acts include Ed Sheeran, Coldplay, Madonna and Wiz Khalifa. Born in 1957, he studied at Moscow State University before emigrating to the US in 1978, becoming a citizen in 1984.

He donates large amount of money philanthropically, including in 2013 giving \$50m to Harvard and \$10m to Yale to aid research into disease.

The University of Cambridge has come under criticism in the past for some of the donations it has accepted, including a £3.7 million donation made in 2012 by the Chong Hua Foundation as an endowment for a professorship.

In 2014, it was claimed that the donation was masterminded by Wen Ruchun, daughter of former Chinese Prime Minister, Wen Jiabao, despite the university claiming that the donation had no links with the Chinese government.

"Universities lend prestige to those they engage with," said Voskoboynik. "From tobacco executives to fossil fuel companies to governments with atrocious human rights records, there is a long history of universities accepting funding from institutions eager to cleanse their reputations.

"The problem is not one of specific dodgy donations. It is the absence of a rigorous, democratic and transparent system which can assess the ethicality of university investments, donations, awards and research relationships."



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The mystery of how the Egyptians built the pyramids has been solved.

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Computer science: machines on the rise

Nik Sultana

Science Correspondent

There is often a bewildering gulf between the things we use and what we know about them. Relatively few people have a detailed understanding of how a modern aeroplane works, yet many of us are happy to trust that a plane will get us safely to our destination. Phones, medical equipment, and cars are all coordinated internally by software. Usually this software is designed to do good things, and sometimes it is designed to do devious things (such as misreport a car's emissions). Often we witness gaps in the design, and these show up as incorrect behaviour. This can be especially damaging in science, since a software malfunction could lead to incorrect scientific results. How can we trust the software used in science?

The first motto of the Royal Society was "on the word of no one"; we should not have to trust knowledge based on its provenance, but rather recreate it for ourselves. Yet scientific research often depends on the software of not one, but very many, people whom we have never met.

Professor Carole Goble has led a raft of initiatives to support scientific research. Her projects have built and contributed to tools used by scientists, and helped develop communities of users for scientific software. Last summer I interviewed her about her work.

Just as in so many other areas, software plays a vital role in modern science. "Software has two significant jobs when it comes to science and computational science. The first is an instrument, just like a telescope or a microscope, and in fact it's probably one of the most prevalent scientific instruments, not that people think



of it as an instrument, but it is — and that is why it has to be well-engineered, and maintained, and tested... And the second thing is as a record of what you did. The algorithm involved, for example. The full set of resources that you actually used, as a record. That could be reproduced, in an alternative setting, or if the computational framework is no longer available, repaired in some way, or recovered in some way, but as a record of what you had — and for that you need open, clear description."

She underlines how knowing about software is one thing, but developing robust and usable software is a different thing altogether: "I run a team at Manchester, and currently have around 15 post-docs working for me, which is quite a big team, and 12 of them are software engineers — they're not computer science

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THE FIRST MOTTO OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY WAS "ON THE WORD OF NO ONE"; WE SHOULD NOT HAVE TO TRUST KNOWLEDGE BASED ON ITS PROVENANCE, BUT RATHER RECREATE IT FOR OURSELVES

researchers. I kind of evolved into somebody who delivers platforms. We have rules about the computer science researchers — their code's *not* getting into production platforms. I always tell my students: the definition of computer science is: it doesn't work. And for software engineering: it does. They're quite different things."

To improve the quality of software in science, she helped corral a training initiative for scientists: "The quality of software engineering is pretty poor across the board, but you can teach skills, and that's what 'software carpentry' does. We're very heavily involved in this, and we're launching its sister, 'data carpentry'." These are volunteer-based initiatives that run over a hundred training workshops a year, and contribute to training materials which are made openly available online.

The development of software can take several years, in a complex web of contributions: "I'm a career academic, and so I'm happy for other people to build businesses based on my software. I can put it on my impact statement, and might be able to get some more money next time."

Formats and computers change, researchers come and go, yet the software should continue to work. Five years ago, Professor Goble co-founded the Software Sustainability Institute to

help improve the quality and longevity of research software. This involves computer science, but also extends into community development: "Not all software shall survive, but software that turns out to be useful needs to have sustainability options. Open source is a great resource for sustainability — the more projects that use a software, the more likely it is to be able to attract funds. But we also need people to understand that, if they're using somebody else's software — which is what the dream of most funding agencies is, that they only have to pay for it once — then the community must play the game: being good citizens and citing it, giving credit to the people who have produced it, and maybe even contributing to it with their own grants, either in kind with development, or in cash to keep the development going. And the funding agencies need to also find mechanisms to be able to fund infrastructure that isn't going to be peer reviewed against novel research, because they're not the same thing at all."

Openness seems to be a vital part of Professor Goble's initiatives. People write software, but people occasionally make mistakes. It is important to make critical software open for inspection by others, who might be able to spot and fix mistakes: "This is when you want to know the transparency part of it — what does it really do, and under what circumstances should you not use it. This is often badly described and documented. How far can you diverge from the steps or services in the algorithms, how far can you push the range of parameters before it isn't valid anymore?"

The pursuit of science is changing to benefit from new tools. This is feeding on, and enabling, more openness in science. Science also seems to need perpetual renewal, human as much as technological. "Was it Max Planck who said that progress in science proceeds through a series of funerals? And he's right in the sense that, you're kind of trained in the image of your professors — but computational science is nothing like [what] people in their 50s were trained in."

This is what the average computer looked like in the 1950s



Cyborgs (and how you could become one)



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More and more people are joining the ranks of the cyborgs. As the technology behind prostheses becomes increasingly advanced, many individuals are having lost limbs replaced

with bionic ones, or having the function of their senses miraculously restored. Transhumanists believe that this marriage between the human body and technology will eventually give rise to the "superhuman". They claim that one day, everyone will want to be part-machine. Instead of loading yourself up with cumbersome gadgets and wearable tech, why not just upgrade your body?

You hear "cyborg" and you probably imagine someone with a flamethrower for an arm and bulletproof armour, when in actual fact even someone with hearing aids can be considered a cyborg. But some of the cyborgs around today have such amazing augmentations that even bulletproof armour couldn't make them any cooler. Here are five individuals alive today who are part-robot.

Nigel Ackland has the world's most advanced bionic arm, the be-bionic3. It looks so cool it will make you feel inferior for having a boring flesh-and-blood arm. The arm allows

him to carry out everyday tasks such as holding the phone and shaking hands with someone. Ackland has given numerous talks stressing the importance of developing prostheses that are not only more functional but also more aesthetically pleasing. Many prostheses involve the attachment of a harness and are considered unsightly or embarrassing by the wearer. He argues that having such an advanced prosthesis has massively improved his psychological wellbeing and his quality of life. Also, he knows no one's ever going to pick a fight with him.

Kevin Warwick, a cybernetics professor at Reading University, was named the world's first cyborg when in 1998 he had a microchip installed in his arm which allowed him to operate lights, heaters and computers remotely. Just think. You could turn lights out without even having to get out of bed.

Neil Harbisson was born with achromatopsia, making him totally colourblind. In 2004 he made the

decision to have an antenna implant that allows him to hear colours as sounds on the musical scale. The electronic eye at the front of the antenna detects the colour and sends the information to a chip implanted into his skull. Harbisson says that while he originally had to memorise which sounds matched which colour, it has now become completely natural to him and has transformed the way he perceives the world. He can, for example, "hear" people's faces; someone may look nice, but sound terrible to him.

Jerry Jalava, a computer programmer from Finland, lost half of his finger in a motorcycle accident, but has done what any normal human being would do and replaced it with a USB port. It's a removable prosthetic so he can leave his finger plugged into a computer. Handy.

Ray Flynn is an 80-year-old British pensioner who in June became the first person to be fitted with a bionic eye. He lost his central vision as a result of age-related macular

degeneration, a very common form of sight loss. Now he has an electrical implant which sends a video feed directly to the undamaged cells in his retina from a camera attached to his glasses. Although the implant can't restore highly-detailed vision, it enables the wearer to see the outlines and shapes of their surroundings. Makers behind the bionic eye claim that this is a revolutionary step forward in ending blindness, which provides hope for millions of people across the globe.



VARSITY INTRODUCING

kieran Daly

Kieran Daly is a second year Linguistics student at Pembroke College. His single 'In The Open' from his debut EP Dear Dandelion was released this month.

How long have you been playing guitar, singing and writing your own songs?

My family tell me that the first sound I ever made was the chiming of Big Ben at six months old! So I guess that was the start. I went through a phase of hating playing guitar when I started to learn at 10, but then I really got into it and started writing my own stuff. The first songs I wrote were at 12 and I released an album at 14, but my friends at uni will vouch for the fact that they're rough and very naïve! Hopefully I've improved since then!

Is it more about the performance, the process or the result for you? Do you get different things out of performing versus recording or writing a track?

They're all really important in their own right. The performance element is great fun, and I get to expand my sound by playing with my band, which is great! The writing process is a good way to transfer negative emotions into something else, instead of

them clogging up my mind.

When I released my first single, 'In The Open', a couple of weeks ago, I felt like the whole recording process and experience was worth it. Recording can be frustrating at times, you can sit there for hours and it still may not sound right. But when the end result is achieved, and the single is uploaded to iTunes, Spotify etc, it's all worth it. I felt a real sense of pride. I think we all did.

How do the other band members Tommy and Charlie fit into the mix?

They're integral to performance. They're great musicians, and who doesn't enjoy playing live with their best mates! It's a great feeling. With regards to writing the EP and our songs, I usually write them and present them to the band. Although Chaz wrote a mean bass line for one of the songs on the EP!

Can you talk a bit about your lyrics?

Lyrics are the most important part of the song to me and I spend the most time on them in the song-writing process. Usually I shroud songs in metaphor because I find it hard to express personal feelings and emotion plainly speaking.



JACOB RIGLIN / LAWRENCE THOMAS

You released a demo called 'Unakwenda Wapi?' that has a part in Swahili. That's quite unusual, is there a story behind it?

I spent six months living in Tanzania and travelling through East Africa a couple of years ago. I love languages and I loved Tanzania. In that particular song, the lyric is about another person who I travelled with and who also learnt Swahili and Nyanja, the languages featured in the lyrics. It made the song more intimate and more personal for me. But of course millions around the world can also understand it! 'Fairytale', which is on YouTube, is also about my experiences in Tanzania and Zambia.

Most of the artists we've previously featured were English students, you study Linguistics. Do you think your degree subject adds anything to your music or are music and academia as quite separate?

Cambridge is a tough place to be, and I've written some songs about Cambridge and the academic hardship that I've faced! To be honest, my music is a release from academia, so I try to keep them separate.

Is being at Cambridge a help or a hindrance to you as an artist?

It's a hindrance unfortunately! Despite providing some lyrical content and allowing me to vent some emotion through my music, it significantly limits my time. Recently I haven't played guitar anywhere near as much I would've liked to, and that's a shame. It's very hard to be balanced here.

Do you see yourself continuing music after university? Would you like to be signed?

That's the dream! Being signed and playing literally any stage at Glastonbury! We'll see how it goes, but that's the dream!

Kieran Daly spoke to Naomi Obeng.

If you are an artist, band, musician, poet or any other type of Cambridge student creative and would like to be featured in this series, please email interviews@varsity.co.uk

Nish Kumar: "There's no anti right-wing conspiracy in British comedy"

The stand-up comedian talks to Eddy Wax about BBC bias, climate change and his quest to be as natural as possible onstage

Nish Kumar is an openly left-wing comedian. With a recent *Have I Got News For You* appearance under his belt, the 30-year-old comes to Cambridge this month with the show which won him an Edinburgh Comedy Award nomination in the summer.

Long Word...Long Word...Blah Blah Blah...I'm So Clever is an impassioned hour which sees Nish rail against the gradual privatisation of the NHS and against the notion that political correctness has gone too far.

Does he think it's the comedian's job to educate his audience and make them aware of political issues?

"I talk about these issues because they're things I'm interested in, but I think comedians only ultimately have a responsibility to make the audience laugh and how you do that is completely at your discretion. I think it's great that you can see someone like Liam Williams one night and Milton Jones the next. I suppose I see myself somewhere in between them."

A few days after I saw his Edinburgh show, the comedian Andrew Lawrence wrote an article in *The Times* criticising what he saw as left-wing dominance in the current comedy scene. "It's not funny when all the comics are lefty, preachy demagogues," he wrote.

Nish disagrees with the contention that there is an inherent left-wing bias at the heart of the comedy industry in this country.

"I do genuinely think it's harder to write right-wing comedy. I think it would be great if the right was more represented in comedy, but I don't

think that's because there's some great conspiracy against right wing comedians. I know from working at the BBC that it's not full of people working really hard to keep Conservative views off the airwaves."

Indeed, though this is clearly stand-up with a left-wing bent, Nish is still critical of elements of the left, particularly what he perceives as its inability to communicate its arguments effectively.

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“PEOPLE I MEET ARE DISAPPOINTED THAT I'M NOT CONSTANTLY COMING OUT WITH ZINGERS”

"I just feel that sometimes, conversationally, people on the left have a tendency to resort to hysterical and emotional language. There's nothing wrong with that but I feel that sometimes that comes at the expense of fact and interesting economic arguments that we have on our side.

"Instead of making a case through pounds and pence, we have a tendency to just say 'Ooh Conservatives are bastards', and it's slightly reductive to do that."

Nish talks about climate change at length in his show, joking that people might do more about it if it had a more

dramatic name such as "the environmental fuckpocalypse".

"You hope Corbyn will get these issues pushed to the front and centre. Obama is doing that now with climate change in the sort of 'fuck you' era of his presidency where he doesn't have to run for anything and can just kind of do whatever he wants. I hope that's one of the issues that gets brought more to the fore."

Nish is a refreshing comedian to watch because he comes across as totally at ease with himself. Unlike comedians like Stewart Lee or James Acaster, Nish is seemingly not interested in forging an onstage persona or keeping himself at one-remove from the audience.

"It takes a huge amount of preparation to sound spontaneous, that's part of the artifice of stand-up. You are trying to contrive spontaneity every time you walk out on stage. In terms of my performance and style, I'm increasingly trying to chip away at my stage persona so that there is almost no gap between who I am on stage and who I am in real life, I'm trying to thin that gap quite consciously.

"I enjoy the lack of any filters, I like the idea that stand-up is a direct connection between my brain and the audience. I want to strip everything way back until the audience is almost inside my head and that's what I get a rush out of, I enjoy that sort of interaction with an audience."

I wondered how this affected his personal life. If he is presenting the 'real' Nish Kumar on stage do people ever feel let down when they meet him



in real life?

"Sometimes people I meet are just disappointed that I'm not constantly

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“IT TAKES A HUGE AMOUNT OF PREPARATION TO SOUND SPONTANEOUS”

coming out with zingers but, you know, that's an occupational hazard. Even though I'm trying to thin my persona down to almost nothing when you see me on stage that's the result of

me having spent a year thinking about funny things to say."

Nish first tried his hand at comedy as part of the Durham Revue, with whom he came on trips to Oxford and Cambridge as a student.

"University is an amazing place to start doing comedy, especially Cambridge because of the smokers and things like the Wolfson Howler. It's such a supportive and nurturing environment, and even if it goes badly it doesn't really matter. If you're a student in Cambridge and you're even vaguely interested in comedy you've got almost no excuse, definitely get involved."

Nish Kumar comes to the Cambridge Junction on Saturday 21st November at 8pm.

Comment

Safe spaces do not prevent freedom of speech



Vidya Ramesh

You shouldn't want to need a 'safe space'. But maybe, one day, you will need one

Last week I was fortunate to attend the launch of the Orwell Prize 2016 at the Frontline Club in London. The Orwell Prize recognises the best in British political writing, so it was no surprise that I ended up (quite literally) rubbing shoulders against journos and pundits as I clambered towards my seat. Coming down from Cambridge, I felt distinctly out of place; a book-laden rucksack was the shell to my tortoise, sticking dolefully to my back. The callipygian glass of dessert wine kindly offered on arrival somewhat helped to calm the jitters. We then sat down for the opening address by the Chair of the Prize, The Right Honourable Ken Macdonald QC.

In a determined defence of free speech, he offered a critique of the Counter-Extremism Bill pending in Westminster. According to Macdonald, the Bill could feasibly be directed against any non-violent but alternative streams of discourse: "Marxist analysis of a supposed class basis for our rule of law, and many atheist deconstructions of religion", to mention a few. That is a legitimate concern. But in the very next breath Macdonald identified a second threat to free speech, and his words caught me off guard: "... demands for so-called 'safe spaces' in which some young people in universities believe they should be

protected from speech they find 'offensive' ... could represent a real risk to the robust discourse and intellectual exchanges".

Strictly speaking, it was my own reaction that startled me. I had never previously considered myself to be invested in the concept of a 'safe space'. Indeed I had dismissed it as a mechanism that compels minorities and various marginalised groups to hermetically seal themselves off in a room where they collectively brood over their difficulties. It seems anathema to the idea of active campaigning, negotiation and integration in wider society. At the 'safe space' forums that I have observed in Cambridge, the procedure is fairly ritualised. Various hand signals and gestures are expected to be learnt by all participants in order to facilitate communication. No matter how affable the co-ordinators are, some would understandably find the experience itself to be an overwhelming one.

But this is nothing new. Elaborate protocol has always been the order of the day in university societies and roundtable groups. Casting one's mind on the Bullingdon Club or the 'Piers Gav' initiations puts things neatly in perspective; at least there's no desecration of pigs or other related livestock involved in the making of a safe space. Suddenly 'safe space' regulations like attaching particular

gender-neutral pronouns to attendees from the LGBTQ+ community no longer seem inconsequential.

A 'safe space' implies that danger is everywhere else. In an ideal world I wouldn't want people I like and respect to have to go there. But semantics aside, there's an easy way to tell if you need a safe space. Just listen to the way you define yourself amongst people you should feel comfortable around. Really listen. It didn't seem like much, until I tried it myself.

On multiple occasions I have explained my choice to study a humanities subject with the phrase "Cause I'm such a coconut!" What does this show about me? Does it show that I, even as a first-generation BME, am still desirous of asserting my integrative capabilities in British society (i.e. that I really am brown on the outside, but white on the inside)? Or does it belie the fact that I feel the need to justify my decision to read a non-vocational subject? Does some irrational part of my brain feel self-indulgent about pursuing something I love? I wouldn't be surprised if it did. For years now, even those on the liberal end of the political spectrum have been identifying immigrants and their British-born children in terms of 'economic assets', or as quick-fix stop-gaps in the flagging industrial and STEM sectors.

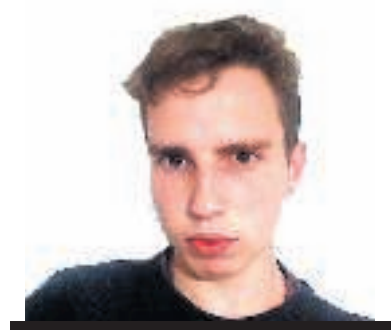
Living and breathing in this political climate means that realising what

your own mind is really thinking isn't as easy as it seems. We need to desensationalise the concept of a 'safe space'. They should be seen as a refuge from the white noise by allowing people to communicate with others caught up in the same identity-based flux. In short, it's a way of finding yourself – cheesy, I know.

Safe spaces are not meant to impinge on the liberty of others. The most dangerous thing we can do is conflate the 'safe space' with the 'No Platform Policy', which in technical terms *does* impinge on the right of others to speak out. Earlier this month radical feminist Julie Bindel was "no-platformed" by the University of Manchester because of her views on transgender women and the impact this would have on trans students. Men's rights activist Milo Yiannopoulos ostensibly came to her defence, capitalising on the controversy by remarking: "I'm disturbed by how quickly American-style no-platforming and the absurd 'safe space' culture has infected British universities." But the two are very different.

On the most fundamental level the 'safe space' can help us to honestly articulate our concerns without having to trivialise them or to couch them in a bunch of self-deprecating ethnic, gendered or sexually-oriented slurs. Frankly, if that isn't freedom of speech, then I don't know what is.

The university must address climate change



Angus Satow

Divestment from fossil fuel companies is crucial in preventing global warming

Faced with the enormity of our ecological crisis, the crisis of our very being, what can students really do? When world leaders meet in Paris next month, the only thing they will all agree on is that global temperatures must not be more than 2°C higher than pre-industrial levels. Despite this, it seems beyond them to prevent this happening. Cambridge may not seem like the real world, but as humans on this planet, we are faced with the knowledge of impending disaster, of aching loss and of authorities failing to fulfil their primary function. When you add to that how busy our lives are here, how hard our degrees push us, the risk of burning out and the plethora of other activities that consume our time, it might seem reasonable to ask whether Cambridge is really the right place for environmental activism. Can we really make a difference?

Students across the world have been asking themselves that same question, and have come up with the same answer: divestment from fossil fuels – that is, getting their universities to withdraw their investments from coal, oil and natural gas. Since the divestment movement arrived in the UK in 2013 it has taken the country by storm: universities across the country have divested, from Edinburgh to Oxford, Glasgow to Warwick. In doing so they have not

only engaged many thousands in our climate crisis; they have helped to build a social consensus against fossil fuel polluters. In each case, concerted student action – protesting, signing petitions and using alumni and academic networks – has made universities act, and made them divest.

Divestment is a powerful and necessary tool. If we are to stay below the crucial two-degrees limit, then 80 per cent of current fossil fuel reserves need to stay in the ground, as study after study has shown. This is not some crazy lefty idea – it is scientific consensus agreed upon by mainstream society, from HSBC to the UN.

Fossil fuel companies won't do this – it's not in their DNA. Even now they are searching for more extreme forms of energy, whether dangerous deep sea drilling or desperate Arctic exploration. They protest that they are part of a transition to a low-carbon future, but we see through them. Shell was recently caught planning for a world four degrees hotter – a world in which the number of climate refugees would number millions, in which whole countries would disappear under water and severe droughts would starve humanity. For us to live in any kind of civilised world, we need a radical shift to renewables.

But governments won't do this without being pushed. Globally, they subsidise fossil fuel companies to the

stomach-curdling tune of \$5.3 trillion. And renewables? They get \$120 billion, over forty times less. Even then, the UK government has spent the last few months taking a chainsaw to the renewable sector while increasing subsidies for North Sea oil and gas. The global summit this winter in Paris is meant to sort this existential threat out, but even now, the politicians' promises – vulnerable in the face of short-term interest – mean three degree warming. This is a disaster.

But it is also an opportunity. If governments won't look after our future, we'll have to do it for them. In doing so we can have a grassroots revolution and demonstrate true democracy: real engagement with the world we live in, responsibility for our own actions and community power. It is not governments driving the divestment movement; it is people, whether doctors getting the British Medical Association to divest, priests pressuring the Church of England (successfully) or students getting their university to invest in their future, not their destruction.

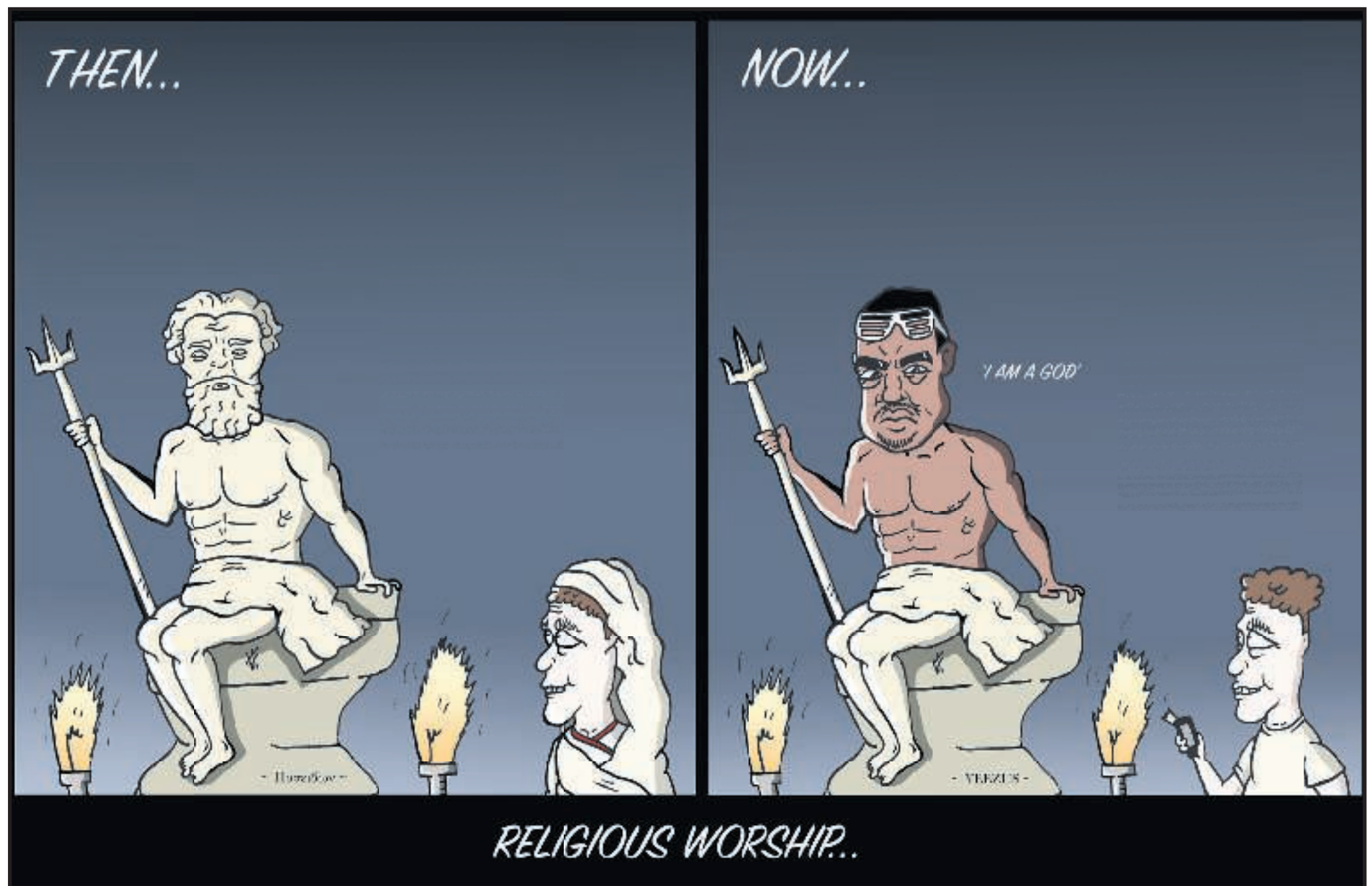
When institutions divest, they send a clear message: these companies are unacceptable; fossil fuel extraction must stop now. If Cambridge were to divest, this message would ring out loud and clear across the world. We will have played a crucial part in the fight against climate change.

But we will have also done something greater than that. We will have demonstrated solidarity with the frontline communities who suffer worst from climate change, from children choking in Beijing's smog to the indigenous communities in Canada and India watching their entire way of life sacrificed at the altar of oil. Divestment is a global movement for a better world: those of us with a voice must fight for those without one.

That fight starts here. This week, the Cambridge Zero Carbon Society launched our divestment petition to Cambridge University, garnering 800 signatures in 24 hours. But the fight can't stop there. We need to keep up the pressure, we need Cambridge to rise up and tell the university to put its money where its mouth is.

They know what is happening. Cambridge's world-leading innovators are at the forefront of sustainability. Earlier this year, the University's Sustainability Leadership group released a report calling for "a just transition to a low-carbon economy." Then two weeks ago the University released a video entitled "Dear World...", suggesting that Cambridge is the future and people should invest in it.

If the world is to invest in Cambridge, then Cambridge must invest in the world. We must make sure it ends this fossil fuel madness, and help create a better tomorrow.



If we wait for perfect leaders, we'll wait forever



Louis Ashworth

Nobody's perfect, so we need to stop expecting it of those we look up to

It's often said that you should never meet your heroes. Better advice for the twenty-first century would be to never look at the 'Controversy' section of their Wikipedia page. Whatever field inspires you, and whoever you look up to, you're bound to find people who aren't quite the paragons of virtue you hope them to be. Steve Jobs berated employees who disappointed him without empathy. Gandhi denied his dying wife penicillin. Mother Teresa would not give sick people medicine, causing unnecessary deaths. The rapper Dr Dre beat up a journalist and tried to throw her down a flight of stairs. Earlier this year, Dr Tim Hunt's scientific career came crashing down after he allegedly made a bad joke about female scientists. Whoever you admire, enquire deeply enough, and you will find something unsavoury.

So what's to be done? In short, live with it. Humanity as a whole faces a huge number of ongoing and developing crises: climate change, overpopulation, war, disease and corruption to name just a few among them. This list may seem hackneyed, but if you spoke to almost any human being in recent history they'd probably give you a similar one. The continued problems that we face as a species are greater than any individual, and each requires humans to work as a group towards finding solutions.

Yet despite this, we still live in a society focused on personality and the individual. Modern western culture is often bemoaned for its worship of celebrities, for producing insipid role-models, and creating a trend towards identity-focused politics, ignoring wider concerns. However, this is nothing new: the position of

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THERE IS LITTLE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE SAINTS WHO WERE WORSHIPPED IN MEDIEVAL ENGLAND AND SOMEBODY LIKE BEYONCÉ

the celebrity, relative to the general population, has changed, but in practice there is little difference between, say, the saints who were worshipped in medieval England, and somebody like Beyoncé. In both cases an idealised version of them is put before us, and people aspire not to their reality, but to what they represent: a better version of ourselves. Hence why we can ignore that many medieval saints probably held views which were

racist, misogynistic or homophobic, and, equally, we can ignore that in attempting to control her branding, Beyoncé's publicity team attempt to suppress photos of her they don't want the public to see.

Gaining a true understanding of humanity as a wider concept is one of the most difficult things for an individual to do – many would argue it is impossible. For most of us, inspiring individuals remain the easiest figures to follow and emulate.

W. B. Yeats wrote “The intellect of man is forced to choose / perfection of the life, or of the work”. No individual is capable of absolute perfection, and we should embrace those who in any way move humanity forward, or in some measure improve the short lives that we lead. So Steve Jobs should be celebrated for the leaps and bounds in technology made, in part, through his leadership, and not maligned because of his personal failings. That is not to say they should be forgotten, and we should be resolute in acknowledging when an individual's flaws make them unsuitable as a model for a certain lifestyle or teaching. Martin Luther King, Jr. is a titanic and crucial figure in the fight for African-American civil rights, but might perhaps not be the best model for maintaining a monogamous relationship. In a world hugely troubled by conflict and strife, we should be thankful for those people

who do, whether symbolically or in actuality, move things forward.

For some, the work and life of an individual are inseparable. For these people, they will find that no leader ever lives up to the standards they demand. Of course, we should demand more from those who purport or strive to be leaders, but if we wait for perfection, we will wait forever. Equally dangerous is the view that an individual's worst work discounts their best. Germaine Greer has been rightly criticised for her regressive views on trans women, but to disregard everything else she has done or said as a result is ludicrous. Let her be a giant on whose shoulders you stand, and acknowledge that you can reach higher as a result. To do otherwise would be like ceasing to enjoy a band because their new album is no good, or not liking the *Lord of the Rings* anymore because *The Hobbit* films disappointed. Plenty of people do it, but it is to their own detriment.

Idolisation is problematic, and making yourself blind to the flaws of somebody you admire benefits no one. To do the opposite though, to wilfully ignore the lessons you can learn from and achievements made by other, flawed humans is a tragic mistake. We should embrace progress wherever we find it, and not shut the door to those from whom we demand a standard that nobody can attain.

It is vital that popular feminism is intersectional

Lola Olufemi



Popular feminism currently relies on the invisibility of anyone but white, wealthy, cis, straight women

As BME Women's Rep on the Women's Campaign, I'm often called upon to talk about intersectionality. I don't consider myself an authority on the issue by any means, but I find it interesting how many people who identify as feminists have not even heard of the term, let alone apply it to their activism. Liberation politics by its nature is the politics of growth; as you learn more about different intersections and the history of the movement, you gain the tools to start deconstructing problematic conceptions of feminism. It's normal that when most people arrive at university they have a pretty basic understanding of feminism; an idea that has been heavily influenced by mainstream media which relies on the invisibility of anyone who is not a white, middle class or wealthy, cis, straight woman. What is most striking is how the historical divisions in the movement, most visible in terms of race and sexuality, are mirrored in the mainstream movement today. How many of the feminist icons (excluding Beyoncé) that the media holds up aren't white, wealthy women?

Often, when you ask white feminists to engage critically with the divisions in the movement and the possibility that mainstream feminism today is not inclusive, you are met with pleas to end unnecessary criticisms and 'focus on the positives'. Cries for 'unity' are heard loud and clear, as if asking people to recognise

that not every woman or non-binary persons lived experience is the same causes 'division.' One woman told me that it's "just too hard" to have a movement that includes every kind of woman. This defensive response is symptomatic of privilege, no matter how well meaning. When white women refuse to recognise that they too can inflict harm on other women and genderqueer people by disallowing them the chance to air their grievances in feminist spaces, they uphold a structure that privileges their voices and their experiences of patriarchy above all else. When Taylor Swift condescendingly implied that Nicki Minaj was being unreasonable in her critique of black women's exclusion at the VMAs; when non-white women are constantly asked to 'calm down' about their historical marginalisation from a movement supposed to liberate them; when they are spoken of and not to by liberal feminists who refuse black and visibly Muslim bodies any agency; when 'leaning in' means leaning on the backs of racialised women; when Beyoncé's feminism is robustly critiqued by the white mainstream and Amy Schumer's accepted without question, I begin to understand why many non-white women refuse to identify as feminists.

Naturally, it is to be expected that those in a position of privilege wish, intentionally or unintentionally, to continue to benefit from that privilege and will therefore be reluctant or unwilling to recognise the problems with

popular feminism today. The problem is not that feminism is popular, it is that it is generally reduced to merely 'believing in the equality of the sexes', 'thinking women are people', and other simplistic generalisations that obscure the fact feminism isn't just one thing. There are feminisms, opposing frameworks of thinking with different methods and goals; some seek liberation completely defined outside of the arbitrary idea of 'equality.'

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ACCESSIBLE FEMINISM SHOULD NOT MEAN A WHITE-WASHED, WATERED DOWN, PALATABLE KIND OF ACTIVISM

I am all for a feminism that is accessible because accessibility often translates into pragmatism. Convoluted academic theory is stale and unwelcoming, open to only a few to decipher. However, accessible feminism should not mean a whitewashed, watered down, palatable kind of activism that refuses to recognise the nuance and complexity of people's lives, because feminism without an intersectional basis is useless. Any kind of feminism that does not consider how race, sexual identity, class, religion,

ability and sexuality might influence how we see the world is advocating for a particular kind of women whose voices have dominated Western feminism for years. When we radically hold our feminist icons, whether they be Emma Watson or Taylor Swift, to account and call them out on misguided, problematic 'feminism' or their refusal to critically engage with race, we are not demanding 'too much' of them; we are demanding to be heard and for our lives to be considered as robustly as our white peers.

It's important that our feminism is intersectional because by recognising how different variables work in concert to create interlocking systems of oppression, we are better able to understand how to provide solutions that go some way to remedy our unique experiences. Alongside a feminism that seeks to understand intersections, we need an openness, a willingness to learn from one another and the courage to challenge older feminists on outdated ideas. Movements change organically; what we value develops as time goes on and we must be responsive to this. Feminism entering mainstream discourse is important, but every movement's integrity depends on how it chooses to learn from mistakes of the past. Put simply, rather than making feminism non-threatening and palatable for men, our first focus must be the women and non-binary people that we have excluded from a conversation that has been happening for decades.

Cambridge needs a reading week

This week, Rosie argues a reading week would improve student welfare, while Lana says it wouldn't solve anything

Rosie Best

Lana Crowe

Visiting family, catching up on work, having a lie-in... does any of this sound familiar? Probably not. Although reading weeks are no longer exclusively for reading, their implementation is considered equally vital at almost every university across the country, with the usual exception of Oxbridge.

Currently, our version of a reading week is the Week Five Blues. When this phenomenon was first described to me as a fresher I pictured a huge blue-grey rain cloud hovering and continually raining over Cambridge for a week, casting a blue tinge over everything, while my friends elsewhere sat contentedly at home perusing their text books in the metaphorical, banished sun. As the year progressed, I realised that this idea wasn't actually all that far from the truth. But we acknowledged it and called it the Week Five Blues, so it was all good.

It has long been a generally accepted (if not scientifically proven) fact that Cambridge is a place of warped time and perspectives – terms feel simultaneously drawn-out and rushed, and a

standard day involves little or no human interaction. A reading week would give us an opportunity to burst our individual Cambridge bubbles, re-discover reality and engage with the real world.

Whether or not a reading week is actually used for reading is entirely unimportant. Affording Cambridge students a reading week would grant us all permission to relax – something a lot of us deny ourselves much too often during our time here.

Imagine waking up on a Monday morning, not full of dread at the prospect of spending an entire day glued to your usual library spot but to the promise of a day devoted to that series Netflix keeps recommending, or to punting down the Cam and exploring parts of Cambridge you never even knew existed. Needing a break from the intensity of our workload with activities such as these does not make us lazy, it makes us human.

The inclusion of a reading week in the structure of our terms would not simply be about allowing us more time to make the most of our university experience – both academically and socially – but would represent a consideration of student welfare and wellbeing. While it could not be said that a reading week would solve all of Cambridge's problems, it would be a significant start.

Granting a reading week to a Cambridge student is like offering a paracetamol to someone who has just spontaneously combusted. It is a futile attempt at sweeping the detritus that comes from being overworked and underappreciated under the carpet. Forget a reading week; instead, give me a room that isn't below ground level, an occasional word of praise and enough term time to actually do all of my work, please.

"It's a vacation, not a holiday." This phrase is often heard reverberating through colleges as the end of term approaches, echoing down arched pathways and straight into the nightmares of students. Bank holidays are not welcome here. Weekends are not 'work ends'. If reading week is code for 'week off' in other universities, you can bet your bottom dollar that wouldn't be the case here. A reading week would become an excuse for supervisors to expect even more work than usual, without the distraction of lectures and supervisions.

It is not as if a replica May Week would be pasted into the middle of every term. Work would not be finished, merely paused. A reading week would just encourage students to run away from their stresses and bury their heads in the Netflix-and-alcohol-flavoured sand. The quality of my work often improves as the weeks go on: it is at week five that I have finally figured out the minimum amount of waking

hours needed to complete my work to a decent standard. Having a reading week would interrupt my routine: I would regress to 1pm lie-ins and have to begin the morning struggle all over again. Plus, when we all undergo our own Doctor Who-style regenerations – known to some as graduating – and plummet into the world of employment, we will not be lucky enough to have a week's holiday every month.

The reason Cambridge does not have a reading week is because our terms are only eight weeks long – almost half that of some other institutions. A reading week is often perceived as a panacea, a magic bullet that will relieve all of our problems. It is not the absence of this reading week that causes so much stress. If we can't get through four weeks without crumbling, then there's something seriously wrong with the system.



ROSIE + LANA

BDS: part of a great struggle against oppression



Patrick O'Hare

A defence of the BDS movement as a non-violent protest against oppression and occupation

Jonny Shamir's article "This is why we should be boycotting BDS" at times borders on parody. Apparently one of the reasons that we should not boycott Israel is because the illegal wall which Israel has erected around Palestinian communities is "actually 90% fence". I'm sure the Palestinians whose communities have been split in two by the barrier and cannot visit relatives or get to work will be relieved by your clarification. Shamir also demonstrates his predilection for black humour in a series of assertions made about the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign, the Israeli state, and its treatment of Palestinians.

He takes aim at the three goals of the BDS movement: an end to the occupation, full equality for Arab Israelis and the right of return of Palestinian refugees. Apparently Israelis also share a desire to end the illegal occupation, but somehow this hasn't translated into the political will to do so. Instead, Israel has deepened and extended its occupation by hastening the construction of illegal settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT). The wall is 8 metres high – twice the height of the Berlin wall – and has a buffer zone which is 30-100 metres wide. The parts which are fence – as illustrated in the rather bleak photo which accompanied Shamir's article – consist of layers of fencing, razor wire, military patrol roads, ditches and surveillance cameras. The wall does not sit on a border between Israel and the Palestinian Territories but rather represents a land grab into the West Bank, where 85% of it is located, cutting Palestinians off from their neighbours, or isolating them in enclaves surrounded by (often

violent) Israeli settlers. As for the wall "successfully protecting Israel from terrorist attacks", recent 'lone wolf' attacks in Israel demonstrate that this is patently untrue.

The BDS demand for equality is apparently "indicative of the intellectual dishonesty which underpins the movement". Yet it is Shamir who is dishonest, claiming "guaranteed equal rights" for Arab Israelis on the one hand, but acting as a discrimination apologist on the other, claiming that the discrimination they suffer is akin to that which "any minorities in the world face". In fact, there are more than 50 laws that directly or indirectly discriminate against Palestinian citizens in all areas of life.

This is no more notable than in relation to land access, where some 92 per cent of Israel's land area is administered in accordance with regulations which prohibit it from being purchased or leased by Palestinians. Israeli Arabs can also have their properties expropriated under the controversial Absentee Property Law, upheld by the Israeli Supreme Court in April 2015. As reported in the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz*, "in 1967, after the Six-Day War, which saw the extension of Jerusalem's municipal boundaries, Palestinians with assets in Jerusalem suddenly found themselves considered 'absentee' owners, even though they hadn't gone anywhere". The law has been used by extreme Zionist settlers who rent expropriated properties legally held by Palestinians in the West Bank, which Israel considers "territory of an enemy nation".

As for Israeli-Arabs in the Knesset, the fragility of their status was highlighted last year; MK Hanin Zoabi was suspended for 6 months, while other

Arab MKs are regularly jailed, exiled and accused of treason for opposing Israeli brutality.

Shamir mentions "binding international resolutions...which recognise the legitimacy of Jewish aspirations in mandate Palestine" yet conveniently fails to mention UN resolution 194 of 1948 which resolves that Palestinian refugees be allowed to return to their homes at the earliest practicable date and that compensation be paid in accordance to international principles and justice. Presumably because Palestinian refugees and their descendants now number in their millions, Shamir describes the 'right of return' – long intrinsic to the Palestinian national cause – as "fantastical". Better, perhaps, to extend the right of Israeli citizenship to Jews all over the world, many of whom have never been to Israel and have no family there. Why do they have automatic right to citizenship and residency while Palestinians who can trace their lineage there back centuries do not?

The reason of course is that Israel is a discriminatory Zionist state which privileges Jewish citizens over others. This brings us to the question of apartheid, as the BDS movement models itself on the boycott of apartheid South Africa. No one is arguing that Israel's apartheid is a carbon copy of the South African case, but rather that the methods are the same. "I have witnessed the systemic humiliation of Palestinian men, women and children by members of the Israeli security forces", writes Archbishop Desmond Tutu, "[and] their humiliation is familiar to all black South Africans who were corralled and harassed and insulted and assaulted by the security forces of the apartheid government".

Tutu is joined in endorsing the boycott by a list of distinguished artists, writers and intellectuals, including the late Stéphane Hessel, John Berger, Arundhati Roy, Judith Butler, Naomi Klein, Ken Loach, Alice Walker, Angela Davis, Mira Nair, Roger Waters, Snoop Dogg, Jean-Luc Godard, Elvis Costello, Gil Scott-Heron, Carlos Santana and others. The boycott targets not individuals but the Israeli state and associated institutions complicit in the occupation and oppression of Palestinians. Rather than "extending its arm for peace", Netanyahu has effectively ruled out a two-state solution, while residents of the Aida refugee camp recently received the following message over loudspeaker: "We are the occupation's army. If you continue to throw stones, we will continue to shoot gas, until you die; the children, the adults, the elderly, the dying. Everything. We do not want to leave any of you alive". Under such brutal circumstances those who stand for justice and peace should support BDS as a form of non-violent struggle called for by Palestinian civil society, who are, to use Shamir's words, frustrated "at the stagnancy of this intractable peace process".

For Shamir, BDS is an "irresponsible attack on a nation" and "collective punishment". If he wants to know what collective punishment and attack looks like, I suggest he visits Gaza, where only one house has been rebuilt since thousands were destroyed and 1,500 Palestinian civilians killed last year. Perhaps he can emulate his hero Mohammed Dajani Daoudi – who took Palestinian students to Auschwitz – by taking a group of Israeli students to see the horrors inflicted by their state, not 70 years ago, but today.

The Secret Diary of Katrina Kettlewell

Columnist **Ellie Coote** recently uncovered a diary buried beneath the floorboards of an undisclosed room in an undisclosed college. In this remarkable extract, we are given an exclusive insight into the world of Chelsea socialite Katrina Kettlewell, who seems unaware of her diary's discovery and shows every intention to continue writing. Names have been changed to protect the innocent.

5th November Dawn Litro just awoke to like the actual smell of gunpowder, treason and... pot. #WhatTimeIsIt? OMG it's litro 4:20 am. LOL it's early I should totes go back to sleep...

Dawn-thirty Litro just awoke to like the actual smell of pot. So like every year to like celebrate the death of some #Guy the Master litro sets this like actual giant mound of grass alight, litro like infusing the college with his actual giant stick of incense #Innuendo. It's like to #Remember-Remember #TheSpliffOfNovember or like something of that sort. I'm

like totes unfazed by the whole thing. Like, super not bothered. In fact... I'm feeling quite, like... Chill... Actually.....

Midday So like I get to my supo and the Prof's eyes are like totes super merlot #Plummy... So he's like litro on the floor rolling around in like an actual pile of leaves. I'm like, "OMG like such gr8 hues Prof, like, super Christumnal #Portmanteau #On-SecondThoughts #JustThePort LOL." He's all "Litro just exfoliating Miss Kettlewell, don't mind me #Crispy." So like I take a seat in the literal interrogation zone and he's all, "Like how much soup would a visor sip if a visor could sip soup?" I'm like totes somewhat baffled by this #BaffleOfTheSome but then litro before I can even offer a soup-table answer he totes begins to recite some actual metaphysical poetry. So like by this point I'm like totes #Donne. Like, I'm so totes not paying even tuppence for this literal flummery #Nonsense. But then he's like, "Have a bagel, Miss Kettlewell" and I like totes soften like a bagel cooked backwards. I'm like "Is there brie?" He's like, "Well obvs." So like as we're taking a little #Briesta Hugo arrives like, "Look who's got the crunchies, LOL! Like, litro, though..."

give me my crunchie bars." And I do, because they are his.

Eventide So like I arrive at Sesame for the Society for WAGS and Porters (SWAP) swap and it is like totes a filthy pit of debauchery #Sesame-Seedy. Like, the small talk is litro aflame #TheToastingIsTotesToasty-Hot. One Porter's like, "Fine if you've litro ever snuck into a literal student's room when they're not there" and all the Porters are litro like "I!" and another's like "LOL yeah like fine if you've slept under a student's bed for like a week without them knowing." I'm like, "Uh, no that is like so totes clearly not FINE. These things are like totes problematic actually. NOT fine if you do anything of the sort!" and everyone's like "I!" #MeetingAdjourned.

So then like litro in the middle of the feast someone totes declares "Like litro fall to, men!" Literally at once everyone around me whips out screwdrivers and tins of paint and like litro gets quietly to work unhinging doors, dismantling tables, pulling up floorboard, painting the walls #EtCetera. I'm like "Litro what are you all doing?!" and a mechanic removing the literal radiator from the wall looks up

and is all, "Well, we're litro like paying them to trash the place, aren't we?! #LadsLadsLads!!!" Someone litro hands me a hammer and is like, "Go nuts." So when Michelle comes in I litro give her a little thwack and then everyone like totes flees like tiny parasites making such litro speedy getaways #GettingOurMoneysWorth.

Even more-tide So like we're litro just fleeing from the swap and I actually like full on collide with Hugo. So he's like totes trying to hide it but I can litro see the crumbs around his mouth... "You've been on a Nature

Valley swap!!!" I litro declare. He's like "How did you actually know?!" And then like some girl appears who litro shoves a Nature Valley bar into his actual mouth and runs away. I'm like litro SO #Offended. The Nature Valley swap is like the most actually sexually charged of all the Oatie swaps. Mostly 'cause like Nature Valley bars are like so totes delish they're like almost orgasmic. "Oh #Crumbs" says Hugo.

OMG so, like, litro just wait for more of the same sort of thing #NextWeek...



#RememberRememberTheSpliffOfNovember #Hugo #WTF???

Vulture

CULTURE • FEATURES • FASHION • THEATRE • REVIEWS

A HAZE OF WONDER

Ballet is for everyone, says Royal Opera House student ambassador Molly Frederikse

Do you remember when you were at that just-become-a-teenager stage, when music suddenly became the most important definer of your individuality? When listening to that music had to be a sacred activity, untainted by anything that might distract you from the sounds? When seeing that music performed live made you cry, and drift through the next week in a haze of wonder?

Ok, I just re-read that. Maybe I was always unusually obsessive. Regardless, I grew out of that. Or out of it in relation to music, anyway. Sometimes I almost miss it, feeling an odd poignancy for that reaction, knowing that, however much I enjoy a gig now, it will never again affect me in the way it did at that age. And then I remember that I still do feel that way, just about something else: ballet.

"You'll never get an interview at Cambridge," my teacher, who shall remain nameless, told me back in those hellish days of personal statements, when my less than brilliant AS results arrived. "Don't even bother. Try Oxford instead" (happily, this enables me to put a little of the beloved Oxford-bashing into my article, though of course that isn't what he meant at all). "I can't go to Oxford," I responded, upon my return from visiting the City of Dreaming Spires, "I need the Cambridge Ballet Club."

I'd like to restore ballet and opera to their rightful place amongst the various theatre arts, rather than confining them to their current position as the archaic pursuits of the rich and elderly. Not only is this false – the Royal Opera House has student tickets from only £1 this season – but it seems to me a sad mistake to dismiss an entire art form. It is highly unusual to hear anyone say they don't like music, or that they can't go and see a film because they know nothing about how to make films. In fact, if a film

was only meaningful to filmmakers, we would probably consider it, at least in some ways, a failure as a piece of art. Like music, art, film and theatre, ballet and opera set out to move, to entertain, and to tell a story. Just as with all art and entertainment, there will be good pieces and bad pieces, and pieces which cause

endless debate. The variety is so great, there will always be something that will intrigue and excite. This approach worked on me (I used to think I didn't like opera) when someone finally pointed out that I might just not like the composers to whom I had been exposed.

A hearty dose of Bizet's *Carmen* soon put me right.

My dear baby sister, growing up a self-identifying tomboy, told me that ballet was for girls and thus utterly boring. My response was to show her *Le Corsaire*, a ballet about pirates based on a poem by Byron. It worked.

As with so much art, one only needs a way in, a gateway, to open the door to everything else it can offer. My sister has no interest in the technique of ballet, and never wanted to try it herself. Despite all my best efforts, she cares not at all for a particularly beautiful

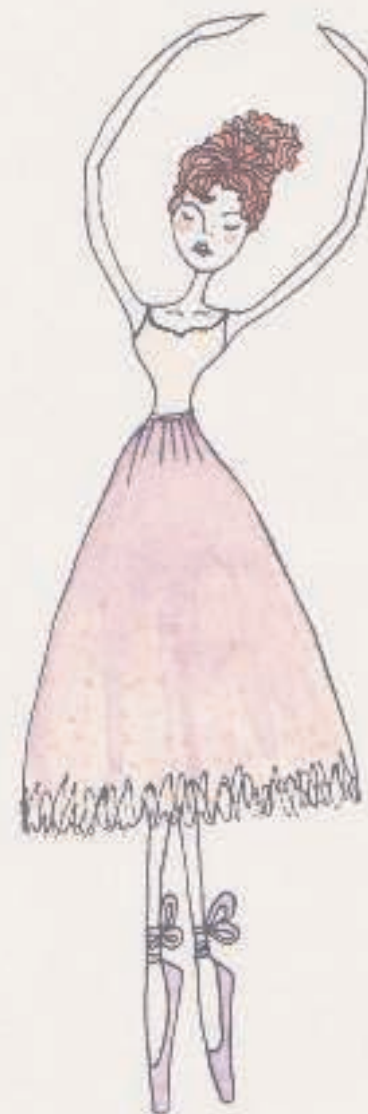
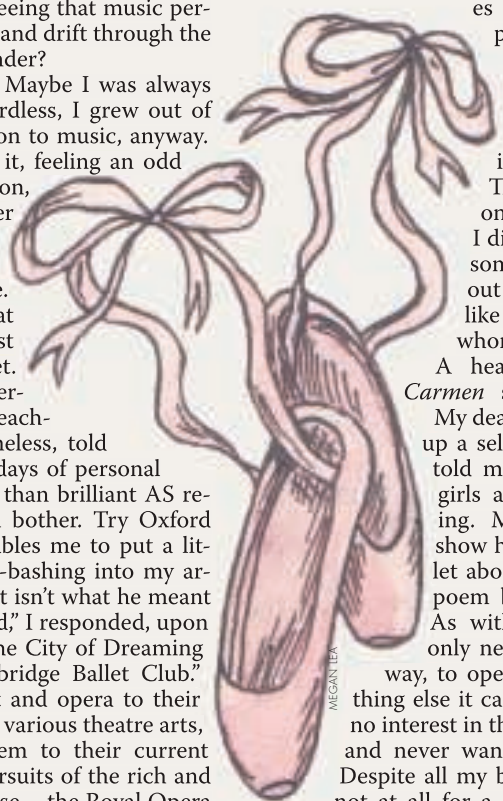
pirouette, or an especially well-performed jeté, but she loves a good story, and she loves going to the theatre. As an artist, she brings along my little pair of opera glasses and spends the evening marvelling at the intricacy and imagination of the sets and costumes. My father,

equally unimpressed by technique, likes going to see performances of scores he played in his orchestra days. My brother, an athlete, appreciates the sheer skill of the dancers, easily equal to the strength and endurance of Olympians: one performance of *The Sleeping Beauty* requires a male dancer to lift more than 1.2 tonnes of ballerinas, and burns more energy than a professional footballer does in two matches.

As a student ambassador to the Royal Opera House, I now have an official name for the role I have been unofficially performing for years – acting as a sort of conversionist for the worlds of opera and ballet – and I get to spend more time at the Opera House in return, something I would never say no to. In my last year in Cambridge before I begin my full-time dance training, I will be leading trips both to the cinemas in Cambridge and to the Royal Opera House itself in London to see various operas and ballets, as well as organising film nights and socials in the colleges. The Royal Opera House Student Scheme is free to join, and enables students to book early, access the cheaper student tickets, and book for special student performances.

The ballet club in Cambridge welcomes everyone from complete beginners to advanced practitioners, and it is one of the friendliest, most inclusive and passionate groups of people I have ever met. There are opportunities for everyone to perform, or just to enjoy classes. I certainly don't know what I would have done without the escape of dance in this intense environment, and it is the ballet club which has made it possible for me to achieve my dream of training as a dancer, when I had believed it to be too late. Who knows where I would be now, had I accepted defeat and never applied to Cambridge?

The ballet club is running a 24 Hour Dance show on 8th November. Contact mfs23 for more information. Booking for the winter season at the Royal Opera House is now open – sign up at www.roh.org.uk/students, and follow Molly's blog at www.facebook.com/HoveringLife.



MEGAN LEA

SAMUEL BECKETT IN DIALOGUE WITH KING'S COLLEGE CHAPEL

Something out there where in King's College Chapel was not my first brush with Beckett. The infamous modernist playwright is not on the reading list of a second-year law student, but thanks to a theatre-loving friend of mine, I found myself sitting in a Beckett production at the Edinburgh Fringe last summer. Blind-folded in a darkened room with strange actors brushing my arms and high-pitched wailing filling the room, I became extremely claustrophobic, had a panic attack, and ran out of the theatre. It's fair to say that Beckett and I started on a difficult footing, and so it was with growing apprehension that I walked into the pitch black of King's College Chapel for the performance on Monday evening.

With his circular prose and lack of plot, I always felt that Samuel Beckett had successfully capitalised on an 'emperor's new clothes' phenomenon, hailed as the great playwright of the twentieth century for being too complex for anyone without a PhD to understand. I had found his work to lack the accessible emotional depth of great art. Beckett was to me a perfect example of the sometimes artificial

hierarchy of the academic study of literature – critics sound clever by saying that his work is amazing because it is so abstract that philistines like I could never understand it.

I'm not sure how far *Something out there* has changed my opinion of the work of Beckett, and as chants of random words echoed round the walls of King's College Chapel, I could not help but feel that the magnificent piece of gothic architecture was the real artwork. However, as an experience *Something out there* where surprised me. It was thought-provoking, it was interesting, and it was an hour of my life that I'm strangely glad I spent sat in the centre of the chapel with the odd, sinister sounds of water dripping, rambling speech and occasionally inspired music bellying around me.

We were led with torches to our seats, and at 8 pm began a series of audiovisual displays, inspired by Beckett's work. The displays were not simply representations of Beckett plays: they instead aimed to illustrate a conversation between the chapel and the literature. The dissonance between the controlled intricacy of the stained glass windows and the raw despair

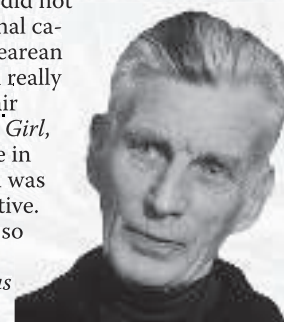
of Beckett's imagery made the conversation varied and complex. The lighting and photography around the chapel resulted in an incredible interaction between the projected images and the walls, so that the images moulded with and adapted to the structure of the stonework. This gave the series a sense of evolution: what first appeared to be a simple projected image was rendered new by the backdrop. The atmosphere created by the soaring ceilings and the sinister voices that read Beckett's words was one that I doubt I will ever get to experience again. Hearing of desolation and emptiness in a place of such ornate beauty was a provocative contrast, and one which forced the audience to question how art relates to and represents the human experience.

Number 8 of the series of 'steps' was my favourite, with part of Beckett's video piece *Quad* forming the centrepiece of the section. It was haunting. Other parts of the series were just plain bizarre; lowlights including an extremely monotonous chant and the incomprehensible speech that the performance opened with. That's not to mention the projections of strange heads that just seemed to gargle.

I came to *Something out there* with a mind full of Land Law and a complex the size of Jupiter about the growing to-do list that I have lost somewhere in my room. Beckett will never be first on my reading list, but I undeniably left a happier student – an hour to think, reflect and question without a supervisor or deadlines is precious. Admiring such architecture, spectacularly illuminated, reminded me that there is something more to life than internships and grad schemes, and Beckett's quirky and thought-provoking imagery removed me from the bubble of college gossip and the house Whatsapp chat.

The performance did not provoke the emotional catharsis of a Shakespearean tragedy, or even of a really great Chuck and Blair love scene in *Gossip Girl*, but the performance in the darkened chapel was evocative and inventive. Maybe Beckett isn't so bad after all.

Sarah Collins



NOT KIDS ANYMORE

"Here were kids only a couple of years older than me... shooting heroine"

I was in a book shop the other day. A woman behind me was asking the shop assistant for help choosing something for her daughter. The shop assistant, hearing that the daughter was turning 14, went through a range of books that sounded jam-packed with sleepovers and BFFs. At one particular suggestion, the mum wrinkled her nose.

"Are there boys in it?" she asked.

The shop assistant laughed and replied, "Oh yeah, all of them have boys in them." I saw the mum's upper lip start to curl in disgust, and the shop assistant added quickly, "Oh, I mean there are boys – but nothing to scare the horses."

It got me thinking about two things. Firstly: are horses particularly averse to racy literature? And the second was something I probably hadn't considered probably since I was around 14 myself, and that's what teens 'should' or 'shouldn't' be reading. Nowadays, we tend to worry more about what kids are watching. A lot of parents would just be happy that their child had picked up a book for once instead of glazing over in front of the TV. But that's not to say 'dangerous' books aren't still a concern, as the conversation on which I eavesdropped demonstrates. Young teenagers are reluctant to give their parents much indication as to how mature their understanding of the world is, and parents aren't keen to expose their kids to any material that might traumatise them for life. As a result, there's a general consensus on how to approach books and young teenagers: encourage them to read, but don't push their boundaries.

But this approach, I think, deprives teenagers of a vital reading experience. We've all read books that once finished have you leaning back in your chair feeling like your brains have just blown out of the back of your skull. But I would argue this happens most often when you're around 13 or so. Reading something that exposes you to new and perhaps shocking ideas at just the right point in time, when you're sheltered and naïve, can make a book really

detonate in your hands.

It would be impossible to talk about controversial kids' books without mentioning Melvin Burgess. When *Junk* was given to me for my 12th birthday, I knew nothing of its legendary status in British teenage fiction. But I immediately attached to it a certain notoriety – my mum had just willingly, without any prompting, given me a book about drug-addicts. It was the coolest thing that had ever happened to a 12 year old. I took it to my room and absolutely scoffed it down, feeling like I had to finish it quickly in case she hadn't noticed how bad it was yet. Here were kids only a couple of years older than me running away from home, losing it, shooting heroine. It was intense, it was memorable, but more than anything, it was incredibly liberating.

In response to those shaking their fists and calling for *Junk's* censorship, defenders of the book argued that while it described kids doing drugs, it also described kids suffering as a result of doing drugs, and regretting having done them in the first place. It seems that profanity in teenage literature is only forgivable when there's clearly a lesson to be learned. If you're writing a sex scene for teenagers, you have two options: either don't write it, and use a strategic page break to drift romantically off into the distance, or write it but deglamourise the experience somehow, maybe with an STI or an unplanned pregnancy. While I'm not dismissing either approach, particularly the latter (which, I think, hits home a lot harder than just hearing about these things in a classroom) the fact that it's so taboo to present teenagers with a sex-positive attitude is concerning. We assume that reading something like this when you're quite young won't be mind-expanding but utterly life-ruining, and in doing so I think we discredit a lot of young people.

But books seen as unsuitable for youngsters aren't just the ones with sex and drugs in them. Perhaps the most common reason parents won't buy a book for their kid is on the grounds

that it may be upsetting. This happens particularly, I think, with girls. Adults are hesitant to recommend books exploring mental health issues, death, or subjects that their children might find 'confusing', like homosexuality and gender dysphoria. And it comes from a good place. They're only worrying about how kids will respond. But avoiding more mature themes stunts the experience of a reader, and can impede the development of a young individual. Maybe I'm being unfair, but the syrupy book titles I heard being read aloud by the shop assistant didn't sound like they'd offer anything very challenging. I remember my first book about an underage pregnancy, my first book about suicide; I don't remember my first book about a sleepover. And of course, those books were a bit overwhelming at the time, but that's not a bad thing. Surely this is the age when you should be breaking out of your comfort zone and being introduced to these ideas, as it's better to have these revelations when you're

younger than to find yourself trying to uproot close-minded preconceptions in later life.

There are some conversations that just don't come up when you're 12. And because you're 12, a lot of these conversations are ones you don't even know you want to have. Books are the best way to get them started. For those having a hard time growing up, they can be a source of great solace and comfort, and a shocking but necessary punch-in-the-face for those unaware of the issues that their peers may be experiencing. Attempts to censor teenage fiction are founded in concern for young people's safety, but in my opinion demonstrate a fundamental lack of awareness of how young people are experiencing the world. Teenagers are eager to find out more about 'the real world', and we shouldn't stop them.

-Charlotte Gifford

Poetry Corner

The Church of Dante

Enter, feigning nonchalance, the French tour group to hear *Dominum Jesum Christum* crossover the enshrined new sound system. They amassed like it was 1034. Electric candles. My eyes swept the floor, my head hung penitent that her renown should have reached me only through Dan Brown, a Ser Brunetto counting his tresor. And then the mounted canvasses I browsed where Beatrice and Dante were espoused with Simone de' Bardi and Gemma Donati. On a doorway lectern, eurozone and slot, parallel text invited me to not abandon every hope but leave a small donation.

-Harry Cochrane

The Photographer

Idyll - still -
The chill of autumn sun cuts through
The knit, sit,
Fit it into the frame and cut
It out, shouts
About the pitch, the team, the clack
Of sticks, thick
With sandstone schools' archaic joys
With thrill and fight and dying glow
That I will not now ever know
The moment stretches, snaps, and so -
A-part - Idyll -
I capture every still.

-Loïc Desplanques

Licking crumbs

"You know, your skin is actually the perfect shade. Not too dark and not too pale."

At this, a young girl has snorted her first line of pure whiteness - consuming it, licking its bitter crumbs.

Being what it is, a drug,
Whiteness leaves you less whole.
It bulldozes over the 3..4...no,
the infinite dimensions of a self
that wants nothing more than the permission
to be complex,
contradictory,
confused,
unique -
speaking for no other voice than itself.

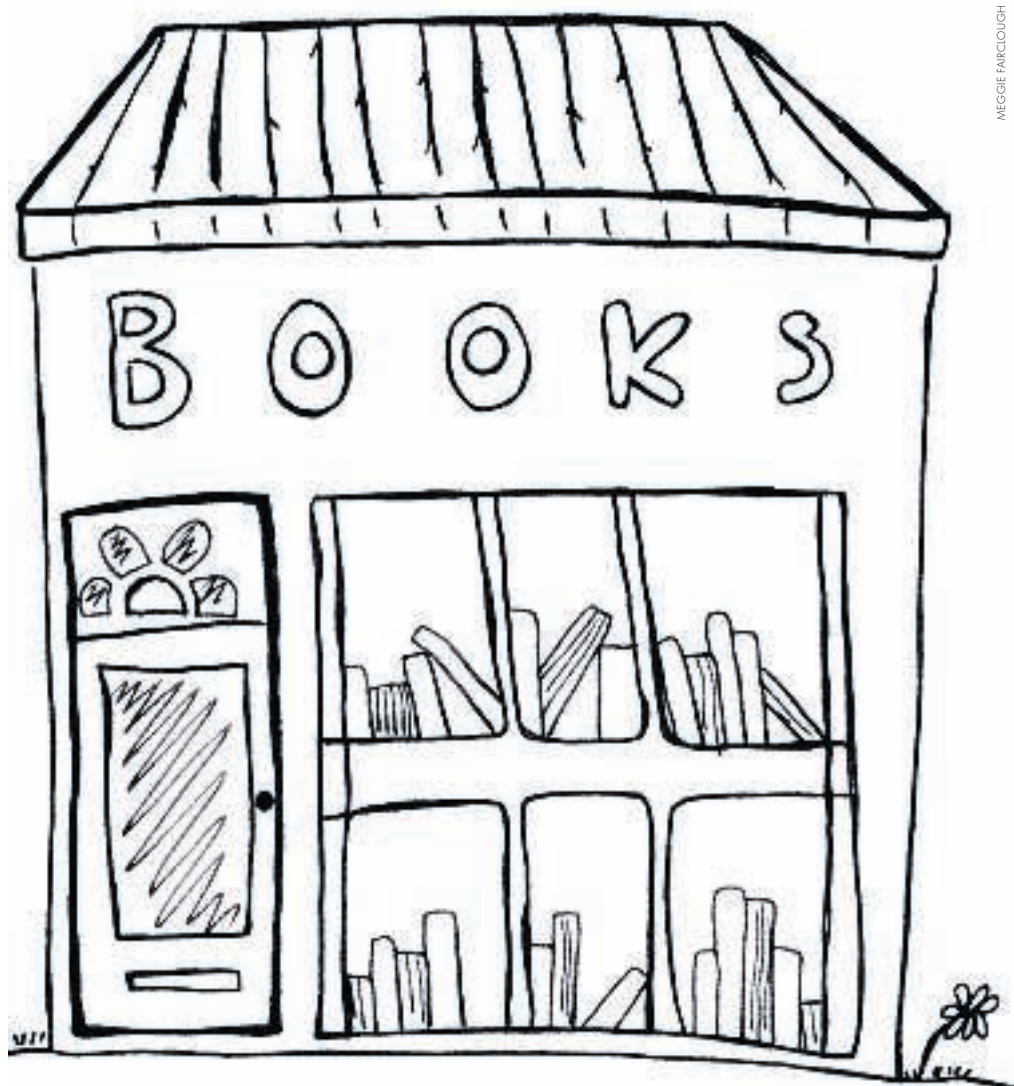
But the problem is,
Whiteness is not pricey (nor Columbian).
It is cheap. Freely available.
Floating, but heavy as fuck, somehow in the air.

Consumable in most minutes,
Shoved down her throat in most minutes.

And like the walking cliché she now is,
Weekly - she steps out with her cigarette.
Never so desperate to seem so nonchalant.
And English boys with their Englishness
glowing with their whiteness
teeter about: licking rizzlas and mumbling:

"no, but where are you really from?"

-Husna Rizvi



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VAR DAGS

Espresso Library

There are bicycles hanging from the wall. They have smoothies with ingredients like 'chia' and 'cacao'. And most importantly, a sticky date cake with grilled toffee and coconut topping that makes it well worth the walk across Parker's Piece to this airy, modern space on East Road. Their signature pale blue cups are best filled with – you guessed it – espresso. Take your reading and spend the day here slumped across their wide study tables, ordering endless lattes and generally feeling very content.

We recommend: Sticky date cake



6 Ice Cream

In the words of Jo, winter is coming, but that is not an excuse not to sample the delicious range of gelato at this sumptuous new spot on Bene't Street. Prices start from £2.50 for a small and the flavours change every day; think Pomegranate Sorbet, Roasted Banana and Toffee Apple. Enjoy with a freshly baked macaroon or scattered with caramelised apple slices – don't miss out on this new find.

We recommend: Cambridge Cream

Ice Cream Price: £2.50

Trockel, Ulman and Freunde

If you can say the name, you deserve to go inside. This is one of the cheapest lunchtime eateries in Cambridge, its bold blue front inviting you in from Pembroke Street. You can get a hearty bowl of soup and a filled baguette from less than £3. Perch on the high tables in front of the window with their authentic German apple cake and blissfully watch as everyone else scurries to their lectures.

We recommend: Apple cake

Baguette Price: £3



Stickybeaks

Bright, modern and alive with chatter, Stickybeaks is a great place to catch up with a friend over any of the vibrant salads or wholesome hot lunches on offer. The menu changes every week to make the most of available seasonal and local ingredients, but we can certainly recommend their Rum and Raisin Bread and Butter Pudding – it's delicious. In fact, why don't you stick your beak into the open plan kitchen to see all the delicious creations come alive?

We recommend: Rum and Raisin Bread & Butter Pudding

Aromi

Although not so secret, it's still worth grabbing a slice of Sicilian life – and one of beautifully crafted pizza whilst you're at it – at either of these authentic delicatessens just off Market Square. If you're not tempted by any of the canolis, tiramisus, chocolate mousses or fruit tarts then fear not, because the chances are you'll fall head over heels for their garlic foccacia or risotto balls. Their hazelnut latte, for £2.70, has finally made the dream of drinkable nutella a reality.

We recommend: Hazelnut latte

Cappuccino Price: £2.70



Top 10 Secret Eats in Cambridge

In the first of a mini-series on "Top Ten Secret...", Katie Wetherall reviews the secret spaces of Café Culture around Cambridge



Savino's

A constant bustle of people gesticulating over espresso and freshly baked pastries, film posters line the walls and gentle music drifts over the ever screeching and gurgling barista machine. A real highlight is a slice of their chocolate Caprese cake or their tomato, parma ham and mozzarella panini for £3.85. The waiters are friendly and you may just pick up some conversational Italian. Belissimo!

We recommend: Chocolate Caprese cake

Panini Price: £3.85

Jamaica Blue

Feeling luxurious? Treat yourself to table service at this upmarket brunch spot in the Grand Arcade shopping centre. The avocado smash with poached eggs on toast will make you feel like the epitome of health itself and you can fill any gaps with a slice of honeycomb and butterscotch cheesecake. Coffee can be quite pricey – around £3 – but you're paying for a work of art: beautifully dense, rounded beans, medium roasted and delivered to you post supervision in Cambridge.

Recommend: Avocado smash with poached eggs on toast

Coffee Price: £3



Urban Shed

I think I'd like to live inside the brain of the person who designed the interior of this L-shaped bolt-hole on King Street. A temple to everything retro, 1970's TV-sets jostle for space with glass milk bottles and giant pineapples. More than just a madhouse, the Urban Shed does really, really, really good sandwiches. You can choose from around 20 delicious combinations.

We recommend: "Coconut satay chicken, mayonnaise & rocket"

Panini Price: £3.50

Bread and Meat

This is a place that doesn't mince its words, or its grub, either. Expect great hunks of thyme and sage roast porchetta; its crackling beaming under the golden lamps of the counter. Sandwich it between fresh salsa verde and thick crusty bread and you have yourself a simply brilliant culinary experience. Contrary to the description, they also serve mixed roast vegetable and manchego cheese baps so bring friends of all diets along. If you don't fancy the whole hog, grab a ginger, or even a real beer.

We recommend: Porchetta Panini

Panini Price: £7



Indigo

There is something quite inescapably lovely about a place that is plastered with posters, only takes cash and is probably smaller than your bedroom. Beckoning invitingly from King's Parade, Indigo is a happy-go-lucky oasis of mismatched tables and velvety cappuccinos. Once you've made it up the creaky stairs, make sure you bag a spot quickly, as it can get busy in rush-hour.

We recommend: Hummus, olives and sundried tomato panini (served with salad and crisps)

Panini Price: £4.50

Cambridge's Most Beautiful Ugly Buildings

I am not the archetypal fan of modern architecture in Cambridge. I revere the ancient honey-coloured stone, the cold old cloisters, the imposing courts bearing down with both the castle-like grandeur of their four walls and the weight of history and tradition they embody. I applied to Corpus partly because of its reputation for being an artsy college, partly because its medieval Old Court is the oldest courtyard still standing in the country, and partly because it has only one modern bit – the Taylor Library, which is tastefully built out of sand-coloured stone.

But, as the most fascinating Shakespearean villain, Iago, once said, “I am not what I am.” I harbour a secret passion for concrete. That’s to say that the ying of the *Brideshead Revisited* aesthetic needs the yang of the 60s brutalist and contemporary functionalist aesthetics. Accordingly, here is a hard-hitting piece of journalism on the ugly modern buildings in Cambridge that I find strangely aesthetically pleasing. Journalism did Watergate, and now it’s doing this.

Christ's Typewriter Building

Was this supposed to look like a typewriter? Was it just a strange accident by some 1960's brutalist architect? I have no idea. I don't suppose it matters: as Roland Barthes reminds us, the author is dead. What this building does, with its small rooms – cells, might in fact be a more apt word, looking at it – stacked together like typewriter keys is to reflect artistically



Typewriter or terrace landscape? You decide

The English Faculty

It's a funny terracotta colour and has lots of big windows. I have no idea when it was built, having scoured the internet for this information to no avail. It's the most vexing fruitless pursuit of a point of inquiry I've had on the internet ever since I spent three hours last term trying to find out what Hogwarts house Rufus Scrimgeour was in (I suspect Gryffindor, because he refused to divulge Harry's location even under torture by Death Eaters – but I had the niggling suspicion that he wouldn't be because he was very funny with Harry and Dumbledore in the Half-Blood Prince) to no avail.

But in any case, this is a modern, functional building. It just does what it does because it's cool. Like the people who work in there, who are almost always that stereotypical subset of English student: the hipsters who always wear green headphones – on one ear, off on the other. Because they're cool. You can tell they love ArcSoc and 'mandy' and Norf Landan. And with its great panes of glass shining out of its terracotta facade, the

English Faculty serves as a great means of broadcasting to the lesser folk of the Sidgwick site just how fucking cool – or 'kwl', as I should probably misspell it – these green headphone wearers are.

The slab of concrete at the side of King's

From the perennial vantage point of my spot in the Corpus library, I have often looked to my left in a confused reverie and considered who the fuck thought creating this block of grey might possibly resemble a good idea. For a long while, I was convinced that it was a thought process analogous to that in the invention of pebbledash as related by Sean Lock: some bloke saying, “I've got a great idea: why don't I cover up your lovely brickwork and make it look – you know – shit?” But then I realised it's making a big statement by creative means, this hulking block of ugliness squatting down near King's Chapel, comprehensively ruining the aesthetics of the Parade. You know how before you come to Cambridge King's looks like this great, beautiful college and then it turns out it's full of people who want to bulldoze the majestic chapel because God is a #ciswhitemale? That's the point artistically expressed by this slab of concrete alongside the beauty of King's.



The Gates of Moria nestled between King's and Catz



The home of hipsters and heartthrobs

Tom Wheeldon
MICHAEL BEHREND / ALVIKUISER / GOOGLE MAPS

THE VARSITY CRYPTIC CROSSWORD

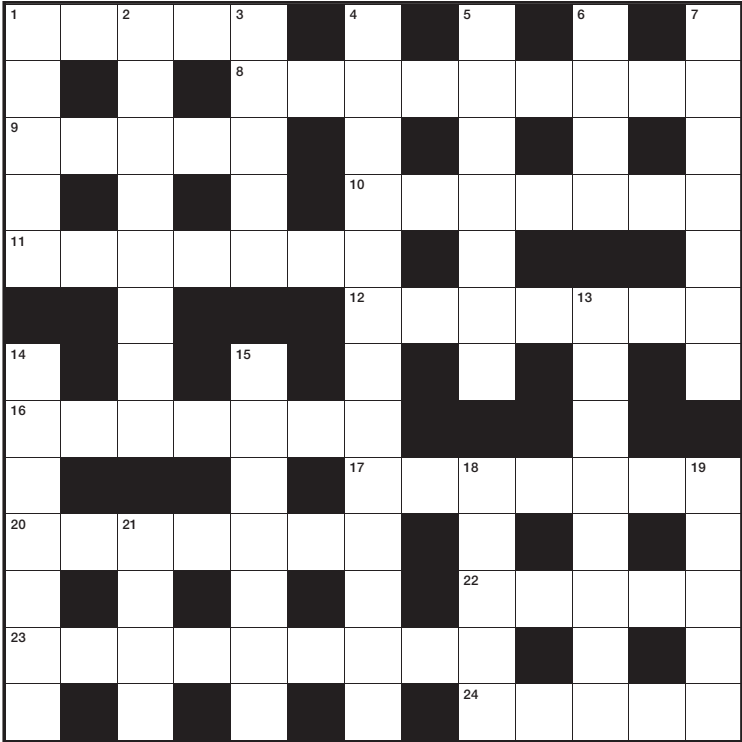
Set by Glueball

Across

1. Spirit is cocktail of half advocaat, drop of drink (5)
8. Mike Ruble, doctor, lived in F block (9)
9. Bone bit broken, among others (5)
10. Predator penetrates blackest religions (7)
11. Honest Eastern philosopher's novel (7)
12. Emergent not on the up (7)
16. Flat earth propounded by church (7)
17. An Italian poet casually walking (7)
20. Ceremonial position right for military man (7)
22. Another Italian poet harbours love for egghead (5)
23. Keep silent – partly a loss of face, I admit (9)
24. Sweet tragus cut, freaky! (5)

Down

1. Pope nearly can predict future (5)
2. Dashing – of good French look (8)
3. Counters a cab I ordered (5)
4. Out of money, drunken adherent has lost love (13)
5. Endless empire has a way to keep going (7)
6. Satan heard angelic harp (4)
7. Stupid mule ate copy (7)



13. Regular call for service (8)
14. Gospel truth: we'd all rather be elsewhere? (2,5)
15. Wheel turned the cart (7)
18. Dunce – man produces rubbish (5)
19. First fruit? (5)
21. Slender metal sword (4)

Solutions will be available online at www.varsity.co.uk after the first correct entry is submitted to editor@varsity.co.uk

I got addicted to PRO PLUS

Exam term is very hard to deal with. Finals are especially hard, for obvious reasons; and first year exams are daunting for terrified freshers. There are several ways of dealing with that. The best way is obviously the clichéd one: to get steadily through revision by day and then to relax (without drinking) in the evening. Maybe some people take up meditation or yoga or whatever. I imagine that's a sensible thing to do and that it works very well – but I don't really know because I am not at all sensible. My instinctive response to my first Cambridge exams was to constantly fantasise about legging it to Heathrow, flying to America and bombing across the country in a 1950s convertible, on drugs constantly, and writing about it, like the twenty-first century's answer to Jack Kerouac.

In reality, what I did was only marginally less sensible: I worked from 5 am to 1 am, every day. In lieu of the sleep on which I was seriously missing out, I took a veritable shitload of those little white pills ProPlus. I'm not sure there's anything particularly wrong about ProPlus specifically – maybe it's just caffeine pills that have this effect, maybe it's just caffeine. But to start with I really enjoyed it; I was smashing through revision, concentrating brilliantly, full of energy, really wired – in the sense of feeling totally plugged in to everything. Through most of my exams, I needed more and more of those little white givers of life to sustain myself. If I stopped taking the ProPlus, I felt I would have collapsed psychologically. All my success thus far, that magnificent feeling of being able to power through tons of work, to ram multitudinous thoughts into my head over the course of library sessions stretching from dawn till well into the depths of the night, was all contingent on me continuing to take the pills. I thought, as Hunter S. Thompson famously put

it in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, “we can't stop now, we're in bat country.” However, after this honeymoon between me and ProPlus, things went downhill. I sank like a meteor careering towards earth – and had a similar landing. It was my last exam. To start with I was writing incredibly fast, pouring my thoughts out of my pen at a demonic speed, with the mental acuity to simultaneously think about getting into a wild Dionysian state of drunken abandon afterwards. Then when I contemplated the fag end of a drunken night and the possibility of the big sleep to come, a silicon chip inside my head was switched to cause a torrent of sleep-inducing chemicals to gush through my brain. I fell asleep at my desk. I don't remember falling asleep that well, it just happened – my body had no choice except to surrender to its embrace. I was woken up by the chief invigilator informing us that it was the end of the exam. My results were 70, 73, 75, 42. As Michaelmas term descends into Week 5, the stressful nature of Cambridge is foremost in people's minds. We're clever people and we want to do well, and all this can often make people seriously anxious. There are a lot of articles in student media saying that basically this is all horrible and we need to remember to chill. Sometimes I think they're wishy-washy and angrily wonder as Tony Soprano did in the unsurpassably good TV series *The Sopranos*: “Whatever the fuck happened to Gary Cooper – the strong, silent type?” But these people are right. I was an idiot to want exam success so much that I seriously damaged my mental health, fell asleep in my last exam and ergo performed abominably in it. For Finals I will definitely work in a steady, sensible, balanced way and probably take up yoga. It's a boring thing to say and a boring thing to do. But sometimes being boring in Cambridge is just what works best.

Anonymous student

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Dressing up like Annie & Patti

In 1975, Robert Mapplethorpe took an iconic picture of Patti Smith wearing an oversized white shirt, black jeans and braces with a men's blazer draped over her right shoulder. It would become the cover of her debut studio album, *Horses*. Two years later, in 1977, Diane Keaton starred opposite Woody Allen in *Annie Hall*. Alongside her enormous contribution to film, Keaton's performance as Hall inspired a new way of dressing for women as she appeared in men's blazers, hats and trousers. Both Smith and Keaton are testament to the timeless appeal of classic tailoring and the flexibility of traditionally considered 'male' garments.



Models: Olivia Brogan and Olivia Fletcher
Styling and direction: Hannah Parlett and Meg Honigmann. Olivia B wears: (this page) Blue men's shirt (Marks and Spencer), Blazer (Topman), Hat (American Apparel), black jeans (Topshop) (next page) Dungarees (vintage), brogues (Topshop). Olivia F wears: White men's shirt (Marks and Spencer), waistcoat (vintage), red men's shirt (Urban Outfitters).

Photographs by John Fahy



Interview: Fred MacAulay

Martin Coulter chats to comedian **Fred MacAulay** about switching careers, panel shows and Scottish comedy

Fred MacAulay is something of an icon in Scotland. A boy from Perth at heart, he was the presenter of BBC Scotland's morning show since 1997, a familiar voice to wake up and drive to work to for generations of Scots, before deciding to quit the airwaves to indulge himself in his love of stand-up comedy. A familiar face, he has appeared on popular panel shows such as *QI*, *Mock the Week* as well as *Have I Got News For You*.

You trained as an accountant before switching to comedy – why the change?

Well I was good at maths and knew becoming an accountant was a solid job that could bring in a decent pay cheque at the end of the month so that was what I drove myself to do. I didn't do any amateur dramatics or performing of any kind at uni but I always secretly thought I liked the idea of being a comedian. By the time I got to 30-years-old I thought: 'Right, it's now or never!'

What did your family and friends make of your decision?

They were very supportive actually (my wife more than most) bless her. At first I think it came as a bit of a shock but once the TV and radio gigs started coming around I don't think they really had a choice but to take me seriously!

What was your first big break of that nature?

My first TV gig was appearing as a panel-list on *Have I Got News For You* in 1995. That was a fantastic experience and it wasn't long after that that the radio work started coming in and it became a lot easier to book venues for tours and all the rest of it.

Do you enjoy appearing on comedy panel shows like that?

Yeah they're good fun, I mean, they are most of the time anyway. *Have I Got News for You* is probably my favourite, followed shortly by *QI*. *Mock the Week* was a nightmare to film. Torturous, in fact.

Why's that?

Obviously I wouldn't want to slate the show or anything – it's obviously really funny but it's just such a

nightmare to film. You're there for about three hours and there's such a lot of rehearsal that goes into the whole thing.

You mean like the 'improvised' Wheel of News rounds?

Sure. I am baffled by the sheer number of people who genuinely believe that these routines are being made up on the spot and then complain when they see them being performed again as part of someone or another's arena tour. I couldn't be arsed with it to be honest.

Do you think there's a great difference in Scottish and English humour?

I'm inclined to say, overall, no. I think there is a wider sort of shared understanding of 'British humour' so to speak and that is a very broad church that spreads throughout the land. Saying that though, humour can be different from city to city. There's a good chance your average Glasgow audience is going to react ever just so differently to routines by comparison to your average Edinburgh audience. It's interesting but I think overall we have a vaguely agreed space on what's funny.

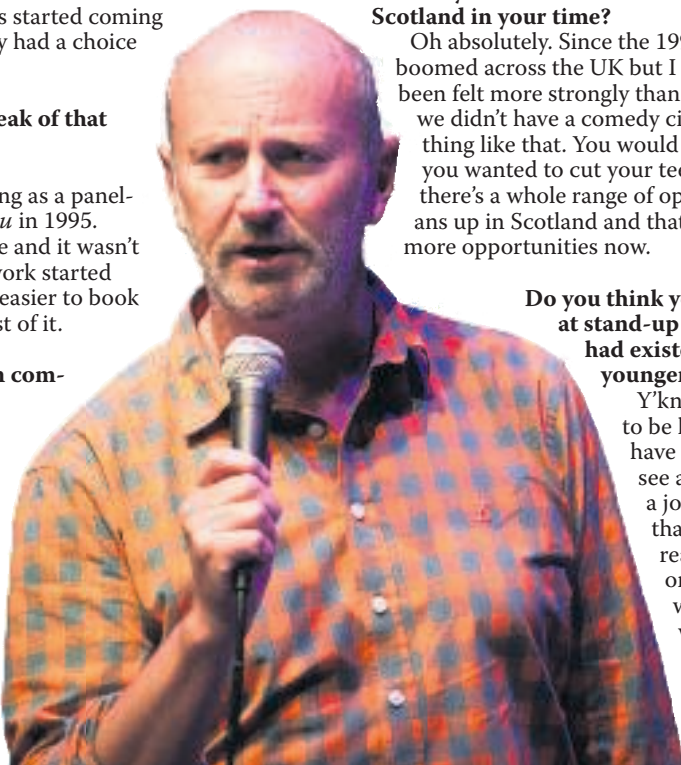
Have you seen much of a change in the comedy scene in Scotland in your time?

Oh absolutely. Since the 1990s comedy as a career has boomed across the UK but I can't think of a place where it's been felt more strongly than in Scotland. Once upon a time we didn't have a comedy circuit or comedy clubs or anything like that. You would have to travel down to London if you wanted to cut your teeth on the stand-up scene. Now there's a whole range of opportunities for aspiring comedians up in Scotland and that's great. There are just so many more opportunities now.

Do you think you would have tried your hand at stand-up much earlier if such a circuit had existed in Scotland when you were younger?

Y'know, I don't know if I would have to be honest. I don't know if I would have been ready. I think I needed to see a bit of the real world and have a job and a family and everything that comes with that before I could really have anything to talk about on stage. I think I'm at a place now where I know my own voice and what I have to say – I just hope everyone else is willing to listen!

'Twenty Fifteen' is running at the Cambridge Junction on Tuesday 10th November, 8pm.



ADAM HOLLIER



ANDREW MARRON

THE ART OF COLLABORATION



Folk tales, music and dance: Florrie Priest discusses why you should watch Week 5's ADC late show, 'Yearwalk'.

Never has a play had more issues with Doodle polls than *Yearwalk* has this term. Although it has been a logistical nightmare to get every member of the team together in one room, it is only a small price to pay for the range of extremely talented people I've had the pleasure of working with.

As a play which promises to take its audience on a journey of mysterious folk tale through the art of music, dance and physical theatre, we were keen to hear what talents everyone auditioning could bring to the table. I don't think any of us expected however, to be inundated with actors who have had years of professional training in dance and singing, as well as the occasional passion for electric gypsy jazz. To use a beautifully evocative description from Rute Costa, working with such a talented cast and crew "is like being wrapped in several layers of several different coloured blankets of various patterns and textures in the coldest night of the year." It has

been the input of the whole team, Maddy Searle adds, that has enhanced the performance so much: "they have all suggested ideas I never would have thought of..."

Making the most out of such a broad range of talents can be challenging though, especially in a piece which is already tackling the difficulties of staging five contained stories within one overarching narrative. With six directors and an ensemble spread between the different narratives, collaboration and compromise have really been the way forward. Joe Jukes notes though that the compromises have been happy ones: rather than everyone stepping on each other's toes or one individual trying to micromanage the whole production, the trust the directors have in each other has enabled something to come together which "sings of good teamwork".

The strange and fantastical nature of the play has also posed challenges. From the beginning we had to make sure

we had a strong aesthetic team on board, and they have been working tirelessly to cater to the needs of each individual story while also creating an overall cohesive look for the show. Every bit of devising has had to take into account how the ensemble will transform from story to story, and Tabitha Kane commented that learning to direct a masked cast has been a surprisingly tough process. The hard work pays off though and everything is coming together to create a visual treat to wake up the sleepy late show audiences.

The story has been in development for a year and it's finally coming to life. The directors, cast and crew have all been through journeys of their own; don't miss out on your chance to be taken on the *Yearwalk* journey too.

'Yearwalk' opens Wednesday 11th November at 11pm at the ADC and runs until Saturday 14th November.



It's IN-YER-FACE!

Laura Robinson gets up close and personal with the provocative writing 'movement' of 1990s Britain.

The 1990s, a decade that gave birth to *Trainspotting*, grunge rock and Tarantino. The unapologetic display of 'anti-culture', of Kurt Cobain's dark mutation of the pop song, of heroin needles and bloody white shirts challenged our sensitivities in between Spice Girls CDs and screenings of *Clueless*. In the world of theatre, it was the time of Tom Stoppard's *Arcadia*, Larson's *Rent*, and Philip Ridley's *The Fastest Clock in the Universe*, which is making its debut on the Cambridge theatre scene at the Corpus Playroom on the 10th November. While *Arcadia* and *Rent* depict the clash of chaos against order, Ridley's work contributed to a group of playwrights in Britain who took this conflict to a higher level. The unflinching portrayal of the taboo, the want of the unseen and unspoken, a space for 'Thatcher's children' to project the violence, drugs and hardship of the 1990s, was the *cause d'être* of 'in-yer-face' theatre. "[They] had the impertinence, no, the hubris to utter those most terrifying of words: 'I love you.' [But] what did they mean by them? They meant: 'I've fucked you and now I need to fuck you again, and possibly a few more times after that and I'll be jealous, insane with jealousy if anyone else fucks you.' All they do is fuck each other and all they talk about is how they do it, and who they'd really rather be doing it with or to – and they don't cloak it in their language." Michael Curtis, the middle-aged writer in Simon Gray's *Japes*, attempts to make sense of this new writing phenomenon, confused as to how it can be both vulgar and grammatical, how language that is unspeakable can collide with language that is enunciated "so that the verbs and nouns stick out – in your face." Indeed, characterised by what society deemed as 'vulgar', and desiring to break away from the ideological, state-of-the-nation plays that charmed the upper echelons, 'in-yer-face' was defined by the shocked emotional response that the plays would garner from its audience, as well as by its graphic impropriety: physical abuse, nudity, sex, humiliation.

One of the forerunners of this movement was Sarah Kane, a playwright who rejected her evangelical upbringing, and suffered throughout her life from depression; after being admitted for taking an overdose of her prescription drugs, she hanged herself in the hospital's bathroom in 1999, at the age of 28. Her plays are defined

by their unflinching rawness and brutality, and the controversy they attracted. Kane's first play, *Blasted*, was headlined in the *Daily Mail* as "this disgusting feast of filth"; in the midst of a war, a misogynistic, racist tabloid journalist invites a young, fragile woman to his hotel room in Leeds whom he attempts to seduce. What follows are scenes of oral sex, masturbation, rape, cannibalism, suicide and masturbation, including a scene in which one character sucks out another's eyes. Arousing aggressive rebuttals among theatre critics, Kane's work was deemed immature and gratuitous, rather than expressive and real. The image of a Bosnian woman hanging from a tree during the Bosnian war – the sad, unrestricted reality of civil strife that partly inspired Kane during the writing process of *Blasted* – was lost upon the sensibilities of the critics.

Kane's contemporary and obituary writer, Mark Ravenhill [who dubbed his fellow playwright as "a contemporary writer with a classical sensibility who created a theatre of great moments of beauty and cruelty"] would become another precursor of the movement with his 1996 play, *Shopping and Fucking*. Set in a world in which consumerism has become the moral code, its cast of desperate twenty-somethings – named after the members of Take That and Scottish songstress Lulu – are disposable, working in fast food joints, selling their image and their bodies. They are born to consume and be consumed, filling themselves on heroin and ecstasy, masochistic sex and prostitution in a consumer culture in which people are commodities.

Philosophy and black humour wrapped in scenes of gaping violence, 'in-yer-face' theatre was not born out of a morbid desire to be as flipantly brutal and unnecessarily controversial as a playwright could be. Rather, the shock nature of the plays and their place in experiential theatre force their audiences to react, instead of pondering their philosophy on the walk home and crawling into bed soundly. Week 5's Corpus main show, Ridley's *The Fastest Clock in the Universe*, does just that: the cultural obsession with youth, the societal infatuation with the male, concocted in a heady mixture of sinister, grimy violence. When *Blasted* was torn apart by the critics, they were unnerved by what in-yer-face theatre encompasses; to borrow from Harold Pinter, "facing something actual and true and ugly and painful".

Week 5 Theatre Highlights

Tuesday 10th November

The Fastest Clock in the Universe; The Corpus Playroom, 7pm
Philip Ridley's tale of Couglar Glass, a hybrid of Wilde's Dorian Gray and Bret Easton Ellis' Patrick Bateman, and obsessed with tans, fashion, and looking as young as he can. With his older lover, he plans to lure young schoolboy, Foxtrot Darling, to his East End flat, although he's not the only visitor.

Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street; ADC, 7.45pm [2.30pm matinees Thursday 12th and Saturday 14th]
Cambridge University Musical Theatre Society brings you a story of vengeance that any revenge hero would be proud of, with the added benefit of some catchy show tunes. Todd returns to London after being exiled by Judge Turpin, who has taken a fancy to his wife and later his daughter. Teaming up with pie shop owner Mrs Lovett, Todd sets out to kill the wealthy for their corruption, the poor for their misery, and Judge Turpin for...well, being a sadistic pervert, I guess.

Revelations; Pembroke New Cellars, 9.30pm

An original sketch show created by Christ of Epaminondas and Yaseen Kader, explores 'humanity's struggle to maintain order in the face of an uncaring and callous universe. And also, irate monkeys.'

Wednesday 11th November

Yearwalk; ADC, 11pm

Yearwalk promises to be a production brimming with fairytales, myth and magic, using music, dance and puppetry. An ensemble piece utilising six directors, and plenty of cast members, histories and mysteries of different cultures will be embraced, creating a wonderfully quaint spectacle.

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VARSITY



Comic: The Unbeatable Squirrel Girl ★★★★★



There is nothing I'm more grateful for in Marvel's reshuffle and reboot than *The Unbeatable Squirrel Girl*'s creative team of Ryan North (*Dinosaur Comics*, *Adventure Time*) and Erica Henderson (*Jughead*) staying the same. Nothing.

This D-list character established a cult following thanks to *Great Lake Avengers* and her babysitting role in *New Avengers*, Squirrel Girl (a girl... with squirrel powers) is back in only her second first issue this year (thanks, Marvel).

This second *The Unbeatable Squirrel Girl #1* definitely benefits from the last series: there's already a pre-established cast (of rhyming rodent based heroes) that allows it to feel familiar. Placing Squirrel Girl in university was one of the best decisions North and Henderson have made with this series, because it gives a sense of grounding to what is really a ridiculous series. There's something about jumping between fighting HYDRA robots and moving into new digs or meeting flatmate's parents that makes the slapstick nature of the comic seem real.

superb the comic is without picking out every joke whilst jumping up and down excitedly, simply because there is no element of this work that is not Marvellous (apologies for the unashamed pun). *The Unbeatable Squirrel Girl* employs a rare breed of comic humour that isn't overly cynical - it doesn't use offence or shock value and doesn't parody or caricature its characters (just, you know, everything else). It's aware of its context, and breaks the fourth wall on more than one occasion; but then, who doesn't love poking fun at the sheer number of Spider-people there are in the Marvel universe right now? North's writing is a bit strained at times (but forgivable as he has to re-introduce a whole cast and landscape in a forced reboot), but the jokes are genuinely amusing.

Henderson's style fits so perfectly with the goofy nature of the series; it's bold, exciting and alive. Every character brings to the table their own distinctive look. It's cartoonish; but this critique should be taken as a compliment: components such as the robot-making montage, for example, succeed mainly because

the facial expressions of Henderson's illustrations are so expressive. I'm glad to see Joe Morris's 'Deadpool's Guide to Super Villains' cards have remained key to the narrative, as they fit with Squirrel Girl being a young inexperienced hero while at the same time allowing for strange and obscure villains to be introduced easily.

This is, of course, a silly comic. I mean, it's a comic about a squirrel girl... But North and Henderson never shy away from this, never attempt to make her anything she's not: by embracing the ridiculousness and the lovability of Squirrel Girl, the writers make a comic like this work. It's fun, refreshing, and also educational - there are some facts about bums, computer science and M.O.D.O.K.; everything you could ever want from a squirrel themed comic.

It's Week Five. Even if you've never read a comic before in your life, if you're in need of a quick laugh I can't recommend *The Unbeatable Squirrel Girl #1* enough. This review is as close as I can get to standing on a rooftop belting out the Squirrel Girl theme, but trust me, I'm doing it in my head.

Olivia Childs



Books: Top 4 Novels featuring Cambridge

1) *Porterhouse Blue* by Tom Sharpe

It feels right to start this list off with the quintessential Cambridge novel. The story centres on Sir Godber, a frustrated former politician-turned-master desperately trying to reform his beloved Porterhouse College in the face of stark opposition from his fellows and staff. Their ludicrous reactions to proposed changes to college structure (including introducing female students, reforming the canteen and providing free contraception) end up with, quite literally, explosive consequences. The amusing array of side characters include a research graduate smitten with an older, widowed bedder; a grouchy Head Porter who comments frequently on the brilliance of students who frequently get the better of him; and Lady Mary, whose self-indulgence has ironic and catastrophic effects. With an extremely satisfying, if predictable, ending, Sharpe constructs an absurd but at times all too familiar story.

2) *The Liar* by Stephen Fry
Stephen Fry is a funny man. There is a lot of humour in his debut novel: the story of Adrian Healey's journey through life, a large portion of which is spent at the fictional St Matthew's College, Cambridge. Healey's life is exciting: he flirts with danger through publishing illicit magazines and has a brief stint as a rent boy in London. Fry's characters are characteristically ostentatious to the point where they at times feel unrealistic. Equally,

the climax of the book suffers from having a few too many twists – Fry at times seems uncertain what kind of story he actually wants to present, be it a comedy, tragic social commentary or even spy novel, leaving the reader unsure of what exactly it was they gained from reading it. Although, in the end, some of these faults can be forgiven in the face of an unreliable narrator, the titular liar.

3) *Engleby* by Sebastian Faulks
As someone that is not necessarily the biggest fan of *Birdsong*, I think there's a lot of things to like in *Engleby*. In contrast to *The Liar*'s Healey, Faulks's character Mike Engleby's unreliable narration puts the reader on edge from early on in the text. The story takes the format of a journal, Mike's personal story as a working-class boy studying at an unnamed traditional university (clearly Cambridge) and the complicated relationship he develops with one of his peers, Jennifer Arkland. Faulks sets up Engleby's strange memory gaps early in the novel, and the arc strongly kicks into gear when Jennifer disappears one night following a party at Malcolm Street. The inside of Engleby's head is a fascinating if difficult place to be, and there's no question that the novel is engaging. The second half of the novel is perhaps less interesting than

the first, and indeed Faulks' story is by no means ground-breaking. Read it for the thrills, not to gain anything profound.

4) *Maurice* by E.M. Forster
Maurice is in many ways a phenomenal novel. Published after Forster's death in 1971, as he feared it would be unpublishable, the story of Maurice Hall is in many ways a deeply uplifting one. When attending Cambridge, Maurice meets fellow student Clive Durham with whom he forms a secret romantic attachment for two years. The real centre of the novel comes after our eponymous protagonist leaves university, heartbroken by his lover's desire to get married in what both parties are fully aware is a miserable union. His attempts to cure his homosexuality through hypnotism prove impossible, and it is not until he meets Alec Scudder, an under-keeper and his social inferior, that you sense a real chance of hope in the character's life. In many ways *Maurice* is a typical period piece, with the obvious exception of the main character's sexuality. Forster's use of this novel as a kind of

therapeutic exercise is clear in how stunningly open it is in a time before the decriminalisation of homosexuality. Immensely powerful and very readable.



Eddie Conway

TV: The Last Kingdom



The Last Kingdom has marched onto our screens courtesy of the BBC, brandishing double-headed axes with wild abandon. As an ASNAC student (yes, we really do exist) I will do my best to refrain from making snarky comments about the historical inaccuracies rife in this series that come so naturally to me whenever watching yet another historical drama, but luckily the ample fur-clad eye-candy provided by an exceptionally stunning cast of both genders preoccupied me.

The story is set among the Anglo-Saxon halls of the ninth century kingdom of Northumbria, on which Vikings sporting a wide array of tattoos and haircuts descend to invade and pillage. Our protagonist is Uhtred of Bebbanburg, whom we witness growing, across the first two episodes, from a precocious young Anglo-Saxon boy from an aristocratic family to the adopted son and darling of the

occupying Danes, who take him as their slave for his noble heritage. The series documents Uhtred's inner turmoil and divided loyalty as he wavers in an ethnic no-man's land between his native and foreign peoples.

Alas, some of the acting leaves a lot to be desired. Matthew Macfadyen plays Daddy Uhtred, who opens the drama on a dismal note with abdominal over-acting, perhaps giving us a clue as to why he has recently had so few prominent roles. The Danes, portrayed by various and indistinguishable blond, burly Scandinavians, cannot be faulted on their acting, nor particularly congratulated on their rather bland and indistinct characterisation. Unfortunately *The Last Kingdom* falls into the classic trap which trips up so many historical dramas: the surfeit of action and bloodshed means little room for character development, and therefore leaves in its wake a bunch of rather pale and immemorable figures. And, as a staunch feminist, although it pains me to say this, the same problem arises with the female characters, the main one being Brida (Emily



BBC/CARNIVAL FILMS

Cox), another Anglo-Saxon slave among the Scandinavians. Big Uhtred (Alexander Dreymond), her foil, also suffers the same fate; but in the case of Dreymond and Cox the weakness of the characters is due to poor scripting rather than their acting, which is impressive in its own right. However, this is not to downplay the rest of the cast. Little Uhtred (Tom Taylor) displays the most convincing and sympathetic performance of them all. Evil Uncle Aelfric's (Joseph Millson) dramatic skills are far superior; however, the trope of the power-hungry older relative of the protagonist is a tired and over-played one and doesn't do him justice. The lovely David Dawson also appeals as Anglo-Saxon Alfred the Great, and not just because of his whimsical cheekbones, but also due to his sympathetic characterisation as the soft-spoken and self-doubting king. Rune Temte is sufficiently foreboding as the hulking warlord Ubba, Alred's Scandinavian counterpart. The script is perhaps the lowest point of the series. It passes muster – but this is all it manages. Fitting in

with the overriding theme of the program, it is simply mediocre. “Those Viking ships look like Devil's turds,” is the most exciting line uttered in the show, which should probably give you an indication of the kind of literary level we're talking about here. While it may seem that I am unfairly plundering the good name of *The Last Kingdom*, I hasten to add that there is still plenty to credit it. Although the Anglo-Saxon politics and the obscure references to multiple puppet kings may have the head spinning of anyone who does not have the fortune to study medieval history as their degree (and even I was rather confused); the narrative is nevertheless very gripping. The copiousness and intensity of the action, the bloody fight scenes, and the fast-paced and refreshingly original storyline and perspective combine to make it highly watchable. Mock all you like, but you'll still come back for more – this Anglo-Saxon fest is addictive, and will temporarily scratch the itch caused by historical masterpieces such as *The Vikings* until their return. *Amelia Tudhope*

Album: Joanna Newsom - *Divers*



Since the release of her previous album *Have One on Me*, fans of Newsom's work have had to wait five years for a new release. This was largely due to marriage and acting roles, both of which seem to have had a large influence on her newest release, *Divers*. The wait was undoubtedly worthwhile, and the depth of her album shows that she certainly did not spend those years idly. Her captivating lyricism flourishes throughout, and her vocal delivery is flawless. Her manipulation of pace and intensity is as effective as ever, and the fact that only one track exceeds seven minutes is a testament to her matured clarity. The first track 'Anecdotes' opens with the distorted call of a mourning dove, initiating Newsom's concern with mortality that pervades the album. Floating harp lightens any moroseness in her war poetry, but her assertion that “we've borrowed bones” is unsettling, and clings to the mind. 'Sapokanikan' is perhaps the strongest track technically, even amongst ten others of astounding conception and production. She acrobatically shows her skill for varying vocal inflection, creating multiple climaxes, the last of which fades with an effortless delicacy. Newsom transitions from melodic richness to incessant galloping in 'Leaving the City', with deep synths adding strong authority to her voice. Only Newsom could pair baroque harpsichord with country guitar and make them feel an utterly natural fit. In 'Goose Eggs' she talks of struggling to find a place amongst others, and hints at deep childhood naivety: “you cannot learn that you burn when you touch the heat, so we touch the heat”. The track presents her anxiety about fleeting time in relationships - as explained to *Uncut*, marriage is “inviting death into your life... the idea of death stops being abstract”. 'Waltz of the 101st Lightborne' is a futuristic war poem, in which war is fought not geographically but temporally, with one's own past and future selves. This “war between us and our ghosts” is an internal conflict, concerned with past mistakes and future expectations. In 'The Things I Say' Joanna seems decidedly alone, her sole voice with a sole piano. Yet her voice echoes and reverses itself at the end of the track, talking of “somewhere far away”. It is darkly isolated – she only has herself to talk to. The title track 'Divers' is most akin to what we expect from her; the blend of harp, piano and undulating vocals is mesmerising. The musical arrangement is the most intricately layered, and in its complexity it is satisfying to the ear. The final track, 'Time, as a Symptom' ends the album as it begins, with the mourning dove call. While it is distorted and distanced in the opening, here it is much more prominent, calling hauntingly throughout. It began as an embodiment of her dawning realisations on love and death, now is a time beyond that dawn. She seems sure in her assertion now: “Love is not a symptom of time. Time is just a symptom of love”. The increasing pace and swelling orchestration are testament to Newsom's frustration at this truth. I was lucky enough to be able to see her live in Manchester Albert Hall last Saturday, a fitting chance to mull over her cryptic lyricism and enjoy the unique, intricate layering of vocals and instrumentals. This chance presents itself now in the form of *Divers*, an album that leaves no doubt about Newsom's wondrous talent, and haunting insight.

Charlie Thorpe

Event: ARCSOC - The Metamorphosis



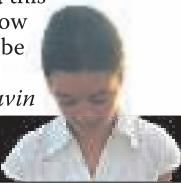
Okay, so the queue was really, really long. We had to spend a stupidly long time in the queue. The creative people of ARCSOC teamed up with perennial promoters Turf to put on yet another silly event in one of Cambridge's least used spaces last Friday, and the logistics through the evening left a lot to be desired. From bouncers via bathrooms to the unfortunate sight of the room being stripped while the last tracks were still playing, it is obvious that there were failures throughout the planning and execution that made some people's nights an honest misery. But that doesn't discount the night entirely. The important parts of it were still there; still just about functional. Fortunately, most of the surviving parts were the important ones: soundsystem, DJ, crowd. And most strikingly of all, dancefloor. The space itself was a genuinely inspired choice – the Guildhall is ornate and warm, but not ostentatiously so and the entirety of the organ fascia was projection-mapped with vast, highlighter-psych patterns spewed out on its surface. A room of that size created a dynamic not simply captured by “the back of the room was empty”. With that abundance of space, the attendees had a choice they are not usually afforded – if you wanted a more intense, claustrophobic club experience, you could dive into the middle of the crowd and do your tight-shouldered shuffle. But others, myself included, did not. After the pass through the crowd for the obligatory ‘hey, you look great, see you around!’, I wandered back to a group of friends, to the back of the hall, and danced like I haven't in weeks. The sound was acceptable and easily loud enough, but the crucial aspect was that space. It allowed a natural sorting – people were, for once, fully in control of their movement, so they ended up where they wanted, with the company they wanted, with the experience they wanted. Cambridge always feels like a cramped town; its clubs even more so. Comparing the experience to the battery farming simulation of most popular nights out, it was a revelation. An added bonus was the substantial reduction in macho, aggressive behaviour when no-one was fighting over the same square inch. The music choice was absolutely fine, if no more than that – Turf's residents pumped out slick, enthusiastic disco and house for the first part of the evening, before handing over to Afriquoi, who performed their trademark, raucously fun act. There was a marginal lack of intensity, with the visceral impact sometimes getting lost in the rafters of the venue, but everything came across as well as it needed to for the hyped crowd. There are some issues to be dealt with. There is no excuse for the kind of threat everyone felt from the venue's security. There is no excuse for not providing decent bathrooms. Similarly (and really, ARCSOC, learn how to PR on this one) there is no excuse for putting sex dolls in the windows, as good as the joke might have seemed in planning. I hope they don't just steamroll the complaints and continue as before. There has been a solid idea at the centre of every ARCSOC night I've been to, and this was no different. If they can figure out how to fix the more egregious faults, they'll be back on form sooner or later.

Michael Davin

Music Picks of the Week, from Margot Speed

I start this week with the soft crooning of Jamie Woon on his new album, *Making Time*, his second after 2011 debut *Mirrorwriting*. You may be familiar with the artist from the success of previous singles such as 'Night Air' and 'Lady Luck', tracks which came to popularity alongside the work of James Blake, the two artists mixing their soulful falsettos with electronic layers and trip-hop beats. Tracks like 'Sharpness' and 'Message' follow this formula, but as the album progresses the work becomes more stripped back, showing Woon has managed to mature the sound of his earlier stuff. 'Skin', for example, lets its plodding beat and crashing harmonies do all the work, while 'Little Wonder' verges on an acoustic sound, as his voice becomes even sleepier and dripping with soul than usual, accompanied by quiet, raw riffs. It's not all slow though, with 'Celebration' coming as close to upbeat as Woon's work probably ever will, but still using his trademark slightly-uncomfortable key changes and a mixture of brass and synths. *Making Time* folds layers of slow ambience and lethargy on top of each other to leave a rich and masterful album. One of the first artists Woon opened for was Amy Winehouse, whose work has been released once more this week on the soundtrack to the documentary about her life, *Amy*. After her unbelievably sad death in 2011, *Lioness: Hidden Treasures* was quickly assembled and released. This new work though, coming as it does on the back of the uncomfortable reflections that the film left us with, is surely a greater testament to the talent and troubles of her life. There isn't much new or unheard music, excepting a downtempo version of 'Some Unholy War', and a demo of

'Like Smoke'. This last is short and incomplete, but it's one of the rare places you can hear Winehouse playing with her remarkable voice and leave the listener feeling closer to the singer than any of her big hits. Tracks composed for the film by Antonio Pinto are scattered throughout, providing reflective and accomplished sounds that if nothing else remind you of the sombre background of the album. Overall though, 'Amy' is a remarkable reflection on her life and work, with her collaboration with Tony Bennett, 'Body and Soul', reminding the listener of the enduring mark she left on soul, blues and jazz. Finally, the collaborative project between The National's Matt Berninger and Menomena's Brett Knopf, EL VY, and their album *Return to the Moon*. The epic lyricism and smooth, treacle tones of the National's frontman are all here, but the general sound of the album is wackier and more 70s than his usual work, particularly on tracks like 'Silent Ivy Hotel'. 'I'm the man to be' meanwhile verges on surrealist, mixing in spoken lyrics such as “I'll be the one in the lobby in the green collared 'fuck me' shirt” with raw electric riffs and tripping xylophones. I'm not really sure where the need for this project came from, but it works. It mixes the obscene vocals and storytelling of Berninger with the epic, prismatic rock of Knopf and creates a polished album that uses the best of both. Even when the tracks start to blur together, sounds like those of 'Happiness, Missouri' and 'Paul is Alive' jolt the listener awake with their eclectic mixes of rock and electronica and the bizarre reflections and echoing howls that make up the vocals. This album is weird, wonderful and totally unmissable.



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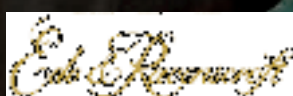
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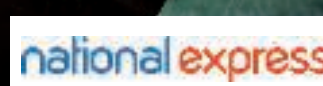
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Hippos and Hermes: drinking and sporting societies

Sophie Penney weighs up the case for joint sports-and-drinking societies, and asks what each aspect brings to the other

Sophie Penney

Sport Correspondent

In Cambridge there are drinking societies, there are sporting societies and there are the joint sports-and-drinking societies. While I do not want to question the existence of either type of society on its own, what, exactly, is this combined model?

Recently, the Catz Kittens announced that they would be abolishing initiations. In explanation of this the President, James Digby, declared: "We are a sporting society, not a drinking society". By reducing the amount of alcohol consumed the society aims to convert itself back into a sports society. This implies that there is a continuous scale, with sport at one end and alcohol at the other. How much you drink decides what kind of society you are. But what is this line linking sport and drinking on this scale? Where does it come from? How can it be explained?

I suppose the answer comes from the 'sporting lad' stereotype, where sports stars are also heavy drinkers and big party animals.



This is, however, little more than a stereotype. In reality, the two activities are fundamentally different. However much I drink, I will not become an Olympian and however much I play hockey, I will not be able to 'strawpe-do' a VK any faster. One student at Selwyn College, where the drinking society is separate from the sporting societies, does not understand the link either: "Just because you play sport it shouldn't be assumed that you like to drink, [and] in the case of Selwyn students that doesn't work."

Indeed, at Selwyn, the president of the Hermes Club, the men's sporting society, is not in the men's drinking society, and the presidents of both drinking societies are not in the sports societies; the lack of overlap surely says it all. As the student at Selwyn points out, "if you're playing sport at a high level you should not be encouraged to drink". Everyone from Usain Bolt to hungover freshers on a Sunday morning knows that alcohol hinders sporting performance, so why encourage the two to mix?

However nonsensical the link may be, could it be beneficial for socialising? A member of Christ's College's women's sports-and-drinking society, the

Hippolytans, is a fan of the mix. Yet I wonder if sporting participation really is the only criterium in all of these sports-and-drinking societies.

The Hippolytans member explains that "an interest in sport means that members have something in common aside from their interest in Cindies on a Wednesday night. It also means that we hold alternative events such as sports days so that the society does not just relentlessly swap." The sporting element clearly adds value and meaning to the underlying drinking society model. But what does the drinking add to the sport? I suppose it could be seen as the extension of sporting socials, which are commonplace and give members of the society a chance to bond off the pitch, track, or court. Does it depend then on how much the drinking element dominates? Is this the difference between a sports society that drinks, and a sports-and-drinking society?

Inevitably, there will be people who do not fit into both categories: the sporting stars left at home during socials because they do not like drinking, and the drinkers who just want to have fun but cannot because they 'are not sporty enough'. I know dancing in Life until the early hours of the morning can be a true test of stamina, but I wouldn't say you need a Blue to do it. Equally, another Selwyn student who has been on swaps with both sports-and-drinking societies and normal drinking societies says that there is "a

different vibe". As they explain, "some of the guys are not comfortable in a swap situation". If the sporting stars are accepted into the club in order to reward their achievements, making them feel left out and 'uncool' seems like a poor way to do this.

“

EVERYONE FROM USAIN BOLT TO HUNGOVER FRESHERS ON A SUNDAY MORNING KNOWS THAT ALCOHOL HINDERS SPORTING PERFORMANCE

So why not just have two separate societies? A member of the sporting Hermes Club finds that "by having the two societies separate you get a more inclusive system, a more effective sports society and probably a more fun drinking society". With separate societies it gives people the option to be in one and not the other. Equally, it does not prevent people from taking part in both activities. I am sure the perfect candidates for the sports-and-drinking societies would not mind being in two societies rather than just one. Since when did joining more clubs ever cause any harm?



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Champagne finish

Do Cambridge sporting societies have a problem with their drinking counterparts? – See page 31

Sport

Sport and social change: the perfect team?

Ben Rossington takes a look at the role of international sport in bringing about progressive social and political change

Ben Rossington

Sport Correspondent

US athletes Tommie Smith and John Carlos standing on the podium at the 200m medal ceremony of the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City, arms raised, fists clenched in a 'Black Power' salute; Nelson Mandela wearing a Springbok rugby jersey – previously a symbol of Apartheid – at the final of the 1995 South African Rugby World Cup, while presenting the Webb Ellis trophy to the South African captain Francois Pienaar; Jesse Owens winning four gold medals at the 1936 Berlin Olympics, flying in the face of Hitler's plan to demonstrate the sporting dominance of the 'Aryan master race'.

All of these are historical examples of sport's power to challenge an unjust status quo. In these instances, international sport provided a platform from which people could speak out against racism and racist systems of government. In South Africa, there was an international boycott of Apartheid sport: the International Olympic Committee banned South Africa from competing in the 1964 Summer Olympics, and excluded them from the Olympic movement in 1970; rugby and cricket boycotts exerted further pressure. This boosted global opposition to Apartheid, and further isolated South Africa, eventually forcing an end to the segregation.

Sport, then, can be a powerful tool for social change, especially internationally, where it can draw attention to the plight of the oppressed, unite

people behind a common goal and change societies for the better.

It can, however, also be exploited for propaganda purposes, often in ways that obstruct social progress. Hitler knew this, and tried to make the 1936 Berlin Olympics a political stunt in support of his brand of fascism. Similarly, the ruling Communist Party of China attempted to use the 2008 Beijing Olympics – in which China topped the medal table – to shore up support at home, and also to project geopolitical power abroad. It seems to have worked – China remains as undemocratic as it was before the Beijing Olympics: in their 2014 report, Human Rights Watch called the Chinese government "an authoritarian one-party state".



SPORT UNITES MORE THAN IT DIVIDES

But can it ever be so simple? Is it really the case that some sporting events help while others hinder? Surely not. The media hype around the Olympics, for example, also focused attention on China's unjust systems of government, its human rights abuses, and its curbs on freedom of expression. This resulted in some positive social changes: anthropologist and China expert Susan Brownell points to the legal reforms that came about after the Olympics,

including the strengthening of intellectual property laws, and a law giving greater freedom to foreign journalists. She also explains the less tangible benefits of the Games, claiming it connected China more with the rest of the world, resulted in a greater national focus on government accountability (which arguably helped to uncover corruption in China's football administration a few months after the Games ended), raised awareness about environmental damage, and, through the Paralympics, made people in China more conscious of the difficulties of living with a disability. The social impact of the Beijing Olympics is not well understood, but it was clearly not just a propaganda tool. Here, as elsewhere, sport unites more than it divides, challenging norms rather than accepting them.

Sport's power to bring people together – spectators and athletes alike – regardless of religion, race, nationality, gender or sexual orientation, is undeniably positive. Of course, this power is open to misuse and abuse. It can even set groups of people against each other, and enforce discrimination – see, for example, the sexism, racism and homophobia that remain widespread in football.

This is why sportspeople and sporting institutions have a responsibility to ensure that sport always upholds the three Olympic values – Friendship, Respect and Excellence – along with the four Paralympic values – Determination, Inspiration, Courage and Equality. Oppressive states like the UAE, Russia and Azerbaijan cannot



Heavy security during the Olympic Torch relay in Shanghai

be allowed to host major sporting events, or purchase sporting assets in the West, without having their human rights records scrutinised. And if sport is to continue being a force for good, sporting elites run by apparent dictators such as the (currently suspended) FIFA president Sepp Blatter or F1's Bernie Ecclestone have to be

challenged and held to account.

Nevertheless, sport can be, and has been, a very effective way to bring about social and political progress, especially when more conventional means have failed. Thankfully, the Jesse Owens in this world outnumber the Sepp Blatters, and long may that continue.

The Beautiful Curse of Saturday afternoon football

James Dilley

Sport Correspondent

If you're like me, a second year History student meandering through life with little purpose or motivation, the weekends are an important watershed. You've managed to spend three days of your week studiously working, with nothing but a promotion to Division Five on FIFA 16 and a worryingly large college bar tab to show for it. How could this happen? You opened that book, didn't you? Are there not a few notes on a Word document? Surely you must have done... something?

Yet you dropped out of bed on Saturday morning to find that only twenty pages of *Building the Devil's Empire: French Colonial New Orleans* have been read. That particular tract needs to be returned to the Seeley Library by 6pm. All of this in a week when you promised to really "pull out of the bag" that stellar essay that you and your supervisor both know you're

capable of. Bewildered, with an oversized mug of coffee in your hand, you sit down in your uncomfortable desk chair plucking up the courage to do some work.



YOU'VE BEEN SUCKED IN BY A DANGEROUS DRUG

Then it hits you. It's Saturday, and that means Premier League football! You knew there was a reason why "I'll do it at the weekend" didn't really cut the mustard. An orgy of sport awaits from 3pm onwards. Maybe you'll just put it on in the background?

The hallowed time looms, and you've read enough about Colonial Louisiana to conclude that you probably wouldn't stop by and visit. This is not enough for your supervisor, and

you know this. Yet you open up Google Chrome and, not without a deep sense of self-loathing, find a stream for the match of your choice. Or maybe you open up two streams, or more – putting Windows' useful new 'snap' feature to its intended use as a Premier League threesome pops up on your screen.

Oh, and what a glorious threesome it is. Jamie Vardy has already belted in two beautiful goals for Leicester and the match is but ten minutes old. Anthony Martial's ball control is more delicate than you'd ever have thought possible. Alexis Sanchez's thighs make you question your sexuality.

The scores are 2-0, 3-1 and 2-2 at half time and you're buzzing. Elsewhere, there are goals all over the shop. Chelsea are



still awful. Agüero is having a frustrating game over at the Etihad, but Mark Noble has inexplicably scored a brace. Back in the studio Gary Neville can hardly contain his excitement as he dissects a sumptuous Everton set piece. Your voracious appetite for football is being fulfilled and you're loving every minute of it.

The second halves of the matches kick off – you now have six streams open and are beginning to perspire – and footballs are flying across the LG monitor. The monitor that you bought primarily for this purpose, knowing you wouldn't be able to resist the old pull and tug. Sanchez bangs in another, looking

like Adonis in his skin-tight Puma shirt. Vardy has scored seven goals by the 65th. Trembling, you look at the footballs while Martin Tyler and Alan Smith's voices smother you like a warm blanket. You live for the football and nothing else matters.

And then it's all over. Mouth agape, you sit back in your chair, staring at the ceiling. The imprints of a thousand balls flicker across your vision. It's quarter to five and French Colonial New Orleans still sounds utterly unappealing. There is no time for work. This is like *Trainspotting*; you've been sucked in by a dangerous drug and time doesn't exist. Later, once the football has finished, you can play it virtually on FIFA and tinker with your fantasy football team. And you've still only read twenty pages of *French Colonial New Orleans* – oh well, maybe next Saturday.

Over the years the trappings of Saturday afternoon football have led many a person astray. And do you know what? Tomorrow's no exception.

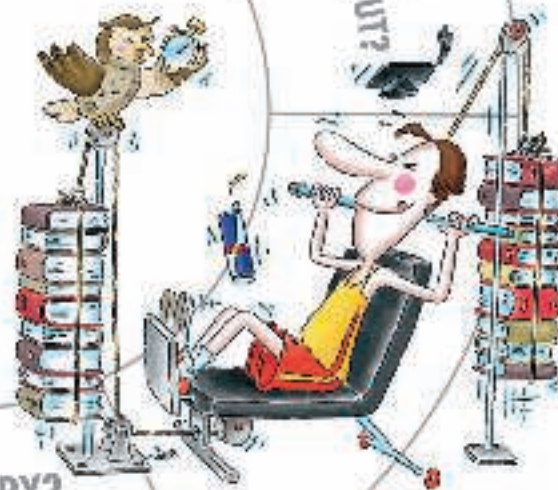
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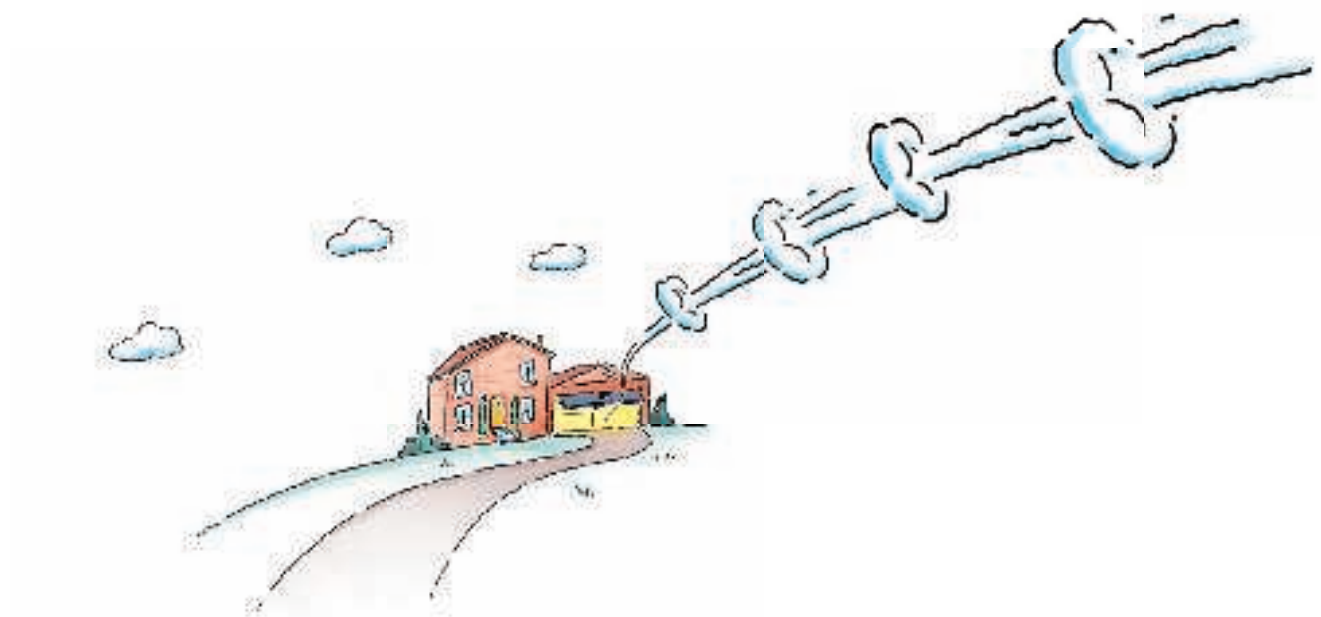
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