

VARSITY

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Cambridge slams government plans

- University report claims proposals for higher education will cause 'considerable damage'
- Consultation 'fails to demonstrate an understanding of the purpose of our universities'

Tom Freeman
Associate Editor

The University of Cambridge has criticised the government's plans for higher education, claiming they will cause "considerable damage" to the sector and its "international standing".

In a strongly critical response to the government's Green Paper 'Higher Education: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice', the University claims that the consultation "fails to demonstrate an understanding of the purpose of our universities".

In the Green Paper, the government lays out plans to "reshape the higher education landscape to have students at its heart".

But the university claims: "They risk undermining the very priorities they are designed to advance".

The report is co-authored by the Vice-Chancellor, Sir Leszek Borysiewicz, and was submitted on behalf of the university and its 31 constituent colleges.

It cites "fundamental concern" with three aspects of the proposals: the complete separation of funding and regulation of teaching from research; the "likely [...] counter-productive" mechanisms to implement them; and "the removal of one regulatory body independent of government" responsible for all university activity.

Among the government's flagship proposals is the establishment of a Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), which seeks to help students "understand the quality of teaching offered at different institutions", aiming to "raise teaching standards" in higher education as students make "more informed choices" about where

to study.

The document also includes proposals to increase "access and success" in higher education participation from under-represented groups, and to create a single gateway for entry across the sector.

However, the university "strongly oppose[s] any imposition of admissions targets" as a breach of institutional autonomy and academic freedom.

Considering imposed admissions targets as a threat to "the fundamental principle of educational standards required for entry", the report also warns that such targets "risk harming the outcomes upon which the national and global reputation of the sector relies and the prestige and benefit of achieving a degree for students".

The government's consultation lists providing "greater focus on graduate employability" as one of its "core

aims". It also aims to establish an Office for Students (OFS) to "promote the student interest and ensure value for money". The university was highly critical of this focus.

"The 'long-reach' aim of universities is to help students grow into thoughtful and critical citizens, not just earners and consumers," it says.

The university also expressed concern that the TEF regime would pave the way for a system of truly variable fees in higher education.

"We do not support the linkage between TEF and fees: it is bound to affect student decision-making adversely, and in particular it may deter students from low income families from applying to the best universities," its response reads.

Meanwhile, the University of Oxford expressed concern that a TEF's costs "would outweigh its benefits".

But in his introduction to the consultation, Universities and Science Minister Jo Johnson defended the government's approach.

"Higher education should deliver lasting value to graduates," he wrote. "While employers report strong demand for graduate talent, they continue to raise concerns about the skills and job readiness of too many in the graduate labour pool."

The report cites the "vital role" universities have to play in the challenge to increase productivity within the wider economy, "the main driver of economic growth in the years to come."

Currently, the Green Paper also outlines plans to merge HEFCE and the Office for Fair Access to create the Office for Students, a more market- and student-focused regulatory body.

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INSIDE:

BME ACADEMICS, FIGHTING SEXUAL VIOLENCE, CAMBRIDGE TECH STARS

Lost illusions

EDITORIAL

This week we learn that Cambridge students are engaging in the world of online 'sugar daddies' and 'sugar babies'. While this is perhaps not a revelation for those of us who have been around in the Cambridge student press for longer than one cares to mention – *Varsity* reported on this back in 2013 – it is certainly worthwhile to remind ourselves every so often that in among the normal rush of lectures, essays, and supervisions, there are other students who are living very different lives.

This probably isn't cause to start reevaluating all of your friends – not everyone is at it on their laptops when they're pretending to write an essay – but it should be enough to give pause for thought.

New realisations about the nature of life in Cambridge are a constant source of interest; why else are we perennially intrigued by the minute differences be-

tween colleges? It's why we're drawn towards stories such as the discovery of a 100-year-old gyp room at Selwyn (page 9), and why we're bound to have a quick virtual snoop around other people's colleges now that some of them have opened their doors to the cameras of Google Street View (page 4). It's all about breaking down the imagined barriers and illusions which perpetuate the many Cambridge 'myths'. This is, of course, a constant source of concern for access teams across the university.

Here we find the fundamental problem with mythbusting – sometimes we end up wishing that we'd remained in blissful ignorance.

However, we are frequently told (for better or worse) that blissful ignorance is not an ethical option. How often do we read articles which tell us that 'awareness' is the solution to any number of problems?

Exhausting though it may be, we have a certain duty to follow, and form opinions on, the latest controversies – see, for instance, what now seems to be an annual debate about race and diversity, which is currently hitting the headlines again in the wake of the Oscars nominations and Charlotte Rampling's comments (page 13). The aura of showbiz glamour which surrounds her has taken a serious knock, along with her chances of picking up an Oscar.

This duty to rid ourselves of 'naïve' illusions is not just a question of intellectual rigour for its own sake, although at a university like Cambridge we may often feel that this is all we ever do.

Instead, the intellectual bursting of certain bubbles is indeed a duty. If we ever wish to consider ourselves responsible citizens now or in the years after we leave the sheltered courts and corridors

of Cambridge, we have to view the world as it really is. Every so often, rose-tinted spectacles have to be unceremoniously sat on. While that may seem disorientating at first – who wants to think about what their friends get up to online anyway? – in the end the truth will out, and it will be briskly refreshing.

In a way, this is what the press is here to facilitate. The things we read retain (regardless of their content) a latent potential to shock, and this is one of the reasons why any of us pick up a paper to read the news. We certainly take more interest in the stories which surprise us, and yet it remains the duty of responsible journalists to strike the right balance; hunting for shocks devalues them. If we are to avoid descending into unfeeling and unhelpful cynicism, we have to both realise and retain a sense of the value of illusions, as we both clutch at them and wave them goodbye.

Trinity and John's hit back at *Tab* over May Ball reviews

Joe Robinson
Senior News Editor

The presidents of Trinity and St John's May Balls have released a joint statement condemning an email to May Ball and June Event presidents from the editors of *The Tab Cambridge*, James Wells and Xavier Bisits.

In the email, Wells and Bisits had encouraged the May Ball Presidents' Committee to drop its ban on the provision of "free or discounted tickets" to student reviewers, and made it clear that the publication "will not be giving any free publicity to May Balls this year in the form of reviews".

The email claimed that highly subsidised or free tickets were "one of the only ways [*The Tab*

Cambridge] could incentivise [its] authors", and that *The Tab Cambridge* would not review any events besides Trinity and St John's as part of its May Week coverage unless the policy is changed.

The email went on to state that a May Ball review from *The Tab Cambridge* was "of course highly valuable." Wells and Bisits claim that the current policy breaks a convention of issuing tickets to reviewers, and insist that *The Tab* has been offered such tickets in the past.

In their response to the email, Julian Derby and Harriet Gordon, Trinity May Ball Presidents, and Tom Zhang, St John's May Ball President, requested that "*The Tab* does not review Trinity or St John's" May Balls if the publication maintains what they characterise as an "embargo on the

remaining Cambridge Balls".

The statement argued that *The Tab's* policy "aims to undermine the atmosphere of cooperation and solidarity between the respective Ball committees."

It then stated that *The Tab's* approach "seeks to portray us as rivals", in contrast to what they characterise as the May Balls' "common goal" of "providing a night to remember for all of our guests."

Their comments echo those made by Derek Chan, May Ball Presidents' Committee Chair, who called *The Tab Cambridge's* actions "particularly irregular" and "heavy-handed", criticising them for intending to "block pro bono review submissions from publication."

The Tab Cambridge declined *Varsity's* request for comment in relation to the joint statement.



The presidents condemned *The Tab's* attempts to secure free or discounted tickets

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BME academics face 'horrifying' career prospects

Siyang Wei

Senior News Correspondent

New research by UK universities has revealed a "horrifying" picture for the prospects of BME academics.

This comes after a report released last year by the Runnymede Trust, which showed that of the almost 20,000 professors in the country, only 85 were black; of these, only 17 were women.

The research has been undertaken as part of an initiative to combat these racial disparities; in 2014, the Equality Challenge Unit designed a race charter looking to tackle the problems, to which 30 universities signed up.

These included Russell Group universities such as the University of Oxford, smaller research-focused institutions such as the University of Reading, and newer institutions such as Coventry and De Montfort. The University of Cambridge was not one of the 30 universities that signed up.

As part of the programme, universities had to analyse their data on recruitment, progression, and seniority of their ethnic minority staff members, as well as their information on the attainment gap between white and non-white students.

Of these 30 institutions, eight were awarded the higher education sector's first charter mark for promoting racial equality in 2015 in recognition of their work. These awards were presented at a ceremony in Westminster on 20th January, with civil rights campaigner Baroness Lawrence of Clarendon as the guest of honour.

Professor Ijeoma Uchegbu, Pro Vice-Provost for Africa and the Middle East at University College London – one of the universities that signed up to the scheme – said that "the analysis made for tough reading for senior staff".

For example, an analysis of historic data revealed that at UCL black members of staff were far less likely to be promoted than their white counterparts; for black academics, the chance of promotion was around a third of the rate for white academics. Prospects for Asian staff members were slightly better, but still below those of white staff members.

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GROWING EVIDENCE ACROSS THE UNIVERSITY SECTOR OF INSTITUTIONAL RACISM

Professor Uchegbu, who told *Times Higher Education* that some of the numbers "were horrifying", recalled that "as a PhD student, I knew I wanted to be an academic, but was told I would never make it." Instead, she was advised to become a pharmacist, as this was the expected route for ethnic minority women to take following study at the School of Pharmacy.

She added that the new figures were an improvement on 20 years ago, when there were no ethnic minority members of staff at UCL.

Laura Serrant, a professor of

community and public health nursing at the University of Wolverhampton, is a patron of the new charter, which she believes will help to reduce "unwarranted variations" in success rates between white and BME staff members by making them aware if ethnic minority staff are consistently shortlisted for interview, recruited, or promoted at lower rates than white staff.

Professor of Education at Cambridge, Diane Reay, reacting to the news, told *Varsity* that there is "growing evidence across the university sector of institutional racism in relation to BME staff appointments".

She said that this was "particularly a problem for the elite universities including Cambridge." However, she added that "there is a strong will to try and change things in Cambridge".

"Paradoxically a traditional sense of fairness works against making progress," she added, because it "leads not just academics but the English more generally to feel they should not make what they perceive to be allowances on the basis of race or any other aspect of identity".

She added that in the UK we have a "much more negative attitude" to positive discrimination.

Speaking to *Varsity*, Nafis Khan, a member of the CUSU BME Campaign, emphasised the importance BME staff members not only for its own sake, but also because of its impact on the student body, saying that a "lack of BME academics does have an impact on the welfare of the student body because representation is so important; if we can't see ourselves in the people we are studying or the people that are



UCL, where data has shown how poor promotion prospects were

teaching us, that can lead to intense feelings of alienation".

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INCREASE IN THE TOTAL NUMBER OF BME ACADEMIC STAFF

She added: "Not only is it important to address issues of representation of within the academy in terms of lecturers and supervisors, it is also really important to think about the curriculum – the people we are studying, and what types of knowledge we are consuming and valuing."

"We need to make it clear that

academia would not be reserved for white middle-class students. Access for BME students should not just stop at having gotten your offer and matriculating, but it can be as simple as feeling like you belong."

When contacted, a university spokesperson told *Varsity*: "The university is committed in its pursuit of academic excellence to equality of opportunity and to a proactive and inclusive approach to equality, which supports all under-represented groups, promotes an inclusive culture, and values diversity."

The university added to this by saying: "there has been an increase in the total number of BME academic staff employed by the university over the period of 2011-2015 and the university continues to work hard in this important area."

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University attacks graduate employability “core aim” in response to government

Continued from front page

This new regulator's purpose would be to “empower, protect and represent the interests of students, employers and taxpayers” through assessing the quality of universities’ teaching with respect to a TEF.

At the same time, HEFCE’s responsibilities for research would be transferred to a new body, Research UK.

Oxford decried the possible separation of research and teaching as “detrimental”, while Cambridge called the proposed introduction of the OFS “not acceptable”.

“A university is not simply a system for the delivery of instruction to undergraduate students... It is also a nursery of future excellence in research, a provider of graduate courses across a wide range of subjects, and a collaborative learning community for its teachers and researchers,” Cambridge’s report states.

Any proposed regulatory architecture “needs to reflect these many different facets”, it continues.

Instead, the university advocates for the creation of an Office for Higher Education, to subsume the proposed remit of the OFS, as well as of the existing Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), to remedy the “basic flaw” in the government’s plans for the supervision of higher education.



Jo Johnson defended the government’s plans

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HIGHLY DAMAGING TO THE SECTOR AND TO ITS GLOBAL REPUTATION

The university expressed broad support for the establishment of a TEF and its potential to be a “simple and respected kitemark” of teaching and educational excellence.

But it cautions: “If a TEF is associated

with an ability to increase tuition fees beyond inflation, students would be forced to choose between quality, as measured by a TEF, and affordability.”

The paper also warns that a TEF must also “respect difference” in the sector, and that any move to encourage “homogeneity” across higher education “would be highly damaging to the sector and to its global reputation, and would reduce student choice”.

A university spokesman declined to comment further on the original report and the contents of Cambridge’s response, telling *Varsity*: “It is not appropriate to add anything else at this stage.”

Google Street View lifts the lid on Cambridge colleges

Daniel Gayne

Senior News Correspondent

The university has announced this week that some of its most beautiful buildings will now be available for exploration online.

A selection of five colleges opened their doors to the Google Street View’s Special Collections team, with the end result now available to see on Google Maps. Iconic parts of colleges including Trinity Hall, Queens’, and Newnham have all been included in the visual tours.

St John’s College, which is available to explore, has hidden a number of ‘Easter Eggs’, referencing various famous alumni within their digital tour.

Among the items hidden are William Wordsworth’s life mask, Fred Hoyle’s telescope, and a towel in tribute to Douglas Adams, author of *The Hitchhiker’s Guide To The Galaxy*, a book containing the advice that you should “never go anywhere without your towel”.

Gonville and Caius College was also included. Its Master, Professor Sir Alan Fersht, said, “Gonville and Caius is one of the oldest colleges in Cambridge, and the exteriors of our beautiful Old Courts are not only open daily for visitors to admire but can already be seen

on Google.

“However, as a working community of education and research, we cannot easily welcome visitors to our magnificent library and hall, which are used daily by those who live and work here.

“The new panoramic interior ‘tours’ allow virtually anyone to explore the previously hidden beauty of some of Caius’s finest architectural gems, and perhaps be inspired to visit this historic college in person.

“From its earliest days, Caius has been a place of modern learning and forward-looking ideas, and opening the College up via technology absolutely fits that tradition.”

Other parts of Cambridge have also been included, such as the University Botanic Gardens and Great St. Mary’s Church.

Many of the university’s most attractive features have historically been closed to the public, and Laurian Clemence from Google UK was keen to emphasise that “now, anyone with a desire to see the university at close range, can access it like never before.”

Cambridge is the latest place to get the Street View treatment, with Google’s Special Collection team already having visited Dubai’s Burj Khalif, Mt Everest base camp, and even the interior of the Airbus A380, the world’s largest passenger plane.

King’s asks: Is the West to blame for ISIS?

Esha Marwaha

Senior News Correspondent

On Monday, King’s Politics hosted a debate on the threat posed by the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and the West’s role in its rise to power because of past military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, and recent involvements in Libya and Syria.

The panel consisted of Adam Deen, head of the counter-terrorist Quilliam Foundation, Cambridge law undergraduate Allan Hennessy, former *Left Foot Forward* editor James Bloodworth, and ex-UN employee Victoria Stewart-Jolley.

Andrew Murray, Chair of the ‘Stop the War’ Coalition, was unable to attend due to illness.

An immediate divide was evident between Stewart-Jolley and Hennessy, who argued that Western intervention was the primary driver of ISIS’s growth, and Deen and Bloodworth who attributed the group’s rise owed to the strength of its ideology. As one audience member put it, there was a disagreement around whether ISIS was “idea-driven” or “people-driven”.

Stewart-Jolley opened the discussion by analysing Western involvement in the Middle East. She focused on three core turning-points – the 2003 US- and UK-led invasion of Iraq, the appointment of Nouri al-Maliki as Prime Minister of Iraq in 2006, and Western refusal to accept Syria as a proxy war, which Stewart-Jolley argued “cut the heart” out of the Middle East.

She was heavily critical of the West for framing Middle Eastern politics as “unimportant” and for ignoring its “highly-complex political landscape, imploring those present to “rapidly look beyond the simplistic, binary notion of what is fed by the media”.

Bloodworth argued that it had



A U.S. Navy F-18E Super Hornet engaged in a bombing run in Iraq in October 2014

become “fashionable” to blame the West, and that this analysis was far too “neat and tidy”.

While he conceded that the West had blundered at critical junctures, he urged for a deeper inspection of indigenous factors such as internal brutalisation in Syria and Iraq.

Criticising Bashar al-Assad’s regime in Syria, he pinpointed the alienation of the Sunni population in Iraq as the breeding ground for ISIS, who model themselves as the “last defence from Shia repression”.

Bloodworth concluded that we ought to understand that “people in the Middle East have autonomy too” and that we should reject any notion

of either nation being stable even without Western intervention.

In seeking to explain ISIS, Deen provided a detailed genealogy of Islam. Drawing on examples of Wahhabism, he reasoned that ISIS is “nothing new”, merely an “intolerant, ugly and perverted reading” of the religion.

Rejecting the assertion that ISIS is a “liberating force against the West”, he proposed that it is “far more than that” and was instead an “aspiring state”. Speaking from personal experience, he argued that what drove people to the group was “disengagement with [...] religion”.

Deen went on to characterise as participating in a “venomous version

of Islamic revivalism”, preying on a vision of living in a “Muslim promised land.” In contrast with Stewart-Jolley, he concluded that “to blame the West for ISIS is to blame the West for Wahhabism and radical ideology”.

Hennessy agreed that ISIS capitalised on a “utopian idea”, but believed that this stemmed from the “fall of Saddam Hussein” rather than a long-termist reading of Islamic theology. He argued that it was motivated by the “power vacuum” created by deposing Hussein, which created the conditions in which ISIS has flourished and has separated it from the “hundreds of other terrorist organisations”.

Hennessy was ultimately critical,

however, of the question itself, which he deemed “reductive”. He suggested that an enquiry into how far the West was to blame, not ignoring the many factors related to ISIS.

During the panel discussion, the audience were given the opportunity to contribute verbally or via a live Twitter feed. The conversation moved away from foreign policy and towards the role of domestic policy in ISIS’s recruitment in Europe.

Questioning whether radicalisation at home could be attributed to the failure of the British welfare state, Hennessy argued that racism and socio-economic deprivation continues to make ISIS attractive.

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ULTIMATELY, WE WOULD ALL LIKE TO END ISIS

Stewart-Jolley proposed that “as a society, we don’t want to look at the dirty and nasty, such as racism”.

While the panel generally agreed on the role of insecurity in radicalisation, Bloodworth drew on a report written by scholars from Queen Mary University, which concluded that those joining ISIS come disproportionately from educated backgrounds.

Deen disagreed that oppression could lead to this kind of violence. Instead, he emphasised the need to understand ISIS and what they say about themselves.

He argued motivations can be personal and the organisation is “self-motivated” and “rotate on their own axis [so that] they don’t need America”.

Despite animated debate, Hennessy was keen to conclude that while “this might get heated [...]” ultimately, we would all like to end ISIS.”

EXCLUSIVE INVESTIGATION

Undercover with the Cambridge sugar babies

Students are seeking “arrangements” with sugar daddies and mommas to pay university fees, find sexual fulfilment, and get other rewards. **Steven Daly** speaks to Cambridge ‘sugar babies’ to find out more



Sarah is a PhD student at the University of Cambridge. For nearly a year, she has been a sugar baby – a partner in a relationship with a sugar daddy or momma – in order to fund “a personal project.”

Describing her experiences to me, she is overwhelmingly – at times unnervingly – enthusiastic and candid, explaining that while she is “not primarily interested in money,” she finds “the idea of receiving money very exciting.”

Sarah uses SeekingArrangement.com, the UK’s “leading Sugar Daddy dating site”, which promises daddies and mommas the opportunity to “get what they want, when they want it.”

In 2013, Seeking Arrangement revealed that 168 students from the University of Cambridge had signed up to its service in the previous year, making it home to the highest concentration of university “sugar babies” in the country. The surge in sign-ups came shortly after the tripling of tuition fees by the coalition government.

With fees at top-performing universities set to rise again in 2017 and following the government’s decision to scrap maintenance grants this month, it seems likely that the number of Cambridge students searching for sugar daddies with SeekingArrangement will continue to grow.

Sugar baby “arrangements” come in a variety of forms. Daddies solicit a range of services: from dining together and conversations, to various different types of sexual liaisons. In return, sugar babies receive rewards: often cash, but also sometimes repayment in the form of gifts.

While Sarah welcomed the £1,000 she received from one sugar daddy in exchange for sex, she tells me that her experiences have mainly been about having fun. “I feel that an arrangement gives me a freedom to say exactly what I want and not to get too much emotionally involved.” And

Sarah is not afraid to speak her mind. “I think lots of women as well as men have a prostitution fantasy and this website is a way to fulfil it within safe boundaries.”

I asked Ella, an undergraduate, about the psychological motivation behind accepting payment for sex. She said that while she could “imagine that many others found the fetishisation appealing and exciting”, for her “it’s financial”. Seeking Arrangement claims that it is a platform for “mutually beneficial relationships”, and Ella echoes their dictum closely: “for me, personally, it’s an easy, convenient and mutually beneficial way to support myself.”

As of January 2016, there are 1.9 million students registered on Seeking Arrangement.

For Brandon Wade, its founder and CEO, the site is a “solution” for students in debt. “We are in a state of emergency, but it isn’t due to terrorism. The \$1.2 trillion college debt crisis is crippling our economy – and no one is doing anything about it.”

No one, he claims, apart from him: “SeekingArrangement.com has helped facilitate hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of arrangements that have helped students graduate debt-free. That’s more than anyone can say of a particular president or Congress.”

Casting himself as an alternative, radical politician with the intention of liberating students from their financial problems, Wade can dodge many of the ethical questions that would otherwise be levelled against him. Despite his scaremongering and inflated sense of self-worth, he is right. Students

around the world are increasingly turning to financial “arrangements” and escort services in order to support themselves.

For another undergraduate, Katy, the financial benefits of an arrangement is the pressing issue.

While Ella – by her own admission – comes from a “very privileged” background, Katy does not: “I would not by any means be on such a disgusting website if I felt I had a choice.”

It is deeply troubling to learn that a student at this university can find themselves in such financial difficulty, desperately turning to the site as a last resort. But Katy believes that she is making the most of a bad situation. Unlike Sarah, she is not willing to engage in sex, and seeks out “men offering money for a platonic or long distance relationship” instead. Sooner or later, she tells me, these men will express a desire for the relationship to become physical: “I almost always have to back off when they begin requesting or demanding more.”

Helen, a recent graduate, found a way to avoid face-to-face contact with ‘sugar daddies’ entirely. Introduced to SeekingArrangement.com by a friend while at Cambridge, she decided to make an account and was contacted by a man offering £50 in return for a session on webcam. When Helen stipulated her one condition, to remain clothed, he explained that she did not have to turn on her webcam at all, “as long as he knew he had a hot girl watching him get off it was enough”.

A no-brainer. Or, in her own words, “50 quid to watch an old guy wank off” (and he came in literally 30 seconds anyway) whilst the Skype screen was minimized and I was probs doing an essay”. Who can argue with that?

While their motivations, experiences and opinions vary from case to case, Sarah, Ella, Katy and Helen are

all unwitting alumnae of what Seeking Arrangement.com call its ‘Sugar Baby University’. The website’s advertising campaign is the latest in a string of measures that capitalise on the site’s popularity with students, such as the free Premium memberships offered to sugar babies registering with a university e-mail address.

In a promotional video released by Seeking Arrangement this month, Kelly, “a fourth-year sugar baby”, takes us on a tour of the ‘Sugar Baby University campus’. It is difficult to isolate the most objectionable scene in the video, as every shot objectifies its female actors. Without context it could easily be mistaken for the pre-amble to a high-budget porn film, with the stilted and suggestive dialogue to match. To take one vignette: we zoom in on one student standing by a notice board offering ‘free tanning sessions’, ‘yoga and wine classes’, and a ‘fashion consultation’. She takes a flyer from the poster advertising a class on ‘daddy issues’, smiles, and walks away.

All of the Cambridge students I contacted via Seeking Arrangement identified as feminists. I asked them what they thought of the video, and whether it changed their opinion of the site. Most were angered: for Sarah the video was “awful beyond words,” Katy found it “exploitative and immoral”.

For Helen, the video was merely laughable: “I just couldn’t take it seriously.” And while its very premise was to attract students to Seeking Arrangement, she believes that the video is “definitely aimed at men... I can’t see how any woman watching

that would feel inspired to sign up”.

The dynamic between empowerment and exploitation is always in flux in these “arranged” relationships. While Helen never met a ‘sugar daddy’ in person during her time at

Cambridge, she always felt that she had the “upper hand” over the men paying her, who were “the ones being taken advantage of.” Ella agrees that in her experience “the paid individual makes the choice.” But she also recognises that “if people aren’t totally consensual (i.e. financial issues mean they have no choice), then that’s completely different”.

As a woman finding herself in that very situation, Katy doesn’t mince her words. She believes that “most” arrangements are disadvantageous to the party being paid, and is “disgusted” to be “a part in this system which exploits women.”

She is particularly critical of Seeking Arrangement, accusing them of manipulating the way the website appears in the press. “It is common practice for someone working for the site to approach ‘sugar babies’ and offer them considerable amounts of money for interviews.” She claims that these women are given practice interviews in which they are “strongly advised to downplay – or rather omit entirely – any negative aspect of the site”.

“It makes me incredibly sad...to imagine the many young girls who will be lured into making accounts on the site as a result of these misleading articles,” she adds. *Varsity* has not received a response to these claims from Seeking Arrangement. On the front page of its website, Seeking Arrangement describes itself as a place where “members fuel mutually beneficial relationships on their terms”. It’s hard to say how true the latter part of that statement is, but certainly becoming a sugar baby is an option a number of students are willing to take.

All sugar baby names have been changed.

“lots of women as well as men have a prostitution fantasy”

“50 quid to watch an old guy wank off”



INDEPENDENT THINKING



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Cambridge students discuss fighting sexual violence

Daniel Gayne

Senior News Correspondent

This Wednesday the Cambridge Sexual Violence Policy Campaign hosted a discussion entitled “Fighting Sexual Violence in Universities and Beyond”.

The forum, chaired by Emmanuel’s Roberta Huldish, centred on the challenges faced by activists trying to change sexual assault and harassment policy within the university and its colleges.

While the panel touched on challenges such as under-educated tutors and the problems posed by the fragmented college system, much of the debate was focused around the controversial Zellick Report.

First published in 1994, the Zellick Report advised universities against investigating serious offences unless the matter had already been taken up by the police.

However, the group was of the opinion that this policy had failed women, with one commentator calling the document “outdated”.

Indeed, the event comes in the wake of an increasing number of reports and surveys highlighting the problem of sexual assault and rape on campus.

A 2014 survey by the CUSU Women’s Campaign found that over three-quarters of students had been harassed and 30 per cent assaulted. What’s more, only 12 per cent of these cases were reported.

It was also revealed that only two students said that they had reported

the incident to the police, with 10 taking the incident up with staff or welfare officers in their college.

Bryony Beynon, who co-directs the Good Night Out campaign, pointed out that the evidence barrier in the criminal justice system can make dealing with the police a very frustrating experience for survivors, and that the process can be made more difficult since “the Crown Prosecution Service barrister is very likely to be ‘of a certain identity’”.

“

OPTIMISM REMAINED MEASURED

Members of the audience and panel told anecdotes describing their own frustrations in dealing with the police. Speaking to *Varsity* after the event, Ella Raff recalled one student advisor at a Russell Group university who “would not refer students to the police”.

Raff, who co-founded End Rape on Campus UK, further noted that “a lot of people drop out” due to traumatic experiences in dealing with police.

Given the hesitance of many survivors to involve the police, it was felt by many that the Zellick Report puts survivors in a difficult position, with Raff admitting “it’s a bit of a paradox”.

Much of the remaining discussion was oriented around the role of the

university and colleges, and how to change this.

Nikolas Oktaba, an MPhil student at the university, brought up recent developments in the US, where the Title IX legislation has been used to force universities into policy change.

Title IX bans the use of federal money to support sex discrimination in education, and audience members raised the idea of using comparable legal mechanisms, such as the Human Rights Act or the Public Sector Equality Duty, to make similar progress.

However, Ella Raff cast doubts on such efforts, pointing out that with these British laws you cannot sue in general terms; the plaintiff has to have been directly affected.

The group agreed that this puts a lot of pressure on individuals to put their lives on hold to pursue a case, with most accepting that potential financial and academic costs were understandably high hurdles to overcome.

Raff described how one exceptional case, where Oxford student Elizabeth Ramey took legal action against her university, failed on a technicality.

Ramey had hoped that her case, fought in 2015, would force a change of policy, arguing that the university’s guidelines on harassment failed to comply with equality laws. The judge ruled that Ms Ramey’s case lacked substance as she was no longer at the university.

Rather than through legal routes, some hoped that change could be made through the internal structures of the university.



Emma Sulkowicz’s mattress protest raised awareness in the US

Indeed, Charlotte Chorley, CUSU Women’s Officer, suggested that the university was close to a new protocol, which she hoped would be finished by Lent.

“

THE UNIVERSITY HAVING A CENTRALISED POLICY WOULD BE FANTASTIC

That policy is being developed by Graham Virgo, Pro-Vice Chancellor for Education, and must go through a committee stage first.

Chorley said that the completed policy could introduce a new “assault

and harassment advisor” who would be “fully trained in rape and harassment [advice] and deal with those cases”.

She also expressed hope for a related policy training tutors to deal with racial and sexual harassment cases, an idea proposed by, and developed in discussion with, CUSU President Priscilla Mensah.

But optimism remained measured; Chorley herself noted that the colleges are independent institutions which are “not bound by what the university does”.

Raff had similar concerns, noting that while the people in charge are not “bad people”, many are unwilling to “go out on a limb”.

However, Raff emphasised that “the university having a centralised policy would be fantastic” as it would set a precedent for all colleges.

Free speech continues to provoke debate in Cambridge and beyond

Anna Menin

Deputy News Editor

The topic of free speech at universities continues to provoke widespread debate, with tensions over issues such as safe spaces and no-platforming arising at many UK universities, including Cambridge.

The Cambridge Union last night held an emergency debate with the motion “This House believes university should be a safe space”, while the President of Lucy Cavendish College, has said that “culture wars are now sweeping our universities”.

Elsewhere, Oxford’s new Vice-Chancellor, Professor Louise Richardson, recently spoke out about the tensions raised by the recent #RhodesMustFall campaign, which has caused controversy both at Oxford and other universities. She has also claimed that “education is not meant to be comfortable”.

“Education”, Richardson continued, “should be about confronting ideas you find really objectionable, figuring out why it is you find them objectionable, fashioning a reasoned argument against them, confronting the person you disagree with and trying to change their mind, being open to them changing your mind. That isn’t a comfortable experience, but it is a very educational one”.

However, the Deputy President of the National Union of Students, Richard Brooks, has defended the idea of safe spaces, arguing that “student



The Union celebrated “200 years of free speech” last year

unions are often the only place where students can be themselves, a place where they can think about things and challenge ideas and thoughts in a safe environment.”

“Sometimes the only way you can ensure safe spaces remain safe is through no-platform policies,” he added. No-platforming is an idea that asserts that individuals with extreme opinions should not be given the opportunity to express their views, whereas safe spaces are designated forums where speech that is perceived to be hateful is not permitted.

This increased debate comes in the wake of a recently published survey which found “curbs on freedom of expression” to be present at 90 per cent of British universities, up from 80 per cent last year.

The survey, published by the online magazine *Spiked*, also found that two-fifths of student unions had no-platform policies in place, with one-fifth having safe space policies.

On the survey’s release, *Spiked*

claimed: “Today, 55 per cent of campuses are a hostile environment for free speech, explicitly banning speakers, outlawing particular ideas, and cleansing campus of anything that might rile, offend or upset.”

Condemning what they term the “epidemic” of “campus censorship”, *Spiked* used a “traffic-light system” to categorise UK universities, with Cambridge being ranked “amber”.

The survey claims: “The University of Cambridge and the Cambridge University Students’ Union collectively create a chilling environment for free speech”, citing things such as the university’s decision to drop the promotional “Dear World, Yours Cambridge” promotional video featuring David Starkey following claims that he was “aggressively racist”.

Some of the other reasons cited for this categorisation were CUSU’s “Zero Tolerance to Sexual Harassment” and their “Safe Space Policy”.

Jackie Ashley, President of Lucy Cavendish, wrote in *The Guardian*:

“As someone brought up in the full flood of the rights revolution, I can’t see any argument in favour of making life even slightly harder for somebody who feels their gender is fluid.”

“How can anyone brought up believing in the right of people to be who they are... believe anything else?”

However, she also expressed her “fear” that “the creation of too many ‘safe spaces’ is infantilising”, arguing that “in 99 [per cent] of cases it’s better to have speakers you disagree with making their case openly, and then being confronted and argued down”.

Ashley added: “If bad ideas are not openly expressed, heard and then challenged in universities, they will continue their subterranean progress through society until, perhaps, it becomes too late.”

Despite these fears, she clarified: “As the head of a college, I would not want any speaker on site who advocated or expressed hatred towards any group of my students.”

Cambridge classicist Mary Beard has also previously argued that no-platforming is “counter productive”, and that it “discourages debate and the due dissection of error”.

Writing on her blog for *The Times Literary Supplement*, ‘A Don’s Life’, Beard argued that “we should be in the business of subjecting all views, both those with which we agree and those with which we disagree, to public scrutiny. Free speech only means anything it is [sic] refers to views with which you disagree as well as agree – else it’s no more than a cabal.”

CUSU holds debate on DSO referendum

Harry Curtis

Deputy News Editor

This Tuesday, CUSU held a debate on the ongoing Disabled Students’ Officer (DSO) Referendum, which proposes to add a seventh sabbatical officer role to the student union’s constitution.

The event began with both sides being given five minutes to make the case for their position.

The CUSU Elections Committee was constitutionally required to present the case against the addition of a sabbatical officer for disabled students, since no one came forward to speak for the opposition.

The intention was to allow further speeches to be made for both sides. However this was forestalled as “in the interest of a balanced debate” further speeches in favour would only be permitted if there were also speeches given against. There were no forthcoming opposition speakers.

In order for the constitution to be changed, a majority of those who vote in the referendum must be in favour and this majority must comprise at least ten per cent of those eligible to vote.

In this case, that number is 21,915, meaning 2,191 people will have to vote in favour in order to add the role to the CUSU constitution.

Voting in the referendum will remain open until 9am on Wednesday 3rd February. If enough people vote in favour of a DSO, one will be elected in May along with a new team of CUSU sabbatical officers at an estimated yearly expense of £26,500.

Merchant: 'Everyone's an asshole, and if you're not, you're a step ahead'

Jack Higgins

Senior News Editor

"You'll never have more freedom or more time than when you're at university – 'oh I'm doing my studies!' – no you're not, you're in the fucking bar." This was how Stephen Merchant, the BAFTA- and Golden Globe-winning writer and comedian, appealed to Cambridge students to make the most of their opportunity to dive into a career in comedy.

Merchant, ironically, told the packed Union Chamber that he wishes he had been sitting where they were twenty years ago, having been keen on the idea of coming to Cambridge – he tells me he would "study philosophy probably" if he could choose now – and joining the Footlights. He says he was "gutted" when his teachers persuaded him that he wasn't academically good enough but then got the requisite grades for Oxbridge anyway.

However, despite being only "marginally" funny at school, he never gave up on comedy, saying that it "never occurred to me not to give it a stab."

Throughout the evening the self-described "comedy nerd" won laughs effortlessly as he divulged carefully rehearsed anecdotes. Rapturous applause greeted one particular story that involved an infuriating small child throwing a shoe into Merchant's soup at a wedding. When the apologetic mother light-heartedly asked "Oh, what's he like?", Merchant retorted "He's like a cunt."

However, such brazenness is far from the norm for the comedian, who concedes that he's typically very awkward with people, such ineptitude being particularly acute when around women, as his show *Hello Ladies* parodied. Now 41, he passed on his romantic wisdom to the students present, telling them that they shouldn't "be

scared of girls" because "they're like a bear in the woods – just as scared as you are of them." Having had his own complications in the dating world – he jokes that in the past he used "would you like to meet Ricky Gervais?" as a chat-up line – he thinks standing out isn't that difficult because "everyone's an asshole, and if you're not an asshole, you're a step ahead."

It would be hard to class Merchant as an asshole – throughout the evening it was clear that he's still down-to-earth, saying that being a celebrity "doesn't banish any personal demons you have" and admitting that when *The Office* went big he was "just swept along" with it, astounded that he was getting paid to write comedy. Did he wish he'd starred in it? "Yeah, when I saw all the free shit that Ricky got sent!" he jokes.

“

THERE ARE SO MANY FUCKWITS IN AMERICA

When we spoke afterwards, he says he isn't at all involved in Gervais's revival of the character that made both their names both in the UK and US, David Brent. Inevitably, Merchant did not escape the question he's most asked about what many perceive to be another of his 'characters': is Karl Pilkington real? "Karl is like that, he's one of the most unique beings I've ever met." In validation of this, Merchant recalls a time when he, Gervais, and Pilkington were talking about celebrities who had become famous via their parents – such as Bianca Gascoigne and Calum Best – when Pilkington, in a "moment of genius", cut them off by saying: "well, you could say the same about Jesus?"



Merchant appeared at the Cambridge Union on Tuesday

Merchant, now residing in L.A., has noted dissimilarities with his native land since moving, finding Americans "more generally optimistic". He adds that the UK is the only place where someone can shout affectionately: "Steve, you lanky twat!" – the kind of behaviour he feels wouldn't sit well with Americans.

Unfortunately for the funnyman, living in the US means confronting an unfunny prospect: Donald Trump's presidential candidacy. He finds the idea "terrifying", and mocks the outspoken billionaire for having gone bankrupt and losing more money than if he'd just invested his inheritance.

How does he explain Trump's rise? "There are so many fuckwits in America", he replies, adding that there is a "weird anti-intellectualism" in the country. When an American student in the crowd jokingly protests against this, Merchant reassures him: "you're not a fuckwit, you go to Cambridge!"

Talking after the event, Merchant says that people like Trump and Jeremy Corbyn are appealing to "disillusionment", that "they fill this gap for people that feel like they're not being spoken to" and, he adds with some enthusiasm: "it's quite exciting". As for his own political views, he tells me that he's "not cynical about politics",

thinking that it's "important that people vote and engage in politics".

As for his heroes, the Warwick graduate mentions John Cleese – with whom Merchant shares both height and a West Country background that encouraged him that he could make it – as well as Woody Allen and Monty Python, famous for pushing the boundaries. Does he think we can draw lines when it comes to comedy? He does, but thinks "policing" comedy is "dangerous" because you inevitably "stifle creativity" and "that isn't healthy".

Merchant himself has not escaped criticism of overstepping the mark, describing how one celebrity refused to feature in *Extras*, calling the script "depraved filth". He recalls that when Kate Winslet appeared in the show, she found one line – "something like 'I'm sweating like a child molester'" – too much, but insists that he and Gervais never purposely sought to "stitch people up".

Speaking after the event, Merchant was affable, generous with his time and – unsurprisingly – immensely tall. He's not always "switched on" either, saying he'd much rather have a civilised conversation than be endlessly cracking jokes as some comedians do. When I ask him if he feels comfortable

in the 'Hollywood bubble', he says that "it's nice to put on a tuxedo and take your parents along", but he finds celebrity award shows "absurd". He adds that the novelty of the celebrity world "quickly wears off", whereas the "novelty of sitting in a room writing has never worn off".

However, he describes how he found little time for writing last year because he was on stage eight times a week, starring in *The Mentalists* in London. He took on that challenge because he wanted to do some real acting with the "discipline" of a fixed script, as opposed to the more improvised comedy he's used to. "I hated it", he says, "never do a play". Is he joking? No, he truly found it exhausting – his own mother said he was "looking grey" – and miserable: "why can't we change the words every night?"

It's safe to say he won't be acting on stage again any time soon. Instead, he's currently "working on a couple of screenplays", and our time is cut short because he needs to get on with writing them.

As he says just before leaving: "in the end, almost everyone I've ever met in Hollywood – if they're any good – they are working really hard, and it's not working hard to walk down a red carpet".

102-year-old Cambridge graduate gets MA 85 years after matriculating

Kaya Wong

Senior News Correspondent

102-year-old Brian Lowe, who read law at Trinity College 85 years ago, recently received a Cambridge MA.

All Cambridge students are eligible to apply for an MA two years after they graduate with a BA. This method is also in place at the University of Oxford and Trinity College Dublin.

Mr Lowe matriculated in 1931, the year when the celebrated physicist Dr Ernest Rutherford first carried out his revolutionary experiments in the Cavendish laboratory.

A student of many talents, Mr Lowe had been a member of the university hockey team, and had learnt to fly at the university air squadron. Upon graduating, he joined a firm of London solicitors in 1937. He then served as an assistant British trade commissioner in Vancouver, after which he moved to Australia, where he now resides. The last time he visited his alma mater was more than a quarter of a century ago.

The honorary title confers membership of the University Senate, allowing the holder to participate in discussions as part of the university's decision-making process, and vote to elect a new Chancellor or High Steward. If

you hold a Cambridge BA, you may apply for the MA six years after your matriculation, as long as you have held your BA degree for at least two years.

"I visited these rooms the last time I was in Cambridge in 1989 when it was occupied by two female students, but seemed much the same, except that there was a wash basin where the coal had been kept, a great improvement," Lowe told *Cambridge News*. The law graduate had considered applying for the MA to 'complete his CV', but had "never got round to it". Having checked the university registry, Trinity College has confirmed that Mr Lowe is the oldest graduate to have ever had their degree conferred. A spokesperson for the college said: "We were delighted to hear from Mr Lowe and were happy to have his certificate sent to him."



Brian Lowe read law at Trinity

Rising Cambridge tech stars named on *Forbes* list

Kaya Wong

Senior News Correspondent

A number of talented Cambridge scientists and technological entrepreneurs have recently been featured on the inaugural *Forbes* 30 Under 30 Europe List.

Dr Steve Marsh, 27, founder and CEO of the technology firm GeoSpock, has been featured in the Science and Healthcare section of the *Forbes* list. Dubbed "the most exciting kind of technology company" by its technological partners, GeoSpock is a company that handles geospatial data in real time, targeting everything from automobiles to genomics. Marsh, who was the first person from his secondary school to earn a PhD, came up with the idea for GeoSpock while studying for his PhD at the University of Cambridge Computer Labs.

Focused on developing a real-time super computer on an extreme scale that could simulate human brain function, GeoSpock is his invention that is capable of handling big data, processing and cataloguing massive amounts of information simultaneously. Marsh partnered up with Horizon's current CEO, Dr Darrin Disley, to launch the company, and is also collaborating with Abcam's Dr Jonathan Milner. The company's services have rapidly attracted interest from various

industries and it has recently secured £3.5 million in Series A investment.

Karolis Misiunas, 27, is a Lithuanian PhD candidate at the University of Cambridge who has also been featured on the Science and Healthcare list. His research concerns how particles couple with each other and how strongly at the deepest observational levels. The information is particularly relevant for other research fields involving channels and protein pores.

Toby Norman, 28, Tristram Norman, 27 and Daniel Storisteanu, 29, the three cofounders of the Cambridge-based, non-profit technological startup SimPrints, have been featured in the Social Entrepreneurship category of the *Forbes* list. Describing themselves as a team who want to "change the world" with their lightweight mobile biometric scanners, the company is expected to release their product later this year. The scanners they have developed connect wirelessly with any Bluetooth 2.0 phone, and are to be used primarily in developing countries to link biometrics with medical records, bypassing problems that arise from inadequate paper-based health records. The trio have won numerous accolades including *Business Weekly's* 'Startup of the Year' and UNICEF's 'Best Tech: Changing Children's Lives for Good' Award, as well as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation 'Saving Lives at Birth Award'.

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News in Brief

EVACUATION OCCURS AS 'BOMB' FOUND

'Bomb' scare at Cambridge train station

There was a bomb scare at Cambridge railway station on Wednesday, which led to the evacuation of all people on the premises. The object, which had been dug up by workmen, was later identified as an old 15cm bullet. Police were called to the station at 8:47am and offices nearby were also evacuated.

TWO WORLD RECORDS BROKEN

Cambridge rower crosses Pacific Ocean

A Cambridge graduate has helped to break two world records, as part of a team of rowers who managed to cross the Pacific.

Isabel Burnham, a former Cambridge rower, joined the three permanent members of the team for the first leg of the journey. They set off from San Francisco in April and have now arrived in Australia after months at sea.

BLAST FROM THE PAST

Selwyn uncovers hidden treasure

Selwyn College has uncovered a bricked-up Victorian-era cooking range that dates from the days when students had servants. It was found alongside letters and postcards, dating back 100 years.

The cooking range would have been in one of the college's original gyp rooms, used by servants to prepare tea and toast for students.

TOURISTS' PHOTOS RUINED

Queens' bank collapses

One of the most photographed places in Cambridge was somewhat ruined this week, as a landslide led the banks of the Cam to collapse at the side of Mathematical Bridge in Queens' College.

The landslide occurred overnight after a retaining wall fell away from the bank, with River manager Jed Ramsey having written to punt operators to warn them about the incident. Mr Ramsey was quick to assure people that there was no risk to Mathematical Bridge and the surrounding area, which is an incredibly popular photo spot for tourists.



The Week in Numbers

102 Age of Brian Lowe, who recently received his Cambridge MA 85 years after matriculating

168 Cambridge students signed up to sugar daddy web site SeekingArrangement in 2013

2,191 Minimum number of 'yes' votes needed to create Disabled Officer in CUSU referendum

'FOLLOWING OF MILLIONS' (APPARENTLY)

John's sets up record label

St John's College has launched its own record label in order to release music by its "world-famous choir".

The first recordings from the label will come out in May 2016 and promise to be "diverse" and "ambitious". The college said on its website that its choir is "widely regarded as one of the best collegiate choirs in the world" that has a "global following of millions".

"This is an exciting time for both the Choir and the College," said Andrew Nethsingha, Director of Music.

A SEA OF PEANUTS HITS NEWNHAM

Newnham goes nuts

Students at Newnham College have been emailed about a "sea of peanuts" left in a corridor. It asked whether "whoever left a sea of peanuts in Peile Corridor [could] please clean them up ASAP"; and was signed off: "Love from your slightly peanut-encrusted estates officer".

This is not the first time that the antics of Newnham students have led to bizarre emails. In December, students were sent a message saying: "A college bed base has been found locked in a running shower."

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Interview: Prof. Alastair Compston

Michael Baumgartner
Science Correspondent

"Knowing about disease is fundamental to asking the right question."

I recently had the opportunity to speak with Professor Alastair Compston: distinguished physician-scientist, fellow of Jesus College, recipient of a 2016 New Year's Honours award, and pioneer of alemtuzumab, the current frontline treatment for multiple sclerosis (MS). Over the course of our conversation, he covered a breadth of topics such as advice to aspiring scientists and his views on clinical science. Despite this diversity, I was struck by the themes that seemed to tie together all these ideas, and in many ways his career as a whole: hypotheses, personal relationships, and perseverance.

Professor Compston offered an unusual perspective on technology and contemporary research based on big data: "If you are a clinician scientist, and the focus is on numbers and big data and big numbers, the critical hypothesis needed to understand disease may be lost." In our conversation, he returned to the view that numbers and technology, while obviously important, are not everything. His approach has prioritised concepts of disease pathogenesis rather than seeing what emerges from big data. This caveat reflects the central role that hypothesis-driven research played in his career and in introducing alemtuzumab as a treatment for MS, the achievement for which he was recognised. MS is a debilitating condition, which manifests as a host of varied, unpredictable symptoms resulting from the deterioration of brain and spinal cord function. Having extensively reviewed and contributed to the MS academic literature, Professor Compston concluded in the late 1980s that the root cause of this heterogeneous disease was the body's own immune system gone awry.

T-cells are a crucial component of the adaptive immune system, the

body's defence system that 'adapts' to best fight off a specific pathogen. T-cells become 'auto-reactive' and mistakenly identify parts of the brain and spinal cord as infectious invaders and launch an attack. Most students of medicine and human biology will recognise this hypothesis from lectures and textbooks, but "this was not established dogma at the time." 25 years ago, Professor Compston followed his hypothesis's predictions and sought a drug to eliminate auto-reactive T-cells and thereby stop MS's progress. This search pushed him into turning the Campath-1H antibody, developed here at Cambridge, into a licensed MS therapy.

A sound hypothesis, he argues, was also essential to shepherd this therapy through the many setbacks it faced. A telling example is alemtuzumab's first clinical trial: an eight-year experiment that found many nasty side effects and few benefits. In spite of this setback, he and his team still believed in their therapy. He realised that he had made the mistake of "treating patients who were too far gone," late stage patients who had already suffered neurodegeneration from the ravages of autoimmunity in the brain. Professor Compston, then facing even higher resistance and criticism, hypothesised that the T-cells had to be stopped early, before they could inflict irreversible damage on the nervous system. A sound hypothesis, therefore, allowed him to diagnose the flaw in his experiment in a way that masses of data alone would have missed.

Professor Compston believes in the importance of personal relationships as

much as in hypothesis, "the power of the advocacy of the individual," as he put it. Relationships, he says, shaped his career, including those that introduced him to the topic of MS research and brought him to Cambridge, and so allowed him to achieve many of his goals, such as being a founding member of the prestigious Centre for Brain Repair. Personal relationships, "not the force of data," overcame one of alemtuzumab's most daunting hurdles: getting a foothold in the business world. "Businesses are easily frightened off," so alemtuzumab had been bought and sold, though no company chose to develop it as an MS therapy. The breakthrough occurred only when the CEO of ILEX, a San Antonio, Texas-based company, visited Cambridge and met one of Professor Compston's patients. This patient argued eloquently and persuasively that this therapy had changed her life for the better. This patient and her conviction finally convinced ILEX to back the therapy.

Twenty-five years after crafting a hypothesis, alemtuzumab finally arrived on the market in Europe and in the USA. This brings us to the last of Professor Compston's themes: perseverance. "There were moments of extreme gloom and moments of considerable excitement." Only recently has the success of the therapy validated the hypothesis that spawned it in 1988. Congratulations to Professor Compston on a New Year's Honour more than two decades in the making.



MULTIPLESCLEROSIS

Life in the stem cell lab

Aran Shaunak
Science Correspondent

Six days into my first real taste of scientific academia, I found myself facing stark white light and three sterile fume hoods at 9:15 on a Saturday morning. I had been the willing recipient of my own batch of stem cells, which I was charged with cultivating, looking after and eventually experimenting upon to *hopefully* provide data of some use to my PhD supervisor. Excited to be flying solo already, I gave my cells the five-star treatment.

Stem cells are so demanding to grow that they often require feeding every day, meaning that I had no choice but to come in on my supposed weekend to give them their meal (which consisted of whatever I could find in the -80C freezer before frostbite caught up with me). So initially I was thoroughly disillusioned with the glamorous cutting-edge-of-science academic lifestyle that people imagine when you say: "I work in a stem cell lab". To me, it seemed like I had unsuspectingly taken on thousands of pets.

Everything changed over the course of the next week. Working closely with my supervisor, a ten-hour experiment produced an actual result. The lab members were sceptical – no one believed it until we could show them every control experiment under the sun. People don't just get results in this line of work, especially not the summer student who has no clue what he's doing. But, lo and behold, a protocol based on 'estimated' dilutions and getting bored before the timer went off produced a near-perfect result – a testament to the experience of my supervisor.

Thus the majority of my planned placement was completed in the first 10 days. As I fed my cells *yet again*, I realised something had changed. It was no longer a chore to feed them, or move them into a bigger flask to give them room to grow. I wanted to put batches in the freezer, so that if

disaster struck I wouldn't lose them. The result of our experiment had both given me a taste of the success that an academic feels when they finally look down the microscope and see that they were right all along, and earned me the respect of my older, more experienced colleagues. And I have come to realise that I had attributed some of that success to the cells themselves; that they had earned the time and trouble it took me to look after them.

If only the story ended there. Real life hit like a hammer in the second half of my placement, when a year's worth of cloning experiments disintegrated in front of my supervisor's eyes, nearly forcing us to resort to the emergency gin tucked away in the drawer. Cloning experiments that were going beautifully suddenly collapsed and we were forced to begin again from scratch. I finally felt the disappointment that comes from unexplained failure, and found true respect for the resilience of your Average Joe PhD; after a week, month or year of two-steps-forward-one-step-back, they still come into the lab with the idea that just maybe, today will be the day for a breakthrough. Fortunately a week of further work resulted in the development of a protocol that my lab will use to quantify levels of particular proteins in stem cell experiments, which had previously been impossible to reliably achieve.

My first ever cells were responsible for my fundamental change of opinion on academic life. It isn't as glamorous as it sounds: stem cells may not be growing people new kidneys in time for Christmas this year. But I realised that scientists don't spend weekends in the lab and nights with a pad of paper by their bed because they have to. We do it because the cells become yours, and you care about them. Your results become your badge of honour that you show off with pride, and most importantly, you absolutely, definitely will find the answer to that one, burning question – and you're damn well going to do it before anyone else.

Infection of the psyche: Can our brains catch diseases too?



NEUROPOP
WITH
JOY
THOMPSON

The idea that mind and body are separate pervades our culture and philosophy thanks to Descartes. The

actual layout of the human brain seems to agree with this: it is encased in a shell of bone and tough membranes, is visually separated from the rest of the body by the neck, and has a handy defence mechanism called the blood-brain barrier, which (usually) keeps out toxins and potential infections in the bloodstream. So the idea of brain damage or mental illness being caused by infection, in the same way that we might catch a cold, isn't just strange, it's downright disconcerting. After all, there's nothing psychological about sore throats or parasites, right?

Except that there might be. Take parasites, for instance. The single-celled *Toxoplasma gondii*, which is transmitted by cats, forms tiny cysts in the brain of all its mammalian hosts, including humans, where it then hangs out indefinitely. And *Toxoplasma* warps the brain, at least in mice; while uninfected mice instinctively fear the scent of cats, *Toxoplasma* infection makes them slightly at-

tracted to it, and thus more likely to be eaten. This is in the parasite's best interests, because it can only reproduce in a cat's digestive tract.

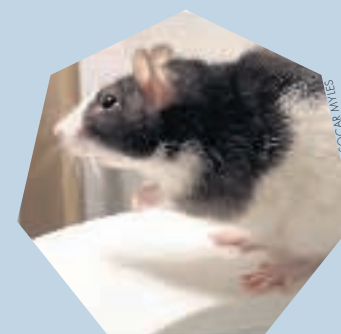
Toxoplasma doesn't have exactly the same effect on humans – most humans don't have an instinctive dread of cats – but *Toxoplasma* infection still correlates with risk-taking and mental disturbance. For instance, the *Toxoplasma* infection rate is several times higher in people who died in fatal car crashes than in the general population – and dangerous driving is strongly linked with risk-taking behaviour. (Much like mice running towards cats instead of away from them.) *Toxoplasma* infection is also associated with increased schizophrenia risk; this isn't true for everyone, though, otherwise cat owners would all start hearing voices. Instead, it's thought that *Toxoplasma* acts as a trigger in brains already primed for the disease, for instance in people with a family history of schizophrenia. This does mean we

don't have to worry too much about patting the college cats; just be extra careful on the road.

Even a sore throat may spell trouble for the brain. Infections by *Streptococcus* bacteria, responsible for 'strep throat', can spiral out of control into full-blown rheumatic fever. This affects the joints, heart – and brain. The neurological symptoms are collectively called Sydenham's chorea, which affects about a quarter of rheumatic fever patients, and range from uncontrollable, jerky limb movements all the way to psychological signs like slowed cognition and altered behaviour. (Historians might know this as St. Vitus' Dance.) The cause is an autoimmune reaction triggered by the infection: instead of just targeting the invading bacteria, the body's immune cells mistakenly kill cells in a brain region called the basal ganglia. In fact, autoimmune reactions like this are now linked with many psychiatric disorders in children, especially obsessive-com-

pulsive disorder.

These findings provide graphic examples of why a healthy brain needs a properly functioning immune system, and how a simple bacterial infection can completely derail this. We still won't catch neural pathology from toilet seats, but the interplay among infections, microbes and the brain clearly shows that looking after the rest of the body is crucial for mental health. Take that, Descartes.



SOC&WIVES

VARSITY INTRODUCING

Joe Winters

JOE WINTERS is a third-year Peterhouse student who has tour-managed the Footlights International Tour Show, written a radio play for Cam FM and business-managed *Macbeth* for the European Tour Group. Now he's written, and is directing, an ADC mainshow: *Peter Grimes*, a dark tale of death and rumour set in 1912 on the stormy coast of Walberswick.

What inspired you to write *Peter Grimes*?

I visited these little villages by the Suffolk sea-side called Southwold and Walberswick for years since I was tiny, and my family feels very tied to there. I spent a lot of time walking around the harbour daydreaming, because there's not a lot to do apart from sitting by the seaside and daydreaming. That's where it began, the Christmas vacation before last, when I was wandering around Walberswick and came across a handmade printing of the George Crabbe poem, *Peter Grimes*. It was a beautiful edition, so I poured over it. I read the poem over and loved the illustrations; I already knew the Britten opera and the poem revealed to me how incredibly different the two were. It was fascinating that this story I thought I knew has a completely different version that predates it. And then I did a bit more research and

found out it was actually a Suffolk local myth. I started to think about the character a lot, and from that I decided to have a go at doing it myself.

Why did you decide to re-write *Peter Grimes* as a play?

It's a very dramatic story. I don't have the skills to write an opera, and I don't think you need another opera of *Peter Grimes*, but I thought it lent itself very well to a play because of its interrogation of character. He's a very conflicted man, which lends itself to close and careful dramatic interrogation. Crabbe's poem, being eighteenth-century, doesn't do that and nor does Britten's opera.

Was the writing process easier or more difficult than you thought it would be?

I have previously written an Oscar Wilde play for Cam FM, which I found really easy, but this was a very different experience because I had no intentions of it ever being staged. I found it a very pleasurable thing to do character sketches - I have a notebook to draw them in. I didn't find it difficult to try to build a big play, because I wasn't trying to. Then, however, I got to produce the Footlights Tour Show,



Love Handles, and

everyone involved went off for a week to write the show. As one of the tour managers I got to pick where we'd go, and so I sneakily picked Walberswick so that while everyone slept through the morning I would get up at 5 or 6 am and wander around the town, have some ideas, and then come back and type them up. Then, flash forward to the summer vacation, when I was at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, where you have to take a week out or you'll run out of money, so I spent that week locked away in a little bedroom writing a proper draft. Then I got back to Cambridge and showed it to a couple of my friends, who were really nice and didn't say it was terrible, and

said I should pursue it. And so I had a little group reading where I got friends to read it out loud, and it went really well. And so I applied for the show.

And now you're in the process of seeing *Peter Grimes* come alive: has the play changed since bringing it to stage?

Yeah, hugely. There's a scene in which someone drowns a cat and, when I wrote that, I showed it to someone who said it was ludicrous and I'd never be able to stage it at the ADC, and I said: "yeah, but I won't be directing it so I don't care..." Now

I look at the script and think: "who wrote this? It's impossible to stage!" Two people drown on stage, a cat gets drowned, there's a massive fight, there's a bar brawl - it's nightmarish. But the play itself has changed hugely because I've had to really interrogate it with all the fine detail that a director would. If you're just writing it, thinking that someone else will stage it, you get very imprecise, so directing is a process of clarification. You have to scale things down, or because of casting you have to change a character. We had a read-through last night and realised that we are very much at the beginning of this process. To me it had felt like that was the end, because I'd finally given in a written draft, but there is so much work to do. It's terrifying as a

writer, but also incredibly exciting, that the actors who come on board are also going to change what the play is. You have to be the person at the centre: everyone's being creative around you, but you have to be the emitter, drawing in everyone's ideas and then funnelling them through you. That is, at least, what I'm hoping to do.

At what stage of the process did you decide to direct the show as well?

About a week after I got the show. I floated the idea of co-directing with a couple of friends and they all said that since I have such a clear idea of what I want, I should do it myself. That was a really nice thing for them to do, because it sort of gave me permission. I haven't directed an ADC main show before, and thought I just wasn't qualified. But I have ideas for lighting and set design, so we'll see how it goes.

Has this process made you want to do this in the future?

I'm very conscious of not wanting to sound like a parody of a Cambridge English student, but yes. One of the things that was brilliant about doing the Footlights show last year was that in Edinburgh we had a party with generations of people who have done the Footlights tour show, and you stand in a room, as in the 2015 tour, but there's the 2014 tour, and the 2013 tour, the 2012 tour, and by the time you get to the 2011 tour, they've got jobs. You got to see that it was possible to go from the ADC to working in Radio 4 or beyond. I would absolutely love to pursue it as a career, and one of the nice things about Cambridge theatre is that it makes it feel possible.

Joe was talking to Joanna Taylor

Frances O'Grady: "this is real – this can rob people of their livelihoods"

Theo Demolder speaks to Britain's most senior trade unionist about the movement she wants you to join

The word 'militant', so often ascribed to leading trade unionists by critics in the media, is one which could scarcely be further from the mind when speaking to Frances O'Grady, the General Secretary of the TUC – the federation of UK trade unions.

The first woman to hold the position (and, according to Radio 4, the 11th most powerful in Britain), her appointment in 2013 was the peak of a career spent rising through the ranks of trade unions – an identity as dear to her as it is fundamental.

"Wherever I've worked I've carried the union card, because I think it's about looking after yourself and also looking after your work mates." I asked her when she began thinking in this way. She told me: "it was discussed around the kitchen table – there were lots of active trade unionists in my family and I think, as a teenage worker in the Oxford colleges in the back kitchens, I already had a sense that joining a trade union was the best way to win not just better conditions, but more respect." This sense of a personal mission evidently endures, and is one which she urges students soon to go into the workplace to take on. "It's the best way of ensuring – critically – that you get a voice... And that's in every walk of life – we represent footballers, IT professionals, lecturers... across the board, unions are there."

Of course, though, there comes with trade unionism that 'militant' baggage – fair or otherwise – with our own CUSU not unaccustomed to coming under fire. For O'Grady, it's about "listening to and not just lecturing people. Trade unions and the NUS are not clubs, we're movements, we're there for our members; so it's important that we do stay in touch with what our members are feeling." She notes, however, that "there are times when our members want us to be bold... especially when they're having a tough time – and there's no doubt that workers and students are having a tough time in the current climate."

In the case of the particular recent 'tough time' of junior doctors, O'Grady asserts that they "without doubt won public support because when government spin doctors tried to dismiss them as militant that just didn't ring true with people's experiences; they – frankly – trusted the doctors more than the government." She explains that "what's important is telling the story. Sometimes because we get so involved in negotiations we sometimes forget how to tell that story to the public at large; the public wants to know 'what caused this dispute in the first place? And what's the practical solution?'"

As far as another case of supposed militancy goes – there have been

allegations that the National Union of Teachers has been colluding with Islamic extremists – she is quick to remind me that the TUC is "an umbrella group", advising people to get the NUT's side of the story.

O'Grady's work seems, at its heart, to be most about the defence of the values of trade unionism – values which she perceives to be under threat from the government's Trade Union Bill, which she believes "attacks what is a fundamental British liberty – the right to withdraw your labour. Although going on strike is a last resort, if we didn't have that right we would be left powerless in the face of an unreasonable employer who just won't compromise... that should worry us all."

She quotes Conservative MP David Davis who likened sections of the bill to that which was enacted in Franco's Spain, and adds "this isn't just a philosophical debate – thousands of workers have been blacklisted in the construction industry because of collusion between their employer and the authorities... so, you know, this is real – this can rob people of their livelihoods." A particular grievance she has is the government's refusal to allow online voting as part of the Bill. "It seems crazy to me that in 21st-century Britain trade unions are the only organisations in the land who are barred from using safe and secure e-balloting.

All good democrats should want to see greater participation in votes of every kind... I think people feel very sore when they see the Conservative Party using it to select their candidate for London Mayor, and yet they're saying that it's not sufficiently safe for trade unionists to use."

As the interview drew to a close I asked her what one piece of advice she would give Cambridge students, aside from to join a union. She told me it was to "be optimistic about the future because you can change it."

Was she optimistic now? She laughed. "I'm always optimistic! I wouldn't do this job if I wasn't an optimist. It's about recognising that we do have the power to change things for the better."

And did that include the power to stop the Bill? Another laugh. "If we can't defeat it, we'll certainly damage it." It's clear that, whether you agree with her or not, in Frances O'Grady the government has certainly met a formidable opponent.



FRANCES O'GRADY

Comment

The Oscars whitewash points to wider issues



Xanthe Gilmore

Rampling's comments have raised a heated debate about racism in the film industry

When the Academy released its list of nominees for this year's Oscars, social media went into a frenzy. This wasn't just surrounding the 'will he, won't he' debate of DiCaprio's fifth nomination, but because all the actors in the running this year are white. It was a surprise when this was the case last year. That this could happen for two consecutive years is, for many, an outrage.

You'll no doubt have read that Charlotte Rampling recently belly-flopped into the sea of #OscarsSoWhite hashtags by stating on French radio that the current unrest over the Academy's non-diverse acting nominations is "racist to white people". Following her stellar Oscar-nominated performance in Andrew Haigh's *45 Years*, it's disappointing but quite probable that she'll now be remembered for such asinine comments more than for her undeniable acting prowess.

It's not just that Donald Trump is making a defiant flouting of political correctness suddenly seem a much more attractive position; Rampling's statement is really ludicrous. Racism is structural, not personal. Criticisms targeted at people belonging to a particular group, especially when punching up, not down, are not the same as racism because to be racist you need to be speaking from a position

of privilege. That's why in the USA, where white men and (to a lesser extent) women continue to benefit from structural and institutional advantages, they cannot be victims of racism.

As Justin Simien, director of *Dear White People*, puts it, "A joke about white people dancing has no impact on the lives of average white people, whereas jokes about black people and reinforcing stereotypes about black people do have an impact on the lives of everyday black people." We can't just 'reverse' a concept so deeply enmeshed in power relations. Clearly, it matters who's speaking.

But if the dissenting voices behind the Oscars backlash are not 'reverse' racist, are they at least justified? Rampling attempted to clarify her comments in the interview by adding: "One can never really know, but perhaps the black actors did not deserve to make the final list." This is the most popular claim in defence of what is seen as a 'whitewash' of this year's ceremony. But many disagree.

Idris Elba's sensitive portrayal of an African warlord in *Beasts of No Nation* is widely considered to be the biggest snub. Others include *Creed*, which was one of the American box office's top hits last year, and has a black lead and director, Michael B. Jordan and Ryan Coogler, but the film's only nomination went to Sylvester Stallone, its sole

white actor. *Straight Outta Compton* too, a critically acclaimed film about a black hip-hop group with a black director and producer, was only nominated for its screenplay, the writers of which were white.

Fingers are pointing at the 6,000 plus voting members of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, whom an analysis by the *Los Angeles Times* in 2014 found to be 93 per cent white and 73 per cent male. Throughout the 20th century, 95 per cent of Oscar nominations went to white actors, and the continued predominance of white Academy nominations and electors suggests that little is changing in the 21st Century.

Of course it is entirely possible that the best actors this year all happened to be white. It's just that this standpoint becomes increasingly hard to defend, year after year, without suggesting that either an Academy voter bias or unequal opportunities in the film industry might also be at play.

Rampling later backtracked on her controversial claim in a statement to CBS News, clarifying: "I simply meant to say that in an ideal world every performance will be given equal opportunities for consideration." It's a noble sentiment, but the only problem is that the American showbiz world is far from ideal. Not only are minority groups under-represented in the top

roles that count for the Oscars, but the drama schools and casting offices see that this 'whitewashing' occurs well before trophy season comes around. A 2013 survey of the Screen Actors Guild (SAG) indicates that 70 per cent of its members are white – and these tend to be the lucky ones offered the 'Oscar bait' roles in the first place. This all has a trickle-down effect, and the Academy can only vote based on what it's given.

So perhaps we're missing the big target with the Oscars. The real issue isn't really who gets to take home a golden statuette, but whether audiences want their films to reflect the society they live in. Following the pressure mounted by Twitter hashtags and plans by prominent industry figures – including Jada Pinkett Smith, Spike Lee and Michael Moore – to boycott this year's ceremony in protest, the Academy has pledged to double the number of female and minority members by 2020. But filmmakers can do more still. Some of the most under-represented groups in Hollywood cinema have tremendous power as consumers. Asia is now the world's second biggest film market and Hispanic Americans buy 25 per cent of the US's cinema tickets. If audiences voiced their dissatisfaction in the world beyond Twitter, Hollywood would almost certainly be all ears.

A review into graduate representation is imperative



Chad Allen

The GU President responds to the university's review into the future of services for graduate students

The university's review into graduate representation is a fantastic opportunity. We are encouraged by how seriously the university is taking the review, and by the clear and genuine personal commitment of the panel's members.

It's no secret that the GU and CUSU have presented contrasting submissions. It's a matter of record that a merger with the GU is one of CUSU's strategic aims; in contrast, the GU's entire purpose is to provide politically independent graduate representation. Disagreement is inevitable.

There is absolutely no animosity between our officers – indeed, we work very well together because we recognise most of our goals are shared. The GU and CUSU jointly provide the Students' Unions Advice Service, for example, and the GU was happy to be invited to collaborate on CUSU's response to the Government's Higher Education Green Paper.

We're also under no illusions as to the necessity for a review. In fact, we'd be surprised if the university *wasn't* reviewing graduate representation given recent events.

Which brings us to the GU's troubled history. There are so many competing rumours flying around, that a potted summary of what actually happened would not go amiss...

One sensible place to start the tale is 2012, when the GU attempted to reform itself into a registered charity

by butchering an (awful) NUS template constitution to make it fit. Unfortunately, the resulting document was a disaster and, even more unfortunately, the university approved its adoption. The Charities Commission had to point out it was unsound and required urgent revision.

This set off a chain reaction of calamity, as the then-President raged against the university's attempts to fix the mess by sending in the lawyers. The GU descended into such a state of chaos that the MCRs felt compelled to remove the President from office. There followed two years of attempted clean-up, including – finally – a functional constitution, but at great financial and opportunity cost.

A lack of proper handovers hampered this clean-up, as the GU had no permanent members of staff. The new Trustee Board was therefore not informed, and the accounts had not been submitted to the Charities Commission until they were well overdue.

By the time reliable accounts were drafted for the previous years of mayhem, the GU had been removed from the charities register. The Commission has since confirmed this was a clerical error caused by budget cuts and understaffing. The GU has since been restored to the register with our original registration date and charity number.

The failed presidential election was the final straw for the university. It is

therefore ironic that, unusually, the GU was not actually at fault. The GU had, as always, delegated the election to CUSU to remove redundant reduplication of effort. The incorrect preliminary result declaration was therefore completely out of our hands. Regrettably, the Proctors' investigation into the affair took three months – by which time the victorious candidate had, understandably, accepted another job.

The by-election that granted me my office aside, that brings us quite nicely up to the present day. So what can we learn from this history lesson?

First, the GU has failed its members. It has been so busy trying to avoid implosion that it has not been serving its constituents' interests. There is no point pretending otherwise.

Secondly, the GU's misadventures were mainly a result of either bad luck or lack of support. If only the NUS constitution was any good, if only its bastard progeny hadn't been approved by the university, if only the GU had had a permanent member of staff to aid with troubled presidencies and handovers, if only the Charities Commission wasn't being cut to the bone, if only the Proctors had come to a decision sooner, if only...

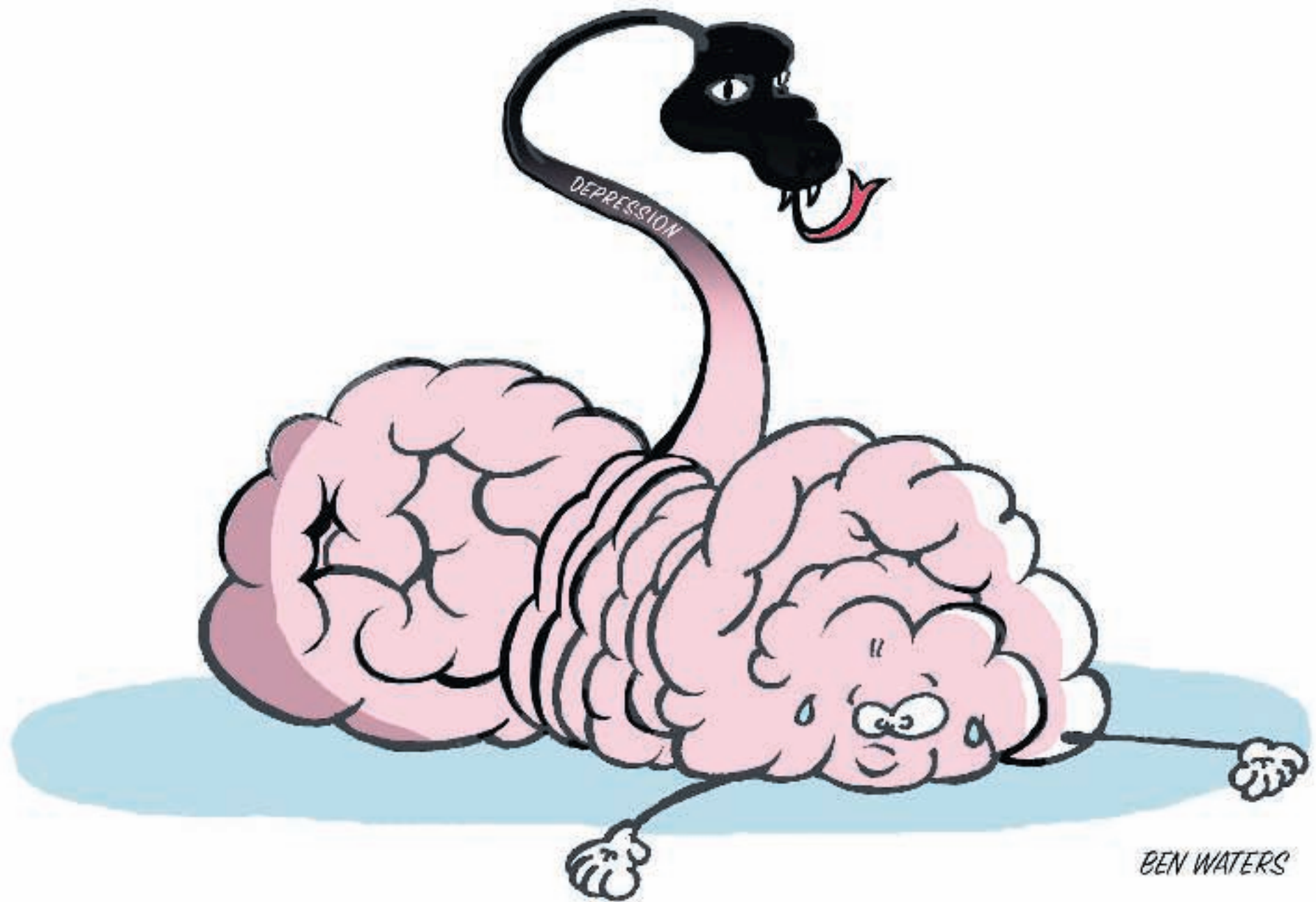
That is why the GU has not just been arguing for the status quo. We can avoid repeating these mistakes if we're given time to reform. No charity can operate well with one full-time

officer and no full-time support staff – their mistakes become institutional calamities.

We've already made great progress: we've hired a new full-time support staff member and won trial funding for a second Sabbatical Officer. This alone should be enough to avoid a repeat of past disasters. My attempts at re-engaging the membership have also been met with a wave of enthusiasm: there's a clear consensus that the needs of graduates are distinct enough to warrant bespoke representation, and a clear lack of enthusiasm for any merger.

We're now looking to the future. We hope we've managed to make the case to the review panel for the GU's continued existence – but we're open-minded enough to work constructively with it on whatever its recommendations will be. And, obviously, any major change to the GU's status will require the consent of the graduate community via a referendum.

Despite appearances, the university is changing quickly. Graduates will soon be the majority of students. It might well be that in the future, only one students' union will be needed. But I don't think that time has come. When and if it does, the merger would need to be a partnership of equals with the consent of graduates – not the result of a series of unfortunate events, over the top of protestations from the smaller union.



How America's political establishment lost the plot



Alex Mistlin

American politics risks descending into chaos, but the situation here is not all that different

Ever since the 1968 ABC debates between William F. Buckley Jr. and Gore Vidal, American politics has largely followed an adversarial template in which Republicans are labelled “crypto-Nazis” and Democrats are “queers”. However, as we head into a watershed election year, the rise of ISIS has unleashed a new level of hysteria on the political process.

This is in part fuelled by the polarising influence of cable news. America does not have a strong public service broadcaster akin to the BBC, which means that the electorate lack an unbiased source of political information. While only 38 per cent of adults regularly watch cable news, cable viewers tend to be the most engaged and consequently spend far more time with that platform than viewers of local or network news.

This is a worrying trend as many cable news networks are beholden to commercial interests and are unashamedly partisan. Fox News continues to be the largest such network by a distance and their anti-establishment narrative and habitual sensationalising of the threat posed by Islamic extremism has played a crucial hand in the evolution of both parties’ presidential campaigns.

America’s absurd campaign

funding situation is also instrumental in determining the nature of the debate. Approximately \$7 billion was spent during the 2012 election and 2016 is already set to easily outstrip this figure. The fact that these sums are disproportionately large donations from private individuals adds some legitimacy to the claim that politicians are no longer truly public servants but instead servants of their corporate paymasters.



A HEADY COCKTAIL OF PUBLIC DISTRUST

Is it any wonder, then, that credible candidates for the presidency are repeatedly offering blunt policy solutions devoid of nuance and complexity? For instance, Ted Cruz, who is currently second behind Trump for the Republican nomination, believes that we can combat extremism in the Middle East by seeing if “sand can glow in the dark” (i.e. carpet bombing it into oblivion). While it is

understandable that public opinion supports taking the fight to Islamic State, comments such as these serve to show how rhetoric is not an adequate substitute for maturity. Clearly, in such a crowded field, candidates have been especially keen to distinguish themselves in a bid to attract attention not only from registered voters but also those all-important donors.

All this blends together in a heady cocktail of public distrust in what is pejoratively termed ‘the Washington establishment’. Donald Trump’s rise from fringe figure to frontrunner is hardly surprising given that 71 per cent of Americans think political correctness has gone mad. Examples of involvement in congressional bipartisanship, such as Marco Rubio’s authoring of the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act, are not seen as displays of compromise between warring parties but instead as establishment collusion. At times, it feels as though the longer a candidate spends navigating the corridors of power, the less qualified they are considered for leadership of the free world.

Despairingly, this misguided disdain for experience has wreaked havoc in both parties. Vermont senator Bernie Sanders (a self-described

socialist) somehow poses a genuine threat to Hillary Clinton. Despite the latter being extraordinarily well qualified and enjoying solid approval ratings as a result of her long exposure to the public eye, Sanders is only four points behind in Iowa and could be up by as much as 20 in New Hampshire. Evidently, both party bases are restless for change.

As a British-American dual citizen, I am increasingly concerned that Britain is on a similar path towards a dystopian emulation of the worst aspects of America’s political culture, as adversarial TV debates increasingly shift the media’s focus from policy to personality. Furthermore, the rise of Jeremy Corbyn not only shows how politics is increasingly conducted at the margins of public opinion but also how ruthless the media can be in its character assassinations. My fear is that Britain is beginning to pay too much heed to those voices who seek to replace order with chaos. It is only our collective sense of perspective and humour that threatens to derail the inevitable reduction of our politics to a circus.

Meanwhile, as I pessimistically survey the future ahead of our transatlantic cousins, I can only wish that a semblance of normality will return.

Drug ring? I'm just here for the tea

**Emily
Bailey-Page**



While debate is healthy,
we must take care to
preserve safe spaces

Having your column openly trash-talked in front of you falls fairly low on the 'Fun Scale'. It probably falls somewhere between waiting alone for your Van of Life chips sober in the rain (I have never done this) and having your late-night romantic transgressions caught on CCTV by your college porters (again, no idea what this would feel like).

As a journalist, I publish my views and I know that not everyone is going to agree with me. But as I sat in hall munching my way through a delectable plate of mildly subsidised food, it was not a reasoned, incisive debate that I was suddenly subjected to. Let alone that, I was not even granted the respect of being involved in the conversation. My friend had asked me if I was aiming to end up as the next Caitlin Moran, and the group next to me suddenly erupted. Caitlin Moran?! Just a silly 'gossip columnist', markedly unworthy of her place at *The Times*, she has nothing to say of value. My mouth was still full of chicken at the time so as this cracking banter passed back and forth I didn't really have the chance to clarify whether I too was indeed a 'silly gossip columnist', but the implication was fairly clear. My friend and I looked at each other in silence and our conversation was over.

Safe spaces get a lot of flak. Depending on which particular sub-

species of identikit think-piece you read, they are either growing conglomerations of excessively mollycoddled students or a dark Stalinist plot to upend society as we know it. Maybe both. Over the past week in Cambridge we've learned that they're also just fronts for sinister, university-endorsed drug cartels. Who knew, eh? Don't mind me, I was just here for the self-care tips, not the crack and heroin.

Yet after this particular incident in hall I was reminded of my need, as a woman, for the safe spaces I have available to me. These are places where I will not be ridiculed, reduced down to the nearest available stereotype. Yes, safe spaces are a place where 'debate' takes a backseat to respect. And this is vital.

Because anyone's interest in social justice will almost invariably come from a place of immense pain. No one chooses to be a feminist for the fun of it, just to rile *The Spectator* every once in a while. When a social justice campaigner speaks, it is not a detached intellectual exercise. It is by its very nature inextricably emotional. When we speak, we are not debating the character of neutral truth. We are fighting for the respect we deserve yet have not been given, we are fighting against everything that has made us feel so small, not for the things we do, the columns we write, but the things

we are. Debates are never neutral - what's being debated is our identity.

So this is why it's shameful that the student press has capitalised on the WomCam debacle in the way it has. Demands for accountability in CUSU-supervised groups have somehow become synonymous and interchangeable with the complaint that in such groups one has to 'walk on eggshells' to avoid giving offence, a place where you can't instigate a good old debate.

I will say it until I am blue in the face. Safe spaces are not places for debate. Safe spaces are places where there is an agreed, existing consensus on certain points. You go there for solidarity, you go there for healing. People in safe spaces aren't being shielded from debate; they're just tired - tired, in fact, from having these same debates over and over again. A survivor of sexual assault is tired, and understandably traumatised, by the debate society exposes her to all the time over victim-blaming, that she should somehow shoulder the blame for an assault committed against her. If as a white woman in a safe space you are asked to check your privilege, someone is not using race as a weapon. Feminism has traditionally marginalised women of colour, and we need to centre in on those voices to redress the balance. If it's a debate you're after, you probably got lost on your way to the Women's Campaign Discussion Group. It's just

around the corner.

Don't get me wrong, I am sometimes more than up for debate, although as a disillusioned member of the Union it seems like it's usually more about winning than uncovering some ultimate universal Truth™. Nevertheless, I write this column because I am fortunate enough to occupy a place of relative safety from which I am happy for my views to be publically debated. But being openly demeaned is neither debate, nor something I'm prepared to sit and endure.

On a side note, while anti-depressants don't taste very nice (pro-tip: don't chew), what leaves an even worse taste in the mouth is *The Tab's* sensationalist approach to medication in its reports. Sharing medication is something I would personally not condone, but let's not stoop to the level of *Daily Mail*-style infographics describing the side-effects of what *The Tab* calls "strong" anti-depressants (what's a 'weak' anti-depressant, a cup of tea?). If we're arguing for people taking these medicines while fully informed, in close consultation with their GP, let's not turn *The Tab* into some pseudo-scientific drugs education body. Implying that those who take anti-depressants are members of a sinister "drug ring" experiencing "lack of emotion", "yawning" and "blindness" isn't really helping to reduce stigma.

Head space

In her third weekly column, Rhiannon Shaw considers the importance of being sad sometimes



Rhiannon Shaw

to snuggle my cats? Is it PMS?

I'm only sort of joking. It's essentially my DIY-CBT, which I've only started to find useful since my emotions became more manageable. Trying to talk yourself out of 'knowing' that you're the most hated, most annoying, ugliest person in the world is like trying to herd lots of really angry badgers. I'd talk myself out of one ridiculous thought and right into another. 'Oh, so you don't think you're the worst person in the world? You must think you're the best. God, you're always thinking about yourself, you're selfish AND arrogant.'

That was me at my worst. I've got better. I like my anti-depressants because they have reduced my emotional repertoire to a reasonably healthy level. They work for me because when they work I simply can't access any feeling that could utterly overpower me. Think of it this way: the strongest cocktail of terrible circumstances can only make me feel rubbish for a couple of days, rather than a couple of weeks. Before, when I had a bad day my classic solution was to crawl into bed and say mean things to myself. Now I'm clear-headed enough to actually want to make myself feel better - perhaps by buying a nice shampoo, or looking at pictures of baby alpacas.

When *Inside Out* was released this summer, it got me thinking about the idea of having five different characters tearing about in my own head. I liked it a lot because it has the kind of useful and practical moral message that gets people talking about mental health and how to treat the emotions

which as children we're told are 'bad'. I think at some point we've all turned to a friend and said 'don't be sad!', as if avoiding and suppressing their response was the healthy or mature thing to do. Sure, nobody likes it, but you've got to let them out at some point - otherwise they'll appear at inconvenient times. I once burst into tears when my French teacher asked me how much holiday allowance the average British person gets per year.

So we're all going to be sad at some point. But that doesn't mean that I'm about to welcome my depression back with open arms. Depression is so very different to sadness. Before, it felt like I had 10 different emotions running around in my head and none of them would listen to me. Depression drowned out my 'real' emotions.

The most common complaint about

anti-depressants is that they stop you from feeling the extremes. Many people I have spoken to aren't keen on them because they numb the senses, which was a concern for me. I like writing stories and what-not. What if my new limited emotions prevented me from being that instrument through which poetic inspiration can flow? Well, it hasn't really done that to be honest. Maybe if I ditched the pills I'd be able to look at a daffodil and break down in joyful tears at the sight of it bobbing its little yellow head but, for now, it's enough that I can still feel warm and fuzzy at times.

I was sat in a café the other day. It's one of my favourite places in Cambridge because they play Motown and sometimes Northern Soul. I heard the opening notes of 'I Can't Help Myself' by The Four Tops. Sometimes

when it catches me by surprise I panic. No one puts trigger warnings on songs that make you think of your dad.

I stayed and listened, though, because I felt okay. I was sad, but it was okay. It made me think of my dad dancing to his old vinyls. He used to be able to do a really bizarre dance move where he lay on the floor and essentially flipped himself up onto his feet with his hands behind his head. It occurred to me that I probably wouldn't have remembered this had I kept the emotions of intense self-loathing and panic that used to suffocate my memories of him. My dad belongs to me again, rather than being a weapon my head can use against me. I guess you could say I felt really happy to be sad.

hello yes these feels ordered are not right
can i return them please?



As someone who has a pretty fraught relationship with their emotions, I'm constantly in the process of trying to work out what I'm feeling, why I'm feeling it and if I'm 'allowed' to feel that feeling. Since deciding that certain extremes of 'feels' were not conducive to leading my life comfortably and with any level of productivity, I've become quite invested in keeping myself at a low ebb. Yes, friends, that's why you haven't seen me at the discos lately. Nights of staying up past midnight and eating sweets after I've brushed my teeth are behind me.

I have a neat little checklist to ensure that today's emotions are valid. Am I feeling particularly het up because I've lowered my dose of anti-depressants? Or is it because that article on *The Tab* gave me real pause for thought about the state of student journalism? Have I not had enough coffee today? Am I secretly homesick? Do I miss being able

Cambridge's relationship with illness is far from healthy



Dani Cugini

Better provisions need to be made to reduce the stress of falling behind with work

Last week I had to message my staircase's Facebook chat to ask if one of them could bring me water because I couldn't stand up. And you thought your Friday night escapades were pathetic! This wasn't a hangover, though, but a nasty four-day stint of freshers' flu. I'm lucky enough not to have compulsory lectures, so I spent a good deal of last week sleeping, drinking cinnamon tea and reading (or failing to read) Montaigne.

But this is hardly the position everyone finds themselves in when they get sick. If you're a NatSci, for instance, four days of missed work becomes a seriously difficult hole to fill in. As for me, I don't know if you've ever knocked out an essay on Renaissance humanism in two days, but suffice to say you don't get much sleep. So, is illness at Cambridge just one of life's little inconveniences, or is there more that could be done to alleviate its effects?

How badly illness can set you back with work partly depends on your supervisor. Mine, luckily, was supportive, although he did point out that it was important I got something in to stop me falling behind. If yours is less

forgiving, that could mean feeling pressured to travel to your faculty or lectures when you're not in a state to leave college (I got light-headed and almost fell over on the road outside Pembroke on my way back from lectures, which was a pretty scary experience, given that I'm not fond of getting run over) or staying up until 4am to write up a lab report when you need sleep to recover. Both of these, of course, will just lengthen the stay of whatever virus you've picked up, or leave you immunocompromised and weak, vulnerable to whatever illness next crops up in college.

The bad side of independent university study is that there's only so much your friends can do. Even my friends on my course are often covering wildly different material on any given week; God knows my Mathmo neighbour is not going to have much luck helping me through *Utopia*, just as his differential equations might as well be written in Sanskrit to me.

Taking out books and lending them to your sick friend is lovely in theory, but likely to lead to a surprise £10 overdue fee when you both forget about it until week 6. Lecture notes

are promised then mislaid, resources on Moodle can take weeks to be uploaded, and we're still a few centuries away from the technology allowing someone to read my books for me.

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WE'RE ALL GOING TO END UP CURLED AROUND A MUG OF LEMSIP AT SOME POINT

Of course, with your average bug, the nurse can't do much more than give you paracetamol and tell you to get some rest, but that doesn't mean changes couldn't be made to reduce the amount of work we're missing.

The case for a reading week has been made extensively in the past, and has so far failed to make a dent, but the case for it still stands. The difficulty of getting a higher-than-average workload completely finished in a shorter-than-average time and the unwarranted mental strain this can take on Cambridge students is not

something that should be underestimated, particularly for those who are perfectionists, juggling time-consuming extracurricular commitments, or have a history of mental illnesses such as anxiety or depression.

However, even if that's too extreme a change, I'd suggest a simpler one: monitoring how lectures are scheduled. I'm an English student, and out of my lectures this term, there are approximately double the amount of lectures in the first half than there are in the second. It was the same last term. If the lectures were dispersed more evenly, getting ill in the early weeks would not be such a catastrophe.

Other practices can also be adjusted in the case of illness, such as scanning and emailing work instead of delivering it to a different college, or even being able to simplify an assignment so it is less of a strain to complete and still covers most of the material.

We're all going to end up curled around a mug of Lemsip at some point this term, but being forced to make ourselves sicker by working too hard is a short-sighted approach that can put us out of commission for weeks.



Miranda Slade

On Indifference

by Miranda Slade

Weekly sipping a herbal tea in the corner of the Sidgwick Buttery this morning, I watched some unassuming omnivore enjoy a pain au chocolat and a cappuccino. Lucky for him, languishing vegan I am this month, I did not have the strength to jump the tables between us and snatch his breakfast from him. I watched him and felt the unbearable burden of 'Veganuary', a pain that is definitively not au chocolat.

The self-deluded optimism of January is coming to an end. As week two bleeds into three and we creep towards the middle of term, standing to attention and 'being the best you can possibly be!' slumps into the familiar 'do what you have to do to get by'.

Indifference is hard. Feeling it and acting it are two very different things. For example, if someone I can't recall swiping 'Yes' to on Tinder sends me a message asking what I'm up to, featuring an emoji of their choice to construct the illusion of wit or charm without wasting characters, I will probably feel indifferent and not deign to respond. If someone I lust after sends me an identical message (and discards the emoji), I must la-

bour over an erudite response that creates the apparition of nonchalance while dripping with allure.

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LET'S BE IRREVERENT, MAKE A LITTLE JOKE OUT OF EVERYTHING

The problem is that the politics of indifference work. We're all playing hard to get, although we are probably hard to want. Take this hypothetical relationship into the physical realm and you may arrive at the impasse that is the orgasm gap. The restaurant scene in *When Harry Met Sally* is still depressingly relevant: a LOT of women fake orgasms for many different reasons. (I do not, on principle – the bedroom is one of the few places I try to be sincere and leave my incendiary sense of humour elsewhere).

Where else are we settling for less than happiness? How about the majority that left their homes back in

May and voted for the re-election of the status quo?

Yes, that is where the orgasm gap chat was heading – talk about anticlimactic. If you think politics is best left outside the bedroom, I will remind you that we are taxing some of the most disadvantaged families in the country for the luxury of that room. If you think that I shouldn't use a sexual allegory to talk about David Cameron, I will excuse myself for crassness, and remind you that he is fucking all of us.

I found myself reading articles about the 'apathetic' British

people. Apathetic was understood as being fine with things as they are. Who these apathetic voters are, I haven't really been able to discern anywhere. It is my suspicion that no such 'they' exists, as to homogenise the voting people in this way is both patronising and lazy.

These arguments have their merit, but what offends me is the self-congratulatory cleverness of the style. When an argument is laid out in such a sequential manner, using such sterile language, the intent becomes so much more insidious. The impetus to respond and debate feels irrational. To read articles that present a seemingly airtight response to outspoken politicians and public unrest really, really pisses me off.



Mostly this is because I don't look around me and see apathy, but rather antipathy. Antipathy is not quite so well suited to rhetorical finesse and convention. In its very nature it belongs in the spirit of protest, on the march and on strike. For the sake of recognising the many young people that only feel allegiance to dissent, it needs its own rhetoric. Putting across my own views varying leads to me being accused of being flip-pant or a Trotskyite.

Using the desolate language that creates the illusion of things being just the way they are is bound to create an illusion of apathy. Even worse, an illusion in which those who are angry (wherever they stand on the political spectrum) are shut down by a false notion of 'common sense'.

The more power we place on rhetoric, the more we divert the trust we put into politics into the hands of spin-doctors, or the press. Instead, let's be irreverent, make a little joke out of everything, because at least then nothing seems quite so fixed and unshakeable, and options other than apathy will be a little bit more open to us.

A man and a woman in period clothing standing in a grand hall. The man is wearing a blue double-breasted jacket with a gold collar and brown trousers. The woman is wearing a brown dress with a dark floral pattern and a purple sash. They are both looking off to the side with serious expressions. In the background, there are other people, a large bouquet of white and red flowers, and ornate architectural details like columns and a chandelier.

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HENRY GOODWIN

GIVE RADIO A CHANCE

on why we should all tune in to this beloved medium

No, The Buggles, video has not killed the radio star. Almost weekly, proponents of radio seem to be fighting against the medium's prolonged death knell. Every new development in digital music has been characterised as the straw that will break radio's back once and for all – and yet, here we are today, still alive and still thriving.

I should probably make clear now that I'm quite biased in my feelings towards radio. For me, it's not only a treasured means of entertainment, but it's also been a hobby and a passion for me at university. My involvement with Cam FM, where I've presented a gloriously pretentious music show over the past two years,

has coloured me as one who will endlessly argue for radio's usefulness and significance in the face of those who believe it is obsolete.

Statistically, the reading is not pleasant. Last year, the BBC's flagship station Radio 1 saw its audience drop to its lowest level for more than a decade, losing some 830,000 listeners in the year according to

The Guardian. Its digital sister station, 1Xtra, did not fare much better, its listenership falling by around 25 per cent. The general consensus for mainstream radio's dwindling listening figures points the finger squarely at the Internet, and the ever-increasing prominence of digital platforms for enjoying content online. For younger people in particular, the question of

whether to listen to a fuddy-duddy DJ recycling the latest chart hits or to curate their own playlists on Spotify or Apple Music must be something of a no-brainer. Who knows best what the individual wants to listen to, than the individual themselves?

However this misses the point entirely, for radio is a medium that has embraced the Internet with open arms, and it continues to benefit as a result. Declining listening figures are, largely, a result of the perpetual decline of analogue radio. In 2015, digital radio accounted for 41.9 per cent of audiences, with around 30 million people aged over 15 tuning in to digital stations like BBC Radio 5 live Sports Extra.

This is no bad thing, as the quality of digital radio and podcasts has never been better. From a personal perspective, I enjoy radio almost exclusively online. Digital radio continues to get better and better, particularly musically; one need only look at Apple's new Beats 1 station to see how important radio continues to be for the artists themselves, with big-hitters Drake, Run The Jewels and Stormzy hosting their own shows on the platform.

I am adamant that there is no better way to hear new or alternative music than via the radio. There is something so satisfying and surprising about hearing a great new track for the first time across your radio. It's impossible to recreate the frantic Shazam-ing on hearing a new banger, or the shouts of "tune!" that erupt when the DJ spins an old favourite. However it's not just from a musical

standpoint where radio shows its worth. In sporting coverage too, following via the radio is a unique and thrilling experience. One need only look at the rampant popularity of Test Match Special, the BBC's live cricket coverage at the moment, to see the cult following that a brilliant radio production can inspire. To hear the ceaselessly eloquent Jonathan Agnew struggling to describe the loutish behaviour of the Barmy Army on tour, or Geoffrey Boycott's Yorkshire draw lamenting how everything was 'much tougher in his day' is an entertainment experience that can't be replicated on television.

I suppose what makes radio so special to me, above all else, is its intimacy. This was most clear when news of David Bowie's death broke a couple of weeks ago. With tributes pouring in across Twitter and journalists scrambling to pen obituaries and analysis, I switched on BBC Radio 6 Music and listened as prominent and professional DJs struggled to process the news. Listening to Lauren Laverne fighting back tears while working her way through highlights of Bowie's back catalogue was simultaneously gut wrenching and uplifting.

Radio's best quality is its humanity; its unique ability to communicate directly with the listener, and for the listener to respond in turn makes switching on the radio feel like entering into a dialogue with the DJ. This, for me, is why radio is such a treasured medium, and why it will never be obsolete. It's going to take a lot more than video to kill the radio star.



CHILD'S PLAY NO MORE

Sarah-Jane Tollen discusses the new phenomenon of adult colouring books

Rummaging in the attic, a cardboard box nonchalantly labelled as 'Stuff' bursts with the colouring books of my childhood. I have fond memories of sitting around a dimly lit kitchen in the middle of winter with my brothers, colouring in images of robins with ribbons streaming out of their beaks, or watching *The Little Mermaid* in my classroom as the rain trickled outside. Most if not all of the images in these colouring books are defiled with colour: flamboyant pinks that burst out of the outline, and smiling dolphins erratically shaded with a strange concoction of greens and oranges. Their pages are weary with soda stains and smudged fingerprints, yellowing with age and confined since the 90s to a box in the darkness where we store all the remnants of youth.

It was a strange sight, then, to discover my friend's collection of colouring books, lined up and illuminated upon a shelf

in her room. Flicking through, the designs were beautiful and elaborate: an intricate labyrinth made of flowers, a peacock bedecked in nature, his feathers leering across the page and morphing into swirling vines. The colours were ordered and fresh, and it took me a while to gather that they had been shaded only recently with the small, delicate box of colouring pencils laying on the shelf beside them.

Wired on a shameless volume of black coffee, bleary eyed from staring at a screen all day, and fretting about the books piling up upon my desk, I sceptically borrowed one – Johanna Basford's best-selling *Secret Garden* – imagining it lost in the whirlwind of papers disordering my desk. After receiving numerous badgering messages asking if I had tried it yet, I begrudgingly grabbed a few colouring pencils before bed one evening, wondering how much progress I could have made with my essay

during this time. Strangely, the anxiety dissolved as I concentrated upon the image before me, shading the forest scene and slowly colouring it into life. I felt a sense of order and agency, things that had been rattled by the onset of a Cambridge degree, characterised by the flurry of academic and social commitments that sweep you up and do not let go. I began to feel slightly insane, my pride in my sceptical, logical nature challenged by 'mindfulness', that pseudo-psychological buzzword.

Yet the type of artistic expression that is found in adult colouring books is very much a popular therapeutic technique. 'Art therapy' is utilised in response to various modes of emotional trauma and medical conditions, from cancer patients to bereaved or orphaned children; art becomes a vehicle of expression and communication, giving a medium to individuals through which they can cope with stress and trauma,

and encourage a sense of achievement. Improvement in cognitive abilities and memory capacity have also been concluded, and 'art therapists' must be registered and licensed with the Health and Care Professions Council to practise.

Even as the adult colouring book market has soared by joining the 'mindfulness' craze (Cambridge is even offering 'mindfulness' classes as part of its counselling service this term), it has also contributed to the surge in interest for items of nostalgia, aptly named the 'Peter Pan' market. Adult colouring books occupy a strange line between 'mindfulness', which involves a complete relinquishing to the present moment, and this new market for childhood experiences, a regression back into an emotional state of the past. Adult-only summer camps in the USA are burgeoning, and East London's wacky 'Cereal Killer Café' tempts with sugar-laden

children's cereal reminiscent of a Monday morning before school.

After half an hour of colouring orchids and butterflies deep shades of pretty purples and delicate blues, I slept quietly, without being awoken by rushing thoughts of deadlines or the constant, anxious turning of my body. Whether the result of a self-induced 'mindfulness' session, or the outcome of simply tearing myself away from the multiplicity of glowing screens that make up my daily life, the popularity of adult colouring books is a material outcome of the buzzing anxiety that lies concealed and unnamed in modern society.

Perhaps in a decade or two I will wistfully look back upon these books, but instead of seeing Ariel's fiery mane and hearing the drip of the rain, I will remember the smothering pressures of my adult life between the velvet green leaves.

- 01 The John Hughes Arts Festival is now in its second year
- 02 One of the many intricate designs available in adult colouring books
- 03 Mustafa serves up Berlin's best kebabs from his kiosk outside Mehringdamm U-Bahn station
- 04 The Berlin skyline: the city has become a hotspot for international street food
- 05 Currywurst mit Pommes from the original 'Curry 36' in Mehringdamm



PREVIEW

JOHN HUGHES ARTS FESTIVAL

Katie Wetherall talks to curator Emma Veares about this year's festival

Tell me about John Hughes.

John Hughes, was our Chaplain at Jesus, who sadly died in a car crash in June 2014. He was a parental figure around college that people really appreciated. He cared for student wellbeing more than anything else. He was also really active in encouraging the arts, and wanted to use the Chapel for all sorts of creative activities, not just religious services. I think a lot of students felt personally affected when he died and wanted to do something that would last. So, in 2015 students founded the John Hughes Arts Festival, to celebrate his life and get people involved in art.

What are you expecting this year?

The enthusiasm we've had is more than we could have ever expected. The festival has stayed in more or less the same form, but it's growing, it's getting bigger. People are even more invested in it, even though they didn't have the

same connection with the Chaplain as the founders.

So there'll be students in first and second year who won't have known the Chaplain, but are still proud to celebrate his life?

Exactly! I didn't know him, but I helped with the festival last year and now we've got freshers getting involved – people who feel like it's a really important cause, even though they don't know him personally.

You're the curator of the Open Hang Gallery. How have you approached the role?

We haven't got a theme. That might be something we introduce later on, but we've wanted to keep it really open, really accessible. Last year it was just based around Jesus, but this year we've opened it to the whole university. We want to get as many people as involved as we can, so it's not just a Jesus celebration, but a Cambridge-wide event. Any-

one that submits has the potential to be displayed. We've aimed for a diverse range of mediums, from photography, to sculpture, to paintings, to drawings....variety and openness: that's what we're going for.

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ANYONE THAT SUBMITS HAS THE POTENTIAL TO BE DISPLAYED

Do you see lots of creativity around college and Cambridge?

The last two weeks people have been submitting loads – I've checked my emails today and it's blown up. And when you reach out and ask people, people rarely ever say no. People like to come out of the woodwork, and say 'I've made this thing, this is really

beautiful'. As soon as you make people aware of what it is, and how easy it is to get involved, they're very keen. Perhaps it's because I'm doing more art things now, but it feels like there are so many more opportunities for creativity in Cambridge at the moment. There's Queens' Arts Festival, our Arts Festival, it feels like there's been a resurgence.

Can you give us a sneak preview of the pieces of that will be in the Gallery?

We have some really exciting photographs coming up from London from a connection, Ed Eustace, who did the festival last year and is now at Art College in Chelsea. We've also got some fantastic pieces of Cambridge, and impressive paintings and drawings, all hanging in two very creative spaces.

What would be the highlight of the festival for you?

Oh God. There's a life drawing class on the Saturday which I'd

like to go to, there's a comedy night, and there's poetry! You know, I'm actually really excited for the opening of the Gallery on the 5th. Drinks, dancing, live music, and all the artwork will be out for the first time. I'm looking forward to seeing everyone come together in the space – it'll be a nice buzzy, fun atmosphere.

Say 10 years on and the festival is still going. How would you feel?

Really proud! And really happy to have been involved in the first and second festivals. To see people still retaining the passion for something which is not personally connected to them anymore, but they feel is an important thing to keep going. That would be lovely.

The festival runs 5th-7th February at Jesus College, and all events are free. For more information go to jjhaf.soc.srcf.net/index.html

ANNA'S CULINARY CORNER

Week one for me kicked off not in my college library but in, uhm, Berlin. It was a study-related visit, rather than a cheeky start-of-term get-away, I promise. But as with all studying, whether in your local faculty or in the German capital, you won't get far without a bite to eat. In the below-freezing temperatures that my trip coincided with, I had no choice but to take shelter in cafés between (and admittedly sometimes during) academic sessions, build up some calorie-induced insulation, and, well, convince myself that food is as valid a form of culture as any other.

That said, fresh from the airport, I found myself in a big queue outside a small kebab van. The thought process in my pretty solidly frozen mind must have gone along the lines of 'when in doubt, go for a döner' and 'when in Berlin, do as the Berliners do'.

Allow me to explain: Berlin is the kebab capital of Europe and the birthplace of the döner. A modern take on the traditional grilled kebab created by Turkish immigrants, the döner became the no. 1 fast food option in Germany in the decades following WWII. As with all classics, there

will always be the place to go (think Chelsea buns at Fitzbillies), and in this case the votes converge on Mustafa's Gemüse kebab, a humble van in Kreuzberg, Berlin's Little Turkey.

The sometimes hour-long queues and multiple mentions in all the travel guides testify to Mustafa's well-deserved place on the throne of Berlin's kebab kingdom, and with feta cheese, roasted aubergines, deep fried potato, salad, a touch of lemon, and the 'secret ingredient' (carnivores have theirs with chicken), Mustafa's döner is a kebab like no other; it single-handedly redefines the hangover cure as a culinary masterpiece.

As such, the döner was well worth the biting cold and the forty minute wait, but I have to confess to envying the queuing strategy of the person behind me: this fast food aficionado was whetting his appetite by snacking on another German street classic, Currywurst. The main competitor to kebabs, Currywurst, or 'curry sausage', is a sausage sliced up and covered in a mild sauce of ketchup mixed with curry powder, finished off with a decent dose of chips and a bread roll.

Like with so many culinary classics, apparently this piece

of genius was born by accident, when a case of clumsiness in a kitchen resulted in the combination of ketchup and curry. I know, I know, Currywurst is perhaps not the most appetising sounding dish, but I can vouch for its place among the best street foods, as it is one of the things I gave up my vegetarianism for.

As unconvincing as it may sound, I have not sold my soul to kebabs and sausages. How could I survive solely on savoury sustenance in a place like Germany with its Kaffee und Kuchen tradition? What pubs are to England, bakeries are to Germany: these havens of dough serve more varieties of freshly baked bread than all the contestants on the *Bake Off* put together could dream up, and pride themselves in more pastry options than your standard Patisserie Valerie. The obvious choice in Berlin is der Berliner, a type of doughnut without the hole (why you would cut out a bit of your pastry remains one of life's great mysteries to me), filled with jam and topped with a fine coating of sugar.

This happens to also be the classic bake that got J.F.K. confused: in a valiant attempt to incorporate German into his speech, the president declared

"Ich bin ein Berliner", "I am a doughnut." Obviously no one had mentioned to him that all you need to do to transform from a doughnut into a Berlin inhabitant is to leave out the article.

Enough of grammar. Mohnkuchen won't get your German skills into history books, but as a love-it-or-hate-it thing this class of different types of poppy seed cakes is well worth a try; after trying a version topped with caramelised almonds from Bäcker Wiedemann near the old Friedrichstraße crossing point from East to West Berlin, I am openly in the love camp.

A perhaps less divisive option is cheesecake, which in Germany often incorporates quark, a soured milk delicacy. A real find here was a quaint café by the name of Princess Cheesecake: their traditional German cheesecake, Königlich Käsekuchen, was one of the lightest, fluffiest things I have ever tasted, and I regret leaving Berlin without sampling more of their creations – Piña Colada cheesecake, anyone?

It was with great sadness that I had to surrender to the fact that the contents of half a bakery would probably not

fare well as aeroplane cargo. So if you see someone quietly weeping outside the Van of Life or Fitzbillies, it will be me suffering from separation anxiety from my beloved döners and Berliners. Such is the life of a food tourist.

Kulture

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COMMERCIAL FEATURE



The famous K-Middy blow-dry is so 2015! Even our own Duchess has cottoned on that 2016 is all about the undone, tousled nonchalant blow-dry. A new, less is more effortless approach has replaced the rigorous perfected look. So with this new hair trend to deal with, what better time for a beautiful new salon to open its doors to ensure our tresses are kept on trend. Enter Rush Hair who have opened their doors and are injecting a little glamour into Cambridge's bustling Fitzroy Street.

Rush are industry leaders and their award winning stylists are regulars at London and Milan Fashion Week, working backstage at Mary Katrantzou, Central Saint Martin's and Gareth Pugh.

The ethos of Rush is rooted in its world-class training and ability to provide beautiful hair at affordable prices. What makes the salon group so unique is their artistic team personally train the hairdressers on sight so you will receive a world-class

hair experience for a fraction of the price. Their student price offer is an extremely reasonable £25 for a Ladies Cut & Finish and £15 for a Gents Cut & Finish, which will no doubt see the salon filled with the cities bright young fashionistas.

Varsity spoke to Rush Franchisee Gentiana Restelica, who opened the salon last November. Gentiana said "Rush are known for attracting a very loyal client base and I'm always delighted to offer clients an amaz-

ing unforgettable experience and I love working closely with my young team to help them grow and develop as stylists."

With the university on their doorstep, it looks like gorgeous hair is going to be on top of some of the cleverest heads in the UK, at very student friendly prices. Gentiana added, "I chose Cambridge as my location because Rush are all about promoting fashionable and beautiful hair at an affordable price and what better loca-

tion to do so in one that boasts one of the best universities in the UK."

With glossy black flooring and well-lit aesthetic, the salon is modern and comfortable. With a young and vibrant team, Rush is the ideal salon of choice for the savvy smart student who wants the best hair in Cambridge, not just the lecture theatre. If our hair is the crown on our heads; then thanks to Rush, you don't have to be a Duchess to enjoy it.

VOLUNTEER WITH CAMVOL IN INDIA AND NEPAL IN SUMMER 2016



Camvol organises volunteer placements for University of Cambridge students with environment and development related organisations in India and Nepal. Students usually volunteer during the University summer vacation, between July and September each year, for a period of eight weeks. Undergraduate and graduate students who are finishing their degree courses can be accommodated for longer periods.

Camvol is able to provide travel bursaries of £500 for up to 20 students. Camvol does not charge any fees for its support.

Camvol was established in November 2006, and is a UK registered charity. It is affiliated with the Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

For more details, visit the Camvol website:
<http://www.camvol.org>; or contact shiraz.vira@camvol.org.



THE VARSITY CRYPTIC CROSSWORD

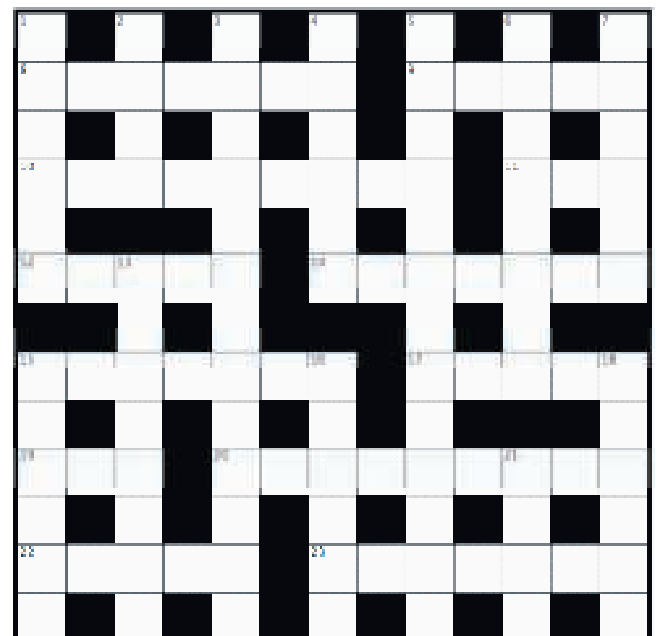
Set by Glueball

Across

8. Dig up short extra-terrestrial (7)
9. Singer's ability to echo after sounding (5)
10. Second rate singer's music bridges key Argentinian right, English left (8)
11. Hearing penny drop – it's fruit! (3)
12. Thanks for the gardening equipment and water feature! (5)
14. The French Financial Times is hot on red politics (7)
15. Vote in backwards head of East English Defence advocate (7)
17. Perform again in response (5)
19. Prime limb? (3)
20. Crafty street rat, for example, goes by Indian Charlie (9)
22. Welcomed in team in ski city (5)
23. Initially Germanic language, total mess, featured stops (7)

Down

1. Boot into goal – golden! (6)
2. Sounds like an actor is ready to get into this? (4)
3. Brew agent's rum spirit, hypothetically (9,4)
4. She, Kelly, had money (6)
5. Campaigners restrict reproduction (13)



6. Plant is abnormal, nice alga (8)
7. Villain taking ecstasy has run out (6)
13. Group opinion is disease is terminally severe – take care! (4,4)
15. Evil in heart of American lawyer abiding by moral code (6)
16. Broadcasting a genre makes some angry (6)
18. Fisher's tool to address problem (6)
21. Opening up – a scandal! (4)

Congratulations to *Jake Choules* for submitting the first correct answers to the crossword in Issue 802. Please submit answers to editor@varsity.co.uk.

IT'S NOT ALL MOËT AND MAY BALLS...

An anonymous student's tale of drunken debauchery on the streets of Cambridge

7:30pm

Time to stop working. Take no heed of the desks around you, laden with studious all-nighters; your shift of academia is done for the day.

7:37pm

One question to the Freshers 2K14 chat 'Thoughts about tonight?' and Messenger is getting active. Very active indeed. Shouts are flying in from all directions. The air is riddled with indecision, swaps, bops and formals. To Turf (and feign your edginess) or not to Turf? Lolas gets a look in but good old Cindies comes top as per; tradition should never be rejected.

8:15pm

The grapevine is hanging heavy with rumours that Tarquin is hosting pres (v. impromptu – classic Tarquin) at his. Now. Glistening from the sprint to his room (paranoid about FOMO) you get stuck right in, discussing the intricacies of Corbyn's Christmas card with Tarquin's pals whilst guzzling Sainsbury's home-brand gin –

what a bargain.

9:30pm

'Bar?' Ah, the routine text from the fresher who has taken it upon himself to uphold the collegiate community every night since fresher's. It's sort of endearing but secretly you wonder if he should talk to someone about getting out more. They say he never leaves.

10:20pm

Because it's Cambridge and lectures call tomorrow morning, just as the ten o'clock news gets going it is officially time to head out. The queue makes Cindies look like Bieber's world tour. A newfound confidence tells you the security guard thinks you're very hot. Undoubtedly. It's a sure way in. You sidle up to him, intensely fascinated by his life - how long are his hours, how old his daughter is, does he miss his wife, oh so sorry, you hope the divorce wasn't too messy, no way, you're a veggie too. All going swimmingly, a coy tap

on the shoulder, wink in the direction of the door and you should be in...

10:39pm

You have been sent to the back of the queue. Ostracised from da crew and your not-so-loving security guard. Now standing next to some very imposing third years from Christ's. Didn't realise third years still venture to Cindies; tragic and beautiful all at once.

10:50pm

In and loving the 30 seconds of bangin tuuuunes. Making full use of your Cindies loyalty card, Jägerbombs slipping down nicely, throwing shapes in every direction, orchestrating mosh pits and generally creating good vibes. Yet to be pulled down from dominant dancing position on the tables. Loo trip with the gals, mandatory mirror photo amongst the other pouting lasses #justforthememories.

12:01am

Not going to last until The Circle of

Life, Lion King style. Crew is heading to VOL. Order cheesy chips and bacon under the guise of Mohammed. Tell the VOL man how much his daughter has grown (according to the photo). Watch in appreciation as a fight over homemade chilli sauce commences. Sit down by WH Smith, strike a very random chord with a homeless man and his dog, who, like you, has a penchant for cheesy chips. He turns out to be very lonely and needs someone to talk to. You give him your number and tell him if he ever wants to chat you will always be there for him.

12:30am

In Life. Not quite sure how that happened or who you are with but twerking with NBF Pedro is getting you some serious appreciation on the dance floor.

1:03am

Out of Life and strutting through the quiet streets of Cambridge. Light bulb moment as you realise this is

definitely the best time to embrace that Inner Cantabrigian in you. Punts. To Magdalene Bridge ASAP. Onto a wonderfully rocky vessel with Pedro and you really ARE Fry, Cromwell and Hawking all rolled into one, living the life.

1:42am

Quite damp. Still living the life. Pretty certain your lab partner from Clare would appreciate a visit; pop past the porters with a cheery familiar smile. Walk in on lab partner fast asleep. Inform him this is not acceptable, it is early and he needs to be more fun. Just because he is at Cambridge. Get into bed next to him (Pedro hops in too) – it's all been pretty knackered. Congratulate yourself; you've made it past twelve which in 'bridge is intensely hardcore. Remind yourself you only have to do this once a term to be considered hardcore.

Congratulate yourself again.

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Quiet, for a Tuesday



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I was so sure that I wasn't going to be a statistic. I mean, university was going to be a cakewalk compared to Spain, right? We would no longer have to go months on end without seeing each other, probably only a couple of weeks at most. And then everything was going to be fine and dandy and we'd end up getting married and having babies and a dog called Al and live happily ever after for ever and ever...

For context: I took a "gap yah", and I managed to last nearly a year in a LDR despite living abroad for months at a time. But then I came to Cambridge and my two year relationship was over by Week 4. What happened? Well, there is no one answer. That's the thing with relationships, there can

never be a one-size-fits-all generalisation because every relationship is different. All I can do is talk from my own experience, with the risk that it might not be relevant to you in the slightest. But I'm probably right. I am an all-knowing "gap yah" wanker after all. And my advice to you, dear reader, is for the love of God don't start university in a relationship.

I was very cocky when I came to Cambridge. Here I was, surrounded by people from the year below who weren't as cultured or as mature as me, right? These youngsters, fresh out of school, probably didn't have a clue what they were doing. I had spent time abroad getting high with people in their late 20s, I'd "discovered myself" and, of course, I was in my cushy LDR - I had my shit together.

Alas, it turned out in fact that my shit wasn't together at all. Two terms in and it still isn't. University, especially Cambridge, will change you in ways that you'd never imagined. And that's where everything starts to go tits up. You're in a new place, surrounded by attractive and intelligent people, some ridiculously so. This place becomes your home, your friends become your new family, the library becomes your prison, and alcohol becomes your God. It becomes incredibly difficult to devote the same energy to your bae back home when there's so much other stuff going on, and that's when things start to fall apart.

RANDEEP NAG

TO LDR OR NOT TO LDR?

that is the question...

My breakup was pretty horrible. I was a blubbering mess for most of Michaelmas, as my friends can attest to.

I was incredibly naïve, but looking back now a few months later, I realise that it was the single best thing that could have happened to me at that time in my life. Sure, the single life is pretty depressing if you've come straight out of a loving relationship, especially if it's your first. It sucks not having someone to spoon, cuddle, and be completely comfortable around. Regular sex is pretty sweet too. I mean, I'm not asking for much here Cam; I know it's highly unlikely that I'll meet the love of my life in

Cindies, just as Wonderwall comes on for the 4th godforsaken time in the night, but it'd be nice to meet someone, well... nice, for once. But for all the uncertainty, rejection, and meaningless drunken pulls, there's also a lot less pressure. I no longer have to answer to anybody but myself; I don't have to feel guilty anymore for having fun. It's incredibly liberating.

Admittedly, it was comforting to start university in a relationship. It took a lot of pressure off social interactions during Freshers, which meant that I could get to know most of the opposite sex without being a nervous wreck. That's the hidden problem with LDRs. They're like that smelly blankie you used to drag around with you as a little kid: sure, it makes you feel safe but eventually you outgrow it.

Granted, not everyone is in the same position as me. At my college, there are quite a few people in relationships with people outside the Cambridge bubble and they seem pretty content. Technology certainly helps; Skype sessions will be a regular fixture if you want to keep things going. Travel costs can be somewhat minimised with a student railcard. And it's fun to share all of the new things in your life with them when they come to visit.

However, it does have its drawbacks. Most of these people haven't integrated socially into college life, and it can be difficult to try to reintroduce yourself in Lent term when all the cliques have started to form. Staying with

your partner is entirely possible, but it requires a lot of sacrifices, sacrifices that in my opinion we shouldn't really be making this early in our lives. So, to LDR or not to LDR? That is the question. Ultimately, the decision is yours to make. As nastily as it ended, my relationship was incredibly important to me, and I wouldn't be the person I am today were it not for my ex.

Saying that, I realise now that the distance just made things too difficult, and we drifted apart. I think it's much better to cut your losses, take those experiences forward with you into the future and enjoy university without any constraints. But what do I know, eh?



THE LOST ART OF WANDERING

Juan Luis Bradley gives us a rambler's guide to the often overlooked sights of Cambridge

Proudly the city of the bicycle, Cambridge often gives the impression of a city in a rush. Its streets resound almost continuously with the squeaking of wheels and that distinctive noise of frantic brake applications. However, behind the lines of cyclists and the newly-christened cycle 'superhighways', there lies a different place. A city that stands apart from the rush, a city of sleepy Victorian terrace houses and seldom-visited green spaces. It's a city that opens itself up to the casual wanderer.

I won't pretend that I put my free time to a 'normal' use. Particularly in my first year, I would get some work done, get out of college and start walking. My walks began in the city centre, the streets everyone knows, but with time they would become more and more adventurous.

It eventually reached the point that the other side of the railway line became familiar territory, and that the average length of my walks was around 10km. That may seem a little obsessive, but in the absence of any other sport, these wanders became my primary source of exercise.

It was never really about the exercise, however. Walking around introduced me to parts of Cambridge that could never be seen when cycling. The dense warren of lanes tucked away between the Grafton and Parker's Piece, dotted with tiny pubs. The rows of terraces leading off the bustling Mill Road, a thoroughfare which would feel at home in North London. The misty network of fens clinging to the Cam, including the well-appointed Paradise Fen. All of these areas would certainly see the odd cyclist, but in general they seemed far removed from the city I thought

I knew well from the commute to lectures.

Last Saturday I set out to regain my old pastime. Starting on Huntingdon Road, my plan was to do a loop of the city, avoiding the traditionally well-known areas as much as possible. Cutting through the recreation ground behind Histon Road, a green space guarded by bizarrely-shaped metal lamp posts, I headed north into Arbury. Home of the Cambridge Gurdwara, this suburb is possibly seen most often as a destination on double-decker buses. Wandering down through long avenues lined with semis, I reach the broad thoroughfares of Milton Road and Chesterton Road. The latter of these brings back mixed memories of trips to the boathouse, the last place I did any exercise other than walking. Crossing the river and traversing the wide swathe of Midsummer Common, I enter the aforementioned warren of lanes at Fair Street. What is striking about these lanes is their apparent ability to house a thriving range of public houses in the most obscure of places. In the very midst of this maze, where Elm Street meets Eden Street (another great name), there are two pubs glaring at each other. After Parker's Piece and Mill

Road, I stumble across another such warren. Here, the sights include a piano lesson in a bay window looking out on to Tenison Road and a distinctive red footbridge over the railway line. 'Distinctive', in that its length and covered nature make you feel as if you're trapped in the endless corridor of a horror film.

Passing two other main roads, Hills Road and Trumpington Road, the city changes completely. Tightly-packed terraces and streets are replaced by snaking green fens. It's when you circle the city that you realise just how lopsided Cambridge is in terms of urban development. The western side, dominated by second college sites, grand houses and Sidgwick, has a considerably more open feel. To get there from the fens, I wander through the historic, twisting pas-

sageway of Maltings Lane. It's hard to see much that has changed here, other than the angle of the buildings, seemingly bending lower with age.

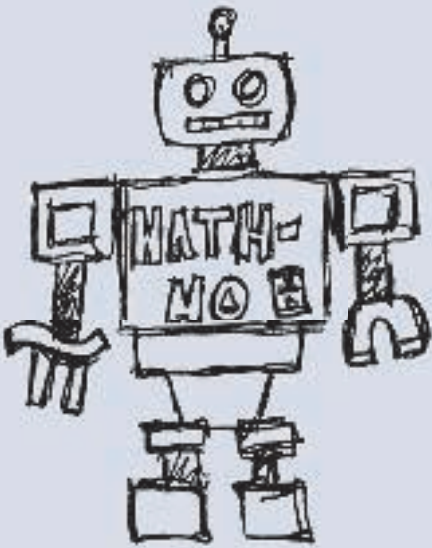
One of the most useful things provided by these walks, besides the scope for interesting sights and moderate exercise, is the space for thought. As Nietzsche remarked, "Only thoughts reached by walking have value."

This walk, which took just under two hours, was in no way exhausting or exhaustive of what there is to be found in Cambridge. A slightly strange way of using up precious free time it may be, but it is arguably a far greater way to get to know the city than being restricted to the trinity of lecture sites, college and shops. Particularly when those commutes are made on two wheels.





01
THE
MACHINES



The supervision partners who just never stop.

They’ve done next week’s work, they’ve done next term’s work and don’t even ask about next year. You arrive fashionably on time in your best dishevelled fluster, to a tut from your supervisor, produce your dog-eared sheaf of papers and sigh at the comparison. The most recent Microsoft font is a poor copy of their handwriting, straight lines are simply not an issue, and when their joints haven’t been oiled for a while you can definitely hear them squeaking.

However, despite their space-age intellect, their chat is primitive at best, “I have that type of pen as well”... Um ... great.

02
THE
SUPERHUMANS



The worst thing is they are lovely.

If their ability to juggle commitments translated into ball skills they would have run away with the circus long ago. Timetabling is always an issue, because, obviously, “any time before lunch is rowing, the orchestra rehearses at 4:00 and my play is performing from 6:00, what about Sunday at 8:00am?” And the worst thing is they are lovely. Charm, wit, and charisma are just three more balls arcing gracefully through the air... and you can’t help but hate them for it.

That doesn’t make you a bad person, right?

03
THE
VEGETABLES



The supervision partners who struggle with the basics.

Turning up has always been an issue (“4:30, oh yeah, cool, yeah, cool, I’ll see you there”) and, to be honest, their presence is more of an anti-presence. Like an intellectual sponge they absorb your carefully crafted, vaguely academic aura, and leave a vacuum into which the hour slowly spirals. Questions directed towards them hang above the room, like the executioner’s axe. You feel like you should jump in but some vague feeling of schadenfreude stops you.

The sight of a world-leading academic trying to pull enthusiasm from a breathing turnip is just too entertaining.

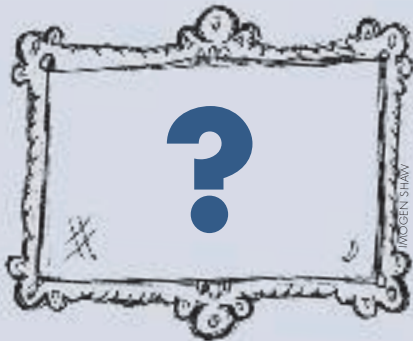
04
THE CONTRA-DICTATORS



They’ve apparently researched every topic, every viewpoint, every statistic.

“I’m really glad you brought that up, but I’m afraid I’m going to have to disagree.” It doesn’t matter who’s talking: you, the graduate supervisor or the world leading source on beetle mating habits, the Contra-Dictators always have something to add. They’ve apparently researched every topic, every viewpoint, every statistic, and managed to form contrary opinions one hundred per cent of the time. The faux politeness is what really grinds your gears. They don’t disagree hesitantly – despite what the carefully stuttered intro would suggest – they relish the disagreement, the controversy. They feed on it, and you definitely think they grow as their monologue begins to roll, or maybe that’s just the supervisor’s weird interrogation style lighting.

BONUS:
THE
CLUELESS



Let’s be honest, you know you’re one of us...

05
THE INTER-RAPTORS



Like a primeval hunter they swoop.

You vaguely mentioned Europe, aaaaaah Europe, a link. From their vantage point, very much outside the conversation, they spy an opening and, like the first feathered dinosaur in an Attenborough documentary, they plummet towards their prey. “Sorry, just - if I may, I was recently looking at some very interesting European literature, specifically some German works of the young Hegelians School.” And that’s it, suddenly the supervision turns into a one-man variety show. You’ve seen it before, this one’s never coming back. It’s masterful how they bat away the insinuating heavy comments from the supervisor and your meaningful glances. Time for an hour of ego-stroking. And you thought you’d signed up for a maths degree.



GOSHA RUBCHINSKY

at 10pm in an old hoodie, it is no bold fashion statement, but the comfort and effortlessness of this kind of dressing is something the fashion world is taking seriously.

Looking good is not simply a question of dressing formally, and no one wants to live their daily life according to the strictures of black tie. Sure enough, streetwear as a genre of fashion is a reaction to this, as is the recent trend towards 90s throwback athletic looks - we all know someone who rolls up to every lecture in Adidas wear. But athletic fashion has moved beyond the street and onto the runway. The radical Russian designer Gosha Rubchinskiy has now shown several shows at Paris Fashion Week with models dressed like Soviet Olympic hopefuls, and many established fashion houses, even brands steeped in the traditionalism of French couture such as Saint Laurent and Christian Dior, are embracing sweatshirts and sports shoes.

Luxury is no longer just about big fur coats and couture dresses - Alexander Wang is probably the pioneer of this kind of casual luxe. His incredibly popular collections are influenced by those young urbanites who tend to stay in their

gym kit for a little longer than necessary, because they appreciate the comfort and practicality they provide. Wang himself has often said that he doesn't play any sports - the key to the evolution of this trend is that sportswear is now largely divorced from its origins. Brands like Wang, Acne Studios and Christopher Raeburn take casual staples and pay close attention to their form and construction. In doing so, they elevate these clothes above their humble origins, so a casual athletic piece can be not just stylish, but in fact luxurious.

“
LOSE THE MINDSET THAT
'IT'S ONLY A TRACKSUIT'”

Basic rules of fit and tailoring apply equally as well in a casual context as on Savile Row - if you are going to step out in joggers, you might want to be extra certain they fit and hang well. Another key to this casual luxe trend is the application of unconventional fabrics. This often comes in the form of high-quality traditional textiles not normally associated with sportswear, such as tailored twill fabrics, silk and even leather, as the newfound function of athletic garments has freed designers from the need to stick to ultra-efficient materials.

Nonetheless, some brands stay truer to the origins of sportswear, exploiting new, manmade fibres for a futuristic, durable look, applying the athletic notion of maximising performance to everyday wear. Perhaps all this attention to detail is all the more appealing because we still feel deep down that it's a daring move to deliberately dress in sporty clothing when all the activity we're doing that day is walking to Sidgwick and back.

For those who can afford it, it makes perfect sense to seek the security of assured quality and design when attempting this kind of aesthetic. But what about those of us seeking athletic chic on a Sports Direct budget? The best bet is to opt for structured styles in more complex fabrics. For sweatpants or joggers, look for elastane mixes and don't be afraid of polymers - this is one context in which 100 per cent cotton is worth avoiding. T-shirts made from silk blends provide a casual drape while maintaining a flattering silhouette. If you commit to this look, lose the mindset that "it's only a tracksuit". There is no reason to skimp on athletic basics if you want to pull this off, and even going for traditional performance sportswear brands such as Nike over cheaper options can ensure you look effortless rather than just like you just stopped caring. Most importantly, confidence in what you are wearing will help you nail sport-luxe - you want it to be obvious that you are dressed like this on purpose.

JOE PEACOCK
**SPORTS-LUXE
STYLE**
*on the rise of fashionable
sportswear*

Who goes out in a tracksuit? While popular wisdom warns against wearing sportswear staples such as trainers and sweatpants outside of their 'intended' context, they can be incorporated into a look that is fashionable, hyper-cool, even sexy. Sure, if I'm in Sainsbury's



Models Alice Anders
Victoria Champion
Emily Conway
Laura Day

Photography Victoria Bowden
With thanks to LMBC for use of
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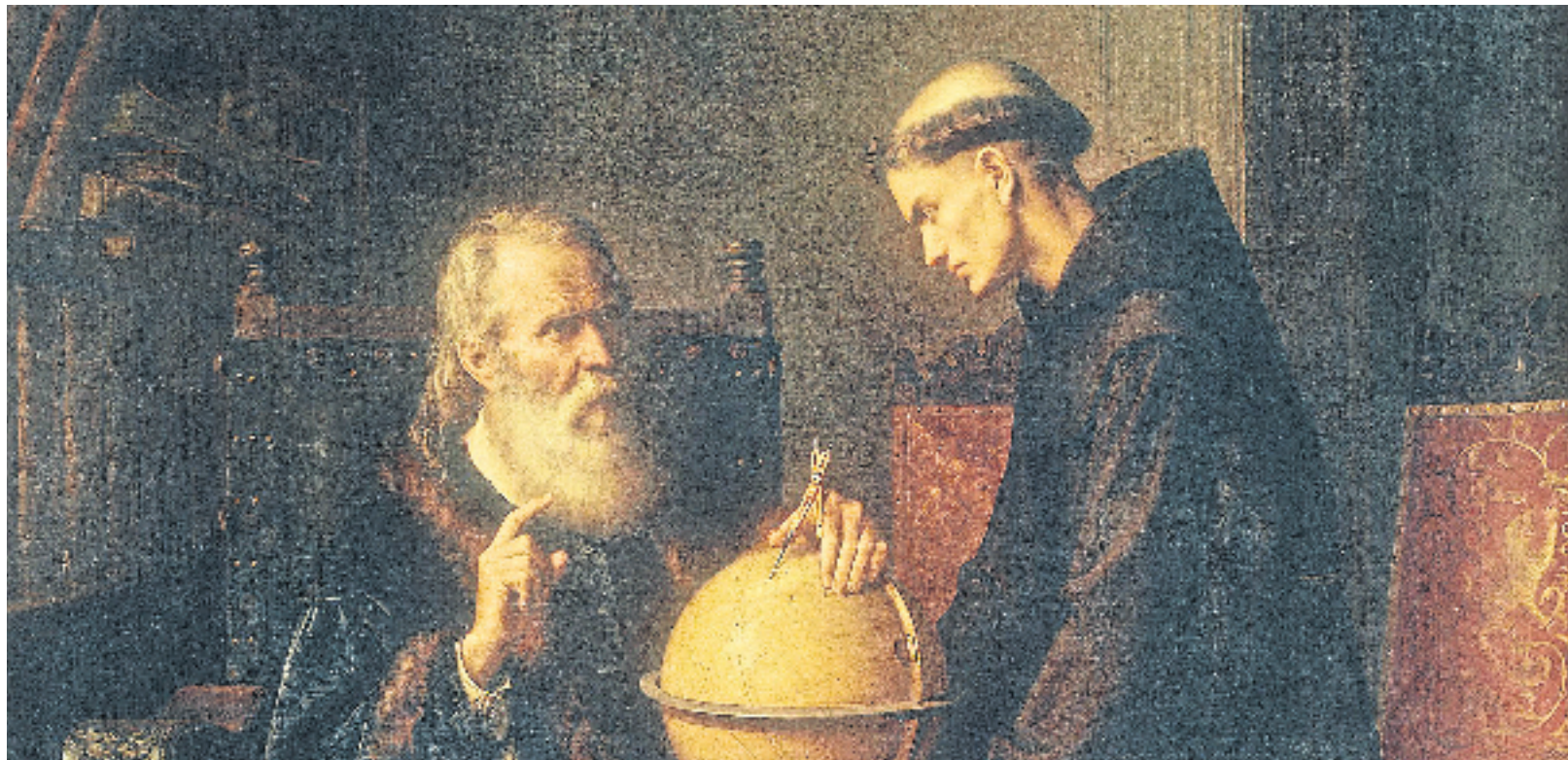
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LIFE OF GALILEO

Noa Lessof-Gendler talks to Gus Mitchell about the upcoming Corpus Mainshow



“It’s not really of a specific genre,” says Gus Mitchell, the director. “It’s epic theatre, which Brecht developed along with a couple of other playwrights. Genre is tied up with how the writer wants the audience to react emotionally, and that was what Brecht was struggling against – he wanted his audience to be emotionally detached so that they could think clearly about the issues he was presenting. He wanted to create a critical distance between them and the performance so that it becomes a sort of intellectual exercise.”

Gus, a second-year English student at Trinity, has really done his research. But it does sound like he’s set himself a challenge – why, I ask, did you pick *Galileo*? “It’s got tonnes of different stuff, which is why I liked it. It has very tragic moments, but it’s also satirical and funny.” But with such a complicated play – Gus admits it’s not a light-hearted stroll in the park – I wonder who it’s going to appeal to.

“I think, for a start, that the scientific subject matter might appeal to people who wouldn’t usually come to see plays,” he says. “I’m hoping that scientists might be interested in the appraisal of their subject. But also, if anyone looks up the play and does a bit of reading about it, they might find things within it that resonate. Something Brecht strived for was to create plays which could mean different things to different people in different times, so I hope that people will come and take from it whatever comes naturally, because that’s exactly what he wanted.”

With such an open text, I wonder if that’s affected Gus’s interpretation. “Oh, definitely,” he says. “In *Galileo*, which he wrote in 1947, Brecht was commenting directly on the atom bomb, but I’ve chosen to base the play around climate change because I think the main message of the play is how science and initially good intentions can be turned to bad ends by

those in power – so obviously that’s very fitting.” Zephyr Brügger, the producer, has similar views on what makes the play so thought-provoking. “It’s really powerful because of the way it shows how social and scientific change work together. But it’s also going to be really interesting visually, because it’s half costume drama and half modern dress, and we’re using film and lots of lighting techniques and a lot of music.”

BRECHT ALMOST WANTS IT TO BE ACTED BADLY

Gus explains the thought process behind this: “Brecht can be done in a very minimalistic way to alienate the audience. But the other option is to use lots of extra interruptions to comment ironically on the action, and music and projection, when used intelligently, can do that. That’s what we’re aiming for – the ironic counterpointing to the text which Brecht really liked. It shouldn’t be distracting but illuminating.”

“The great thing about epic theatre is that because you’re trying to alienate the audience you can sort of get away with anything,” says Zephyr. “You can make use of all sorts of techniques in weird ways which will seem cool because the play leaves space for it; Brecht deliberately never laid down any rules.”

And Gus gives me a curious insight into Brecht’s attitude towards his own plays. “He’d rewrite them, and add comments like, ‘I don’t know how I thought this before, this scene is all wrong... I don’t know how this should work, but it could be attempted like this...’ He’s not massively didactic,

it’s very freeing.” Zephyr adds, “He apparently used to correct himself all the time and say things like, ‘Who the hell wrote this?’”

Next I ask a bit about the direction. What specifically has been tricky, and what’s been the most interesting to work on? “Something really tough has been turning the play from something grand and epic into something that works on a smaller scale,” says Gus. “The RSC had it covering many years and miles on a massive stage; we’re doing it in the Corpus Playroom, so obviously it’s got to be much more intimate. And in terms of the acting, it’s been really difficult to pin down. You could assume from the text that Brecht almost wants it to be acted badly to alienate the audience; to make it really strange and jarring. But at the same time it’s got to be really good to engage the audience. The best Brechtian performances I’ve seen are ones where the acting is almost spot-on but just a little over the top – ‘acting in quotation marks’. And getting the actors to do that has been hard because it’s just so unusual.”

And what’s gone well? “I’m really happy with the music choices!” he says. “We got pressured into picking the music in a hurry” – “our biggest production catastrophe so far,” adds Zephyr – “but it somehow came together in the heat of desperation, and I found a pattern which I think comments really well on the play. So I hope people will really enjoy listening to it in relation to the action.”

And he tells me later that he’s got about an hour’s worth of music for a play which isn’t much longer. Is it modern music? “Yeah, it’s pretty much all modern. There’s some chants, but it’s mostly folk music, like Bob Dylan, Peter, Paul and Mary, Woodie Guthrie, other protest music. And then Daft Punk is in there, some other electronic stuff...” It goes on. Gus has really gone to town on the soundtrack.

Zephyr answers the same question. “I think we’ve got a really amazing cast,” she says. “I saw them yesterday for the first time and I think they’re really spontaneous, brilliant people who seem to be able to work with texts in different ways. They were really experimental and enthusiastic about playing around with the script.” Gus agrees: “They’re so playful, they’re not afraid of going all out and looking silly. They’re not afraid of doing Alan Rickman or Darth Vader voices.

Lastly, I want to hear what I should be looking out for in the performance. What should we bear in mind as we watch? “I don’t think I want anyone to come in with any preconceptions, because I think the journey is about working it out for yourself,” says Gus.

“But it might be interesting to look out for repeated phrases which are almost chorus-like, and also visual motifs which recur in different permutations. And it’ll also be good to think about why things are jarring when they’re jarring – like when the music or projections don’t seem to match up.”

“My advice is to pay attention to the things which seem really stupid,” says Zephyr. “There’s an ongoing joke about milk which is funny but it’s actually making a really serious point. You have to really pay attention to the text: it’s not the kind of play that you can just sit through and understand without trying. There’s always something else going on and you need to concentrate to understand.”

So it’s not the kind of play for relaxing and snoozing through after a long day? “Definitely not,” they both laugh. Zephyr continues, “Everyone says that about their own play, but it’s particularly the case with this one.”

Life of Galileo is showing at The Corpus Playroom at 7:00pm from Tuesday 2nd to Sat 6th February 2016

SPRING AWAKENING

Rebecca Vaa talks about the background of the play

This interpretation of Frank Wedekind’s groundbreaking play raises the question: what on earth does rock music have to do with the sufferings of young people growing up in a time that seems so far removed from our contemporary world?

Adapting this play to a musical, particularly one of a rock concert style, is incredibly apt. This disjuncture between the experiences of the characters and the world of song create an incredible forum in which to illustrate the universality of the troubles of puberty and budding adolescence, the timelessness of the themes of the show, as well as give the characters room in which to share their emotional journeys, their doubts, their desires with the audience.

Song is a powerful means of communication that resonates with so many people on deeper levels than speech, and the music and lyrics of this show provide a great tool to highlight the complexities of its central themes. This adaptation magnifies this universalising effect even more, really drawing attention to how these issues can relate to contemporary society, just as much as they did in a more conservative, traditional time period.

Going through puberty, exploring physical relationships for the first time, and grappling with sexuality are all central experiences for the life of any modern teenager, and therefore Wedekind’s work is just as timeless as this musical adaptation suggests. And indeed, despite the idea that we live in a progressive, liberal society in which there is freedom of expression and toleration, taboos around sex and sexuality are still prominent in all corners of the globe today.

Access to sex education is so varied and arbitrary, and fallacies about things like pregnancy, STIs, and homosexuality continue to exist due to the lack of acceptance and, quite simply, the failure to give people the tools to understand it. Sex is still such a closeted subject, and the persistence of taboo has extreme consequences for many young people all over the world.

Keeping that in mind, the themes of *Spring Awakening* are essential to preserve and to continue to bring to the stage. This, among so many other reasons, is why I am so thankful to have had the opportunity to direct this show.

Spring Awakening is on at 7:45pm, Tue 2nd February 2016 - Sat 6th February 2016, at ADC Theatre



Eleanor Costello (Varsity): *Have you tried to do anything different or unusual with the play?*

Gaia Fay-Lambert: When we set out to put on this play, the original idea was to gender-swap the students, and we spent a lot of time thinking about what the impact of this would be – the first thing was that Hector's 'fiddling' immediately became more sinister somehow, and one of the other key things was that a lot of the lines said by the students are very gendered, with a sort of

'lad culture' vibe. Casting the whole student body as female would have (hopefully) called some of these lines out. We immediately came up against licensing restrictions, with our contract saying that we couldn't do anything to change the 'intent' of the play, particularly gender-swapping. In the end we cast the students gender-blind, though they're still all technically playing males. I love the way that the female and male cast still create the same dynamic as in the film. It also helps (I hope) to dissipate the idea that I think still hangs around comedy, that females can't be as blatantly funny as males.

EC: *The play is set in the 1980s. Do you think that it's something that will still resonate with students at Cambridge?*

GFB: I think that it's massively a product of its time, and I think Bennett was very conscious of this when he wrote it. What strikes me about the play is that the 'paedophilia' isn't really an issue to the characters – when Hector is caught out, the Headmaster has more of an issue with the homosexual aspect of it than anything else. If

the play was set today, there's no way Hector could get away with it. The other thing that's come up a lot in rehearsals is how unrealistic it is that eight students from one school could all get places at Oxbridge for the same subject. It's been really difficult for everyone to get their heads around the idea that everyone could get in, since it's something that we have all been through ourselves. I think it still resonates with students at Cambridge though, perhaps far more so than it would have done on Broadway. It creates a weird sort of dual nostalgia – both for when it's set, a time we never experienced, and for moments in our own lives.

EC: *Has your idea of the play or any of the characters changed over the rehearsal process?*

GFB: I don't think the characters themselves have really changed, but one thing which does keep developing is this idea of Hector's voice. We established right at the start of the process that he has lived in Yorkshire all of his life, but his words aren't actually written with any Yorkshire dialect, and in the film version Richard Griffiths doesn't have an accent either. We've tried it a few different ways, with a broad accent and without, but ultimately we've ended up coming up with a whole backstory for exactly why and how Hector speaks the way he does. In terms of the play itself,

my ideas have changed somewhat. I feel like it's quite obvious that Alan Bennett was discussing the play with Nicholas Hytner, the original director, while he wrote it, since there's some bits that have us tearing our hair out over stage directions (or lack thereof). Since the first rehearsal, my idea of the play has developed into thinking of it as a type of collective memory that's set in the past, rather than being in real-time with the audience, which resolves some of the issues of characters speaking out to the audience for instance.

EC: *The History Boys has been frequently voted as one of the nation's best-loved plays. Why do you think that it is so popular?*

GFB: I think it's because the teachers themselves are so universal. Everyone can relate to the types of teachers it portrays – the inspirational one, the one whose lessons always seemed fun but irrelevant, and the one who just spoon-feeds you the facts, who you're massively grateful for when you get to the exam! The boys themselves are very relatable, and you can feel that you yourself are part of the play. The characters are also all completely human. They all have very evident flaws, but you can't help but like them. *The History Boys* manages to strike a perfect balance between humour and poignancy. I just hope that we can do it justice!

ELEANOR COSTELLO

HISTORY BOYS

in conversation with director Gaia Fay Lambert



Eleanor Costello chats to Lucy Moss, director of Product

Lucy Moss is lounging on one of the sofas in Caius JCR, typing furiously on a Mac perched on her lap. As I walk over, she looks up and smiles, snaps her laptop shut, and rises to shake my hand. Lucy is the director for the Corpus Playroom lateshow *Product*. It's a play I've heard nothing about, and she is keen to fill me in.

"Basically, this producer is trying to sell his idea for a script to a famous actress, with the idea that he has to get her on board at all costs. He's trying to use any means possible to convince her that this is the best script ever – but the problem is, the film is super-offensive. In some productions they've named the script 'Mohammed and Me', and at this point Lucy

pauses to pull a face at me. "It's pretty awful. A woman from London meets this Muslim guy on a plane and ends up taking him home with her. He turns out to be a terrorist, and then she becomes a terrorist, but then she changes her mind after a dream... It's the worst script ever, but because the producer is selling it so hard there are parts which become almost convincing. It's very funny and very dark."

Lucy pauses for breath, and we get onto talking about whether the play is making a statement about Islamophobia. "The producer never tries to be political – the statement of the play is about him embarrassing himself with his terrible script. He'll make a story about anything, and this is what is selling at the moment. The play is

called 'Product'; it's making a statement about how people will make a narrative about anything to sell films. It's really interesting to consider what's acceptable to be told as a story. And as well – the play was originally written as a one-man play by Mark Ravenhill for him to perform at Edinburgh, so he is ironically selling himself in the process."

So who's the lead? "We've done something a bit different – we have four people playing the same character throughout, and it's actually all-female." Lucy laughs as I look at her in surprise. "Yeah, I was casting it gender-blind originally, and I had it in my mind that I would cast men because there is an undercurrent of ironic sexism in the play.

But Cambridge has such an abundance of female talent – for every good male actor there are five good female actors, so when I held auditions it became clear very quickly that it would work better with all-women. I feel like you can get away with more with female actors – there's something really interesting about watching a female actor playing a man being very sexist about women.

"The play is difficult to stage because it gives you so much but also so little to work with," Lucy reaches for her script to show me. The script is only a few pages long, and it's one long monologue. "The script is probably the most difficult that I've had to work on because there are so many nuances to it. It's been tricky to work out

how this would work as an ensemble piece."

I ask Lucy how she thinks the play will be received. She looks slightly worried, but then laughs. "My dream is to get a five-star and a one-star review. I have no idea how it's going to go down – I think this is going to polarise people a lot. It's about toeing the line – we don't want to be scared of offending people, we want to make the play dramatic and appealing, but at the same time we want people to see that it's tongue-in-cheek. A lot of people will hate it, but hopefully a lot of people are going to really get it."

Product will be on at the Corpus Playroom at 9:30pm from Tuesday 2nd-Saturday 6th February 2015.



TV

War and Peace

dir. Tom Harper

★★★★★

I can't really tell you what it's about or why you will like *War and Peace*: it's a 1500-page novel after all, and I can't get it all down here. Bonaparte, court politics and finance stalk the aging aristocrats in the dens of the ancien régime; simultaneously sex, death, war and marriage pull the younger generation along at a bewildering pace as they try to make sense of it all. The hypocrisy, tangled plot lines and intrigue resemble *Game of Thrones*, but the thoughtfulness and interesting tone that this BBC adaptation achieves means that a direct comparison doesn't do this show justice.

The first few episodes are quite steamy, focusing on romance and family intrigue; war and political intrigues are felt only in the reverberations they cause in the lives of protagonists. That's why Russian critics have dismissed it as "a classic with cleavage" or a "medium budget soap opera." They needn't get so jumpy and defensive. In the Soviet version you sat through hours and hours of slow conversations, interminable maroushkas, miles and miles of Soviet

army extras, and a lack of good female dialogue. There were (at a rough guess) 100,000 minutes of close-up footage of grim-faced Russian male leads staring into the distance while riding in a carriage. Natasha had all the charm of a scientifically reanimated potato. Meanwhile, the 1950s American version consisted in its entirety of bland glossy actors leering at Audrey Hepburn.

In any period drama it is hard to get us to look past the ballrooms and grandeur. This adaptation avoids that pitfall. Deft camerawork means that we are close but not too close to the action. The script is wonderful, the dialogue contemporary and unpretentious. Lines like, "I feel like everything I say or do or think turns out to be wrong" is neither fanciful nor jarringly overdramatic. With the recent BBC series *Dickensian* the director jumped from one part of the plot to another and it felt like *Eastenders* – a sprawling mess. Each episode of *War and Peace* is neatly self-contained, and we are always left with a cliffhanger. It's quick but also manages to take the time out for the existential conversations between Pierre and Andrei, or Sonia and Natasha.

Paul Dano (of *There Will Be Blood*) and Lily James deserve special mention as Pierre and Natasha. Every other version I've seen has Natasha as a kind of speechless Lolita: beautiful and dancing and entirely lacking in the brain department. James plays

the sensitive young heroine with the force and thought that she deserves. Meanwhile, Paul Dano's Pierre is passionate, irritating, idealistic and loveable. It's a very fine turn. The count Ilya Rostov, Marya Bolkonskaya and Vassily Kuragin (his face looks like a wet towel) are great supporting characters and for fans of Jim Broadbent, he's back and playing Jim Broadbent in this too.

Stylistically it is beautiful: sweeping us past grand pastel eighteenth-century mansions, looking like a row of iced cakes on the snow, into twinkling ballrooms, and through the deep greens, purple-grey mountains and autumnal low lights of the Russian countryside. It's so well shot you feel you could reach out and ping the crisp morning air with a finger. They have even come up with an earthy Russian-inspired choir to score the work.

I'm personally not a fan of most of the BBC's Big Project, wide-audience-appeal shows. The Christmas *Sherlock* episode was the worst episode of any television programme I've ever seen: poorly cut, poorly paced, nonsensical, self-infatuated mega-bollocks is about the closest I can get to pouring adamant amounts of scorn on it, and the whole *Sherlock* series. This show is a cut above. I love it as you can probably tell and I guarantee that you will too. My only criticism is that all the actors are far too beautiful; but I doubt that will put you off.

Alex Findley

EXHIBITION

'Cutting the Curve': Crafting the Classical Body

Faculty of Classics, closes 25/02/16

★★★★★

'Cutting the Curve': *Crafting the Classical Body* is all about simplicity, getting to the heart of things. The creator of these striking images, Vanessa Stone, has worked at reducing images of Greek and Roman statues – many of them will look familiar, even if you're not a Classics student – to their essence, the sense of proportion and demeanour which has made classical art a subject of wonder for thousands of years. She talks of the importance of seeing the stencils as the artwork, rather than as a stage in the process of creating an image. Drawing the image onto paper with a scalpel, she forms stencils to abstract them to their

essence, and her images become, ultimately, layered paper collages, which she then cuts through again to rework the picture. Stone is already known in Cambridge for her work involving local scenes, which has been exhibited at Byard Art on King's Parade since 2006. She's evidently very excited about the project, calling it a 'dream come true', not least because of how much the images in the cast gallery have captivated and inspired her as an artist.

This is not a stand-alone exhibition in one corner of the cast gallery – it's intimately integrated into its surroundings. This made it, for me, seem less like an exhibition and more like an addition to the viewing process and, depending on the individual, can be seen as a positive or negative. Some, such as the 'Aphrodite of Capua', were pieces which benefitted from being viewed in adjunct to the images which inspired them, whereas others, like 'I am Horse', felt somewhat less relevant. With regard to this last image, the top of the horse's head feels very classically inspired, and manages to capture the look of marble, but as you move down the nose and onto the mouth, it begins to morph into something less familiar as it becomes shrivelled and almost corpse-like. This is not to take away

from the image itself – but a large proportion of the pictures feel peripheral to the idea of the exhibition.

The exhibition is an interesting – if lighter – companion piece to the Fitzwilliam's 'Following Hercules' last term, in that it explains classical art with a combination of classical and modern work, showing how the classical form continues to delight and provoke artists today. It is also nice to see that both exhibitions featured prominently the works of local artists, giving them unique opportunities to exhibit their work in such unique settings. It's a shame that with our busy terms, as students we rarely get the opportunity to properly enjoy the museums and galleries on offer in Cambridge. We could all do, however, with taking the time out to visit carefully considered exhibitions such as these, which invite us either to discover the museum for the first time, or to find new ways of viewing and engaging with objects we are already familiar with.

'Cutting the Curve': *Crafting the Classical Body* is open from 10am-5pm, Monday to Friday, and 10am-1pm on Saturday, until 25th February in the Museum of Classical Archaeology. Free Admission.

Emer O'Hanlon



FILM

The Big Short

dir. Adam, McKay, 130 mins

★★★★★

In a recent *Vanity Fair* interview, Michael Lewis, the writer behind a 2010 Wall Street book about the 2007 economic crash, revealed that director Adam McKay had made a pseudo-blackmail deal with his studio to adapt Lewis's story in return for directing a revival of an early 2000s 'Will Ferrell is still relevant and fresh' classic comedy. Two films were produced from this deal; the first was an ensemble cast in an average and occasionally patronising portrayal of a high-stakes professional industry that didn't quite live up to expectations – the other film was *Anchorman 2*.

The Big Short follows a group of various financial 'outsiders' who predict the 2007 collapse of the housing market, and consequentially bet against the banks to make money if an economic 'atomic bomb' were to happen. Do not fret however, because *The Big Short* is witty in places, although less a comedy and more a hard-hitting encyclopaedia of financial fraud and corruption that softens the blow with the

occasional joke.

The Big Short is held together by its stylised direction, and unflinching screenplay, both by Adam McKay. The editing is fast and clever and fits smoothly with the film's high pace, but *The Big Short* is a little long and its commitment to never settling can be exhausting at times. The scenes are interwoven with bold, yet fittingly naïve, visual and audio snapshots of the early 2000s that are incredibly effective, if not just because it may be the first film to combine George Bush, Britney Spears, Mark Twain and Ludacris in a montage that looks like it belongs to a low budget conspiracy documentary from the dark corners of Netflix.

Film should not be criticised for the audience not understanding the logistics behind it, and *The Big Short* does not really hold back. In some scenes, to help the audience, Ryan Gosling will stare down the lens and into your soul to explain various forms of mortgages – which, in all fairness, is just about enough to grasp your attention back just as it's about to slip into the abyss of home equity loans and AAA ratings. On occasion the explanations can feel a little patronising, but although it may hurt your ego, having some concepts explained through the medium of Jenga or Selena Gomez is incredibly necessary.

Christian Bale is the Anton Chigurh,



Heath Ledger's Joker or BB-8 of this film, in that Bale's scenes as Michael Burry are the parts you look forward to most when your mind wanders off as the characters head to the fourth financial conference in an hour - although his musical taste may give you what I shall refer to as a 'whiplash headache'. Since 2013 Brad Pitt seems to have made a career of acting in the same role - a bizarre, almost benevolent, guide who is only there to morally prod the film's characters when needed, with as much screen time as the credits (see *12 Years a Slave*, *The Counsellor*). Here, his nuance and subdued characterisations stand out from the exaggerated traits of his fellow financiers, yet it's still a glorified cameo in essence.

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HELD TOGETHER BY ITS STYLISED DIRECTION, AND UNFLINCHING SCREENPLAY

Steve Carrell gives the weakest performance, mainly due to the conception of his character Mark Baum. The treatment of Baum's past is so heavy-

handed it makes the character repeatedly shouting 'I don't want to talk about it' come across more like Simba on cocaine instead of what could have been a poignant glance into the dark realities of Wall Street. His character rarely rises above his anger, and the slotting in of a wife (poor Marisa Tomei) for two scenes does little to humanise him. Often he seems to spew phrases like 'ripping ordinary people off' as if they came directly out of 'how to get your audience to like you 101'.

To make a fleeting reference to the current cinematic zeitgeist, in a film about rich white men - and with the risk of making a potentially unrelated statement - it is rather baffling how a film which is quite good, but not great, can achieve such awards success as *The Big Short* has.

There is one element of the concept that should be questioned, and without revealing too much, is that in a film about the economic death knell of millions sounding due to the recklessness of the few, it feels like the characters should come out with more than moral scars. However, to paraphrase and 'de-profane' an excellent quotation in the film, the truth is like poetry - because no one wants to hear it. In all, *The Big Short* will leave you feeling slightly deflated, and you may wish that they had lied just a little bit.

Naomi Sutton

ALBUM

Savages - Adore Life

released 22/1, Matador / Pop Noire

★★★★★

When Savages first emerged and released their debut album *Silence Yourself* in 2013, the comparisons with bands like Joy Division and Siouxsie and the Banshees were so commonplace that it almost feels like a cliché to be commenting on them at all. It was a lazy and completely reductive analysis of what Savages had achieved. Besides, if one were to make a comparison between Savages and other bands with a moody aesthetic and angular guitar lines, in this case it would be more appropriate, at least in terms of trajectory, to refer to the post-punk revival bands of the early noughties. The likes of Interpol, The Strokes and Franz Ferdinand all arrived with debut albums that seemed to present the finished package. The problem was where they went from there; everything they had to say had been said. Arguably Savages faced a similar problem; so refined and purposeful was *Silence Yourself*. Yet they have managed to do what their predecessors couldn't, and create an album that is a step up in almost every sense.

Although largely well-received, Savages were not wholly spared criticism. They were accused of being rather serious - a charge not entirely without justification given the essay they wrote for the album's cover - and of only operating at two tempos: the pummelling, quicker tracks and the more dirge-like slower ones. Yet the band have addressed these issues head on. For one, there's a real sonic dynamism to the record. 'The Answer' comes thrashing out of the speakers, opening the album with a churning guitar line and Jehnny Beth's typically pointed vocals, yet it's followed by a dance-like groove on 'Evil'. 'Surrender' may start with a yawning, billowing drone but it morphs into one of Savages's most accessible songs yet, with a remarkably poppy one-word chorus.

Savages's new lyrical fixation on love, both for life itself and each other, seems to have been a particularly fertile soil. It would be hard for their critics to argue that they are still too po-faced, as there are glimmers of a dark sense of humour coming through. The album opens with the line "if you don't love me, you don't love anybody" which manages to be both threatening and mocking of the self-absorption that comes with passion. On 'Sad Person' Beth mischievously claims that "I'm not gonna hurt you, 'cause I'm flirting you", as though she doesn't know that those two things are far from mutually exclusive. Although delivered in a typically strident tone, Beth must surely be aping Radiohead's 'Karma Police' on 'T.I.W.Y.G.' when she declares "this is what you get when you mess with love." One can't imagine any listeners would have much trouble deciding whether Beth or Thom Yorke would provide the more sympathetic shoulder to cry on.

Savages do more than just poke fun at the complexities of love, though. This is than the quasi-title track and mission statement, 'Adore', which stands as the highlight of their career to date. The songs opens sparsely with a low, rumbling bassline reminiscent of Nick Cave, before it bursts to life with an oddly transcendent chorus as Beth sings "maybe I will die maybe tomorrow." Yet the song arguably saves the best till last, as it climaxes in a noise-rock crescendo and Beth bellowing that she adores life. Such are the quirks of fate, but lines like "I understand the urgency of life" have taken on a much greater significance since the events in Paris and Savages's pointed effort to play there shortly after.

The only real disappointment is the closing track, 'Mechanics', which is heavy on the atmosphere but rather lacking in tune. It's not positively bad though, and does nothing to take away from what is a triumph of a record. Many bands can show promise. A select few have figured out, as Savages have, how to deliver it here and now.

Patrick Wernham



CHRIS ATTO

ALBUM

Chairlift - Moth

released 22/1, Columbia / Sony

★★★★★

Chairlift have never shirked away from a creative challenge. Even if their best known track may still be 'that one that got used in an iPod ad a while ago', the duo of Caroline Polachek and Patrick Wimberly refused to get stuck in the pigeonhole of pretty, inoffensive pop music and have spent two albums since trying to figure out what their alternative is. Finally, on their third outing, they have found it. Toning down the excessively cerebral and arch qualities of *Does Your Inspiration?* and *Something* (two albums with awkward titles to match their aloof, self-absorbed tone) and finding a new, vibrant vitality, *Moth* is an album with serious impact but with the thought and insight to back it up.

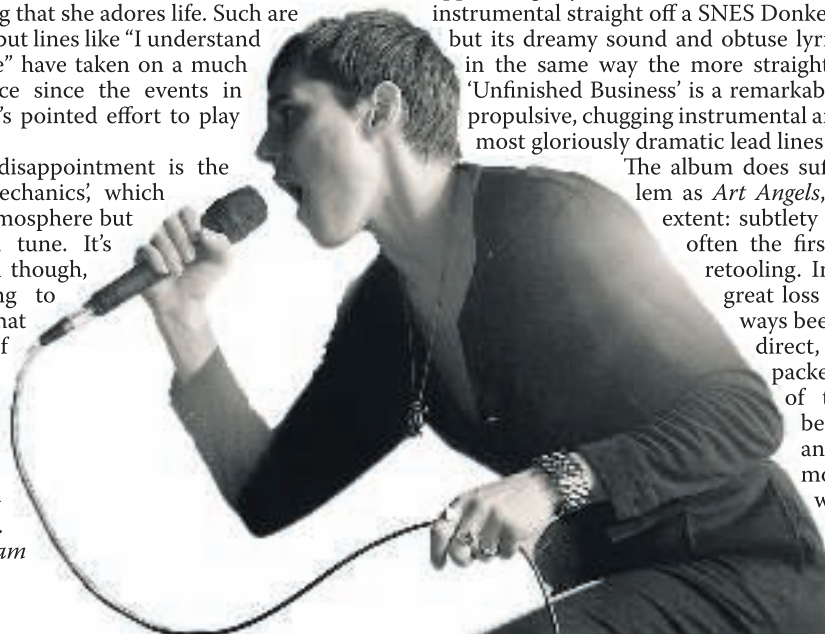
Chairlift's sound palette has always been 80s-influenced, but opening track 'Look Up' shows how much this album's production doubles down on it, with clattering drum machines, FM bleeps and gliding synth strings backing up Polachek's voice. By a minute into the track, a quiet saxophone lead line and palmed guitar part straight out of the most disgusting of power ballads are lurking in support. This definitely isn't 'genre' music aiming to resuscitate tropes from the past, but the music certainly mines deeply ingrained attachments to pop music from the likes of Madonna and Diana Ross. It does take the care to pack in the attention to detail to mark itself out as properly thought-out and inventive, but that pop music core keeps the album relatable and grounded throughout in a way that Chairlift had never managed before.

That pop sensibility is the most notable feature of this album, a change this album shares with the similarly powerful *Art Angels* from Grimes. However, where *Art Angels* was manic and explosively charged with an abundance of competing ideas, *Moth* maintains a much tighter focus. Caroline Polachek's voice arcs over every track, laser-like in its accuracy, while the songwriting is honed and concise; the two lead singles Ch-Ching and Romeo are a study in minimal, functional construction. It is a talent that was hinted at in the highlights of *Something* ('Sidewalk Safari' and 'I Belong In Your Arms' most obviously), and was used to stunning effect while writing 'No Angel' for Beyoncé, and is now being exploited fully in everything Chairlift do. Romeo presents a feminist flip of a love song - aping the myth of the huntress Atalanta that a suitor needs to match the protagonist in a running race: "If I win, you're done with / But if you win, you win my heart... / Hey Romeo / Put on your running shoes, I'm ready to go". It is all wrapped up in a shuffling, sunny and really danceable drum and bass track, one of their most unconventional but strongest tracks yet. 'Ch-Ching', meanwhile, is a grooving dancehall-RnB banger, all bass and swaggering confidence - from the close-miced whispers to the squeals of "Ch-ching!" in the post-chorus, it is packed with a bright, infectious joy.

That relentless pop-charm does make some of the album's more bare moments come across in a less than elegant way. 'Crying in Public' seems to want to act as the emotional centrepiece, but the coy cuteness of the instrumental fails at sustaining the track's sentiments in a way that doesn't appear slightly naive. 'Ottawa to Osaka' seems to have an instrumental straight off a SNES Donkey Kong soundtrack, but its dreamy sound and obtuse lyricism fail to impact in the same way the more straightforward tracks do. 'Unfinished Business' is a remarkable exception, with a propulsive, chugging instrumental and one of Polachek's most gloriously dramatic lead lines.

The album does suffer the same problem as *Art Angels*, even if to a lesser extent: subtlety and complexity are often the first victims of a pop retooling. In this case, it is no great loss - Chairlift have always been best at their most direct, and this album is packed with those kinds of tracks. *Moth* is a beautifully measured and intelligent take on modernist pop music, with a lucid head and an open heart.

Michael Davin



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Clichés: the language of football

Zack Case decodes the cryptic tongues of football pundits, and tells us what we need to look out for

Commentator classics:

The Curse of The Commentator: it is a notorious trait of 'The Commentator' to be versed in the dark arts. These commentators-cum-sorcerers have the power to 'curse' the mere mortal struggling on the pitch below. "He hasn't missed a penalty in his previous twenty attempts"; inexorably, the player misses. Spooky, eh?

He had no right to score from there: The Magna Carta itself includes a section on the angles and distances from which, by legal right, players can and cannot score. 30-yard 'screamers' are in fact illegal.

My grandmother could have scored that: Did the man who came up with this line ever have a grandmother?

No offence to all grandmothers out there, yet, even if alive and pre-Zimmer, most likely she too would have missed that 'sitter' - especially if it had been a header.

Acres of space: The dimensions of a football pitch are as follows: length can range from 100 to 130 yards, width from 50 to 100 yards. To put that into perspective, a single acre equals 4,840 square yards.

Thank you, Captain Obvious:

If you don't shoot you don't score: As opposed to trying to 'walk the ball into the net', obviously.

Goals win games: Own goals can actually lose games; see Kolo Touré's scoring record.

A Game of Two Halves: Not a game of two quarters?

We are going to take one match at a time: Squads these days are comprised of 25 players, so there is no

reason why two matches could not be played simultaneously. Manchester City could probably take on three matches at once.

It ain't over 'til it's over: Perhaps there is some sense in at least one of these clichés. It has always been a mystery how they formulate stoppage time and why the referee only rarely blows the final whistle at the correct point. 'Fergie Time' will never end.

When Manchester City don't score, they rarely ever win: Thanks for that insight, Michael Owen.

Expertise from experts:

who employs the strategy?

Could [insert footballer] do it on a cold and rainy Wednesday night at Stoke in November? The ultimate hypothetical question. The criterion for judging world-class players has had a tendency to boil down to a player's ability to perform at the Britannia, specifically on cold and wet Wednesday nights in November. Messi, the argument follows, could not. Glen Whelan could. Perhaps obsolete now given Mark Hughes's inception of Stokealona?

They're parking the bus: Where does this bus come from? How did it get onto the pitch? Where is it parked? Who drove it? Are the players inside it? Is it the same bus for every team

He's got bags of ability/pace: In a sport where there is minimal anti-doping legislation and enforcement, it is no surprise that players can get away with carrying bags of performance-enhancing talent.

He certainly has that in his locker: 'That' generally refers to a piece of brilliance exhibited on the pitch - a cross-field ping, a cheeky flick, an overhead kick. For some reason, and somehow, these flashes are kept in the changing room for the duration of the match.

Goalkeepers' Union: All goalkeepers are obliged to join. They never go on strike.

Fans know better:

He scores when he wants: The obvious question then is why isn't he scoring all the time? Is 30 goals a season enough for a player who supposedly has the supernatural faculty to put the ball into the back of his net at will? Perhaps fans ought to get on his back. Is his head truly in the game?

We are by far the greatest team the world has ever seen: Perhaps the treble-winning Barcelona side of 2009 that dominated Manchester United comes nearest to this hubristic claim. When Hull City fans sing it, there is a greater element of delusion.

Managers know best:

The players worked their socks off today: This is virtually inconceivable. How this dictum has become synonymous with 'we chased every ball' transgresses the mind's capacity to reason. What do socks have to do with anything? Do they smell?

The lads gave 110 per cent: We don't need a mathmo to prove that this is impossible. Odd that it is always 110 per cent as opposed to any other impossible percentage.

It really was a good time for us to score: Are there bad times to score? During a football match, probably.

They got stuck in today: A simple clamour for aggression. It makes very little sense if you think about it. Players becoming stuck would render them useless.

We showed great character: Did Luis Suárez collect for the Red Cross and Martin Škrtel help an old lady across the road then, Brendan?

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It's all Greek to me

Zack Case discusses the oddities of football clichés on page 31.



Sport

Finding the meaning of sport

What's in a sport? Sophie Penney asks which of Cambridge's many different societies deserve that label

**Sophie Penney**

Sport Correspondent

What links baton twirling, hovering, bridge, lifesaving and tiddlywinks? It turns out that they are all sports. In Cambridge, lifesaving, chess and Frisbee are all half blue sports, with tiddlywinks just trailing at quarter blue status. How did this happen? How are they sports? If bridge is a sport, why not other card games like snap and poker? If motorsports are allowed, is flying a sport, and is the pilot of an EasyJet aircraft taking passengers on their holiday to Saint Tropez next in line for Sports Personality? Where do we draw the line?

One would think sports need to have three things: physical exertion, competition and skill. The *Oxford English Dictionary* seems to think pretty much the same: "an activity involving physical exertion and skill in which an individual or team competes against another or others for entertainment". Yet it turns out there are many definitions, each one broader than the next. The word sport comes from the Old French word 'desport', meaning 'leisure'. In English, the oldest definition of sport was made around 1300, classing it as "anything humans find amusing or entertaining".

Sporting bodies use different definitions. Sport England uses the definition in the 1993 Council of Europe's European Sports Charter. The International Olympic Committee has formed the Association of IOC Recognised International Sports Federations in order to class which activities it deems to be sport, which does include bridge and chess. The most cited definition comes from

SportAccord, the union that includes all of the world's largest sports federations. SportAccord claims that sport can be primarily physical, mental, motorised or animal-supported, that it should have an element of competition, and that it shouldn't rely on any specifically integrated element of "luck", nor pose an undue risk to the health and safety of its participants, or be harmful to a living creature.

Cambridge has its own way of classing what a sport is or at least what sporting activities deserve the recognition of the student body: the blues system. A quick glance at the list of which sports are blues sports will bring up the obvious: football, rugby, hockey, tennis, and rowing. It's in the half blue section that there are some surprise finds: try lifesaving, chess and Frisbee. Quarter blue status has also been awarded to tiddlywinks. Cambridge is a place famous for prioritising intellectual activity over any other, but can it really go so far as to call these activities sports and give them a blues status? How competitive can lifesaving really be; surely everyone would want everyone else to win to prevent, well, death?

It turns out there is much more to it than that. Sam Brennan, former tournament secretary of the Cambridge University Chess Club, explains, "Chess was the first sport to be awarded half blue status. In those days it was the most watched of the Varsity matches." Is this just a Cambridge thing? Certainly not. "The UK is one of the only countries in the world not to define chess as a sport. The Olympic Committee says it's a mind sport." If the IOC, the God of sporting bodies, does it, why shouldn't Cambridge? People have trouble with accepting mind sports because of the lack of

physical exertion but there is no doubt that there is competition and skill involved. A readjustment of perspective is all that is needed.

The lack of physical exertion is a theme which continues with tiddlywinks. But Nicky Collins, a committee member of the Cambridge University Tiddlywinks Club, argues that this isn't an issue: "To be a world-class sports player requires multiple things: commitment, talent and desire to win. These are, of course, all qualities which a tiddlywinker must possess. Matches are won or lost not on the physical fitness of the players, but on the strategy and skill they display." Does it bear any resemblance to any other sport? "I like to think of winks as a game with the tactical and strategic qualities of chess combined with the technical skill of basketball." And what is this legendary quarter blue status that no other sport seems to possess? "The quarter blue status is unique to tiddlywinks and something which is over 50 years old." There's even quarter blue stash! Nicky, however, still has yet to receive his invitation from the Hawks Club.



PEOPLE HAVE TROUBLE WITH ACCEPTING MIND SPORTS BECAUSE OF THE LACK OF PHYSICAL EXERTION

There are some Cambridge sports that do require physical exertion but are still considered a bit odd. Ultimate Frisbee springs to mind. Yu Wei Chua,

a member of the Cambridge Ultimate Club, explains the problem of public perception: "I think people who claim Ultimate cannot be classed as a sport just haven't seen how it's really played yet. They have the perception that it's a beach sport, or that it can't be a competitive game because you just throw it around." Perhaps that's just it: You need to understand the sport before you start to judge it, and most people don't often give the sport that chance.

In terms of Frisbee, Yu Wei explains, "I find the level of physical fitness required on par with any 'actual sport' – sprinting is the only way to successfully get the disc so the amount of running in a fifty-minute-long game definitely fulfils the physical component of a sport. Throwing a disc well isn't easy either, and takes months of practice to get it right, and there's more than one kind of throw."

Ok, agreed: Ultimate Frisbee requires a normal amount of sporting physicality, and chess has the tactics and strategy to make up for that particular deficiency. Yet motorsports? Surely all you have to do is sit down and drive? Ryan Jenkinson, who is involved in Cambridge motorsport, explains why this is so far off the mark. "When I started in first year, I was getting bashed about an incredible amount. The bruises I had from first year Varsity were brutal, my left leg and back were purple, this was because I couldn't hold myself in place with the g-forces and was being bashed around in the seat. At the top level the physicality cannot be disputed even if it doesn't involve 'moving'. Formula One, World Endurance Championship and World Rally Championship drivers are some of the fittest athletes in the world. The cars they are driving are extremely powerful and the g-forces

involved means only the very fittest can compete. Also, the level of technicality and sophistication aimed at analysing performance to increase speed means Motorsport is as much a thinking man's game as it is a test of physical endurance."

The final elephant in room remains lifesaving. Emma Hildyard, president of the Cambridge Lifesaving Club, explains the basics of the sport: "It's composed of learning first aid, but then applying it to simulated circuits both in and out of the pool. Most of our time is spent in the pool simulating saving people from made-up incidents." When people tell her it's not a sport, what's her reply? "You try sprinting 50 metres swimming, tumble-turn, swim 17 metres underwater without breathing, pick up a water-filled manikin from the pool floor, and tow it the remaining 33 metres, whilst not dunking its head underwater or strangling it. Then come back to me and tell me that lifesaving is not a sport."

Our perception of sport is influenced, more than anything else, by what the public deems sport-worthy. Sometimes, the inherent nature of the sport is trivial when compared to the effect the sport's history, popularity and coverage has on our judgement of it. Could we truly be sure that football would enjoy the same status within sport were it not for the fact that it dominates the back pages and that it's played in every school in the country? What would happen if we played competitive tiddlywinks at our secondary schools?

So maybe think twice before you judge what is and isn't a sport. There will always be someone willing to fight and justify what they do. To be fair, wouldn't you do the same? And sometimes they may have a point.