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VARSITY

Drop in EU applications to Cambridge

Anna Menin
Senior News Editor

The number of EU students applying for places at Oxford and Cambridge has fallen in the wake of Brexit, according to statistics released by UCAS.

The figures, which also include applications to study medicine, veterinary medicine and dentistry at other UK universities, only apply to university courses with the earlier application deadline of 15th October.

Although the data only represents around 10 per cent of total applications to UK universities, this notable decline in EU applications will stoke fears as to the impact of Britain's vote to leave the EU on its universities.

Nicola Dandridge, chief executive of Universities UK, said that the fall highlighted "the importance of ensuring that prospective European applicants are made fully aware of the fees and financial support arrangements well in advance of the applications window."

She went on to suggest that "uncertainty" over whether EU students would continue to be entitled to the same fees and financial support as UK students for the duration of their degrees may have contributed to the decline in applications.

UCAS applications for courses beginning in 2017 opened on 6th September this year, but the government did not guarantee the funding situation for EU students until 11th October, only four days before the deadline.

Dandridge argued that "we need the government to extend these transitional arrangements now for EU students considering applying for courses starting in 2018."

"These prospective European students will soon be starting to consider whether



Members of PalSoc hold a vigil outside the Union on Wednesday night

(LUCAS CHEBIB)

Palestine Society clashes with Union over Israeli speaker event

Sam Harrison and Aoife Hogan

The Cambridge University Palestine Society (PalSoc) organised a candlelit vigil outside the Cambridge Union Society building on Wednesday evening as Mark Regev, the Israeli Ambassador to the UK, delivered a talk to the debating society.

The two groups have repeatedly clashed over the Union's record of inviting Israeli officials to speak to their members without soliciting a representative from Palestine to contest them.

In Michaelmas term of last year, PalSoc protested against the invitation of Yiftah Curiel, the head spokesperson of

the Israeli Embassy, to the Union, and in the year prior against the invitation of then-Ambassador Daniel Taub.

The vigil was attended by around 20 people. They laid a line of electronic candles along the edge of the pavement opposite the back entrance to the Union chamber, where security guards were checking the possessions of incomers.

A spokesperson for the vigil told *Varsity* that their demonstration was a "sign of solidarity with the Palestinian people" intended to "hold Regev to account for [Israel's] continued policy of occupation and denial of human rights."

They also commented that the Union "should have more Palestinian speakers",

and, while acknowledging that the Union has invited the Palestinian Ambassador to speak separately in November, argued that "an event in which [Regev] was directly challenged would be better".

She emphasised that PalSoc was not contesting Regev's right to speak, a sentiment echoed by others attending the vigil. One attendee told *Varsity*: "The message that the ambassador intends to give will be given - we just don't want it to be a comfortable event". He added that Israel, which he called a "settler colonial state", needs to be challenged at such talks.

And indeed various challenges were levelled within the chamber. Audience

members asked Regev about the integrity of Israeli democracy, the effects on the peace process of Israeli settlements, and the wall - which Regev countered is a "security barrier" rather than a wall - erected by the state in the West Bank.

Regev answered, respectively, that Israeli democracy is strong and consistently improving, that settlements are being established at a slower rate now than in the past, and that the "security barrier" is necessary to protect the lives of civilians. He also demanded that Palestinians "be held accountable for failing to respect the peace process".

Varsity contacted the Union for comment, but received no response.

Continued on page 11 ►

EDITORIAL

All change, please

Cambridge students are used to fast-paced change. Our terms cram months of teaching and study into eight frantic weeks, and any extracurricular activities must be balanced alongside the continual pressure of a full-time degree. Many of us will, at some point, be enactors of change, from getting involved with societies or even our college's JCR. We do so, at least in part, because we want to make a difference and leave a legacy – but this just isn't possible within the time limits of our terms; institutional memory is an issue that plagues most Cambridge societies and organisations.

Dissatisfaction with CUSU has been a hot topic of late, not least following the heated NUS referendum that took place at the end of the last academic year. This week, Petreans will decide if they want to remain part of the Union. But it's important to remember that disaffiliation, particularly by a college the size of Peterhouse, is widely a symbolic gesture; students continue to be represented by CUSU regardless of the status of their college's JCR.

As battle lines are drawn once again and Pexit (see pages 4-5) becomes an conceivable reality, this cycle of referenda, disaffiliations and reaffiliations feels ever more like a broken record.

Historically, turnout in elections and referenda is also disappointingly low. A look back through the *Varsity* archives shows that a Trinity vote to reaffiliate to CUSU in 2007 passed by a margin of 17 to three, and was in fact only possible because a *Varsity* reporter in attendance allowed the meeting to reach quorum. At the time, it was suggested that the vote passed “because very few people actually care”. *Plus ça change...*

This is not to say that student politics is unimportant – on the contrary, engaging with CUSU and college JCRs can enact real, positive change for students, and the experience gained can be invaluable in later life.

Tensions will inevitably be high in the colleges this week, but at the same time we should remember that there are far more pressing issues quite literally on our doorstep. Monty Flynn's sensitive piece on homelessness leads this week's magazine (see page 20-21). Have a read, and perhaps next time, instead of hurrying past a rough sleeper, you'll think about how you can make a difference.

We'd like to congratulate the winners of our Wilko and SleepyPeople competitions. Wilko: Alicia Loh, Nicholas Wong, Alexander Bystrov and Louise Ellis. Sleepypeople.com: Bobby Seagull, Jess Ward-Zinski and Tom Dunn-Massey.

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Interview

‘This is a golden age of journalism’

● Daniel Gayne talks journalism, Facebook, and post-truth politics to broadcasting legend Jon Snow

Daniel Gayne
Senior News Editor

“Handsome guy”, remarks Jon Snow as he enters the *Varsity* offices. He's surveying a framed photo of former *Newsnight* host Jeremy Paxman from 1972. Snow is Channel 4's longest serving presenter, and along with Paxman, had the market for hard-hitting journalism sewn up for years. Now Paxman is gone and Snow is alone with a cohort of younger, fresher faces. But while both men strike fear into the heart of any PR spinner or political apparatchik, Snow seems driven by very different forces.

Paxman's recent autobiography seemed to confirm what many had already said of him: that his brash, cutting journalism was rooted in a nihilistic disregard for sacred cows of any kind. Snow, on the other hand, brims with a righteous energy that leads back all the way to his days as a student. In 1970, he was rusticated from the University of Liverpool for his part in an anti-apartheid socialist protest. Looking back, Snow notes that the event truly changed his life, suggesting that he would otherwise have gone on to be “a very poor lawyer”. But such an eventuality is hard to imagine for Snow, who seems to revel in performance from the moment he steps into the room. Before the interview begins, he does mock adverts for *Varsity* to camera – much to the delight of our editors.

Though his student days are long behind him, his activist streak has clearly not left him. At the first opportunity he

indulges in his most recent rage against the machine. He slams *The Sun* newspaper for their crusade against Channel 4 News reporter Fatima Manji, who wore a hijab in her coverage of the Nice attacks. He complains that “the press regulator refused to condemn *The Sun*, because they're financed by News International”, but Snow nonetheless sees the debacle as proof that “the Murdochs don't have the influence they had 10 years ago” – his optimism is another defining trait.

This axe-grinding demeanour has earned him plaudits among many liberals who see him as an antidote to a supposedly toothless BBC. Indeed, he appears drawn like a magnet to contentious issues. When I ask him about his experience as a Washington correspondent for ITN in the 1980s, he hovers momentarily on his experience interviewing Reagan, before launching into a fresh diatribe about the “eery parallels” between the Brexit and Trump campaigns.

“Both of them are riddled with lies”, says Snow, “and instead of quite simply deconstructing the lies and setting them out for the reader or viewer, the journalists have tended to say ‘Trump said this’. His proposed solution is characteristically to the point while remarkably polite. “Whoever tells lies, you say: ‘I'm terribly sorry, although he said that, it's not true’”.

“The most grotesque thing was that commitment to spend what they claimed to be what we pay for Europe, which was also a lie, that they were going to spend it on the NHS. Well, pigs will fly!”

I put it to him that this era of ‘post-truth’ politics has been partially brought

“
People are
going to
brands,
and they're
going to
brands they
trust
”



Interview



on by the advent of social media, where confirmation biases and filter bubbles run amok, but on this too he is relentlessly optimistic. “We on Channel 4 News might reach one million people a night on television, but, my God, from January 1st this year to today, 1.3 billion hits on Facebook.”

“But what are we doing on Facebook?” he asks rhetorically, pitching with the smooth delivery of a finalist on *The Apprentice*. “We are getting mobile telephony”, he says, taking out his lime green-encased phone – a perfect match for his tie and socks – “we are cutting up Channel 4 News into gobbets of two, two and a half minutes – Syria, NHS, whatever it is. Captions because nobody ever listens to it, they’re just watching it”.

He is unconvinced by my suggestion that such measures trivialise news journalism. I point to recent facebook posts from Newsnight which reduce lengthy exchanges to a simple ‘he-said-she-said’ narrative, and he retorts: “Well we could also argue that in the past nobody saw Newsnight in any number”.

For Snow, the good judgement of the news consumer seems to be an article of faith, and points out that “The BBC last month got 167 million hits on Facebook, that’s a lot of people looking for quality journalism online”.

Indeed, perhaps the reason that he has been able to keep pace with the host of younger presenters in broadcast journalism is this enthusiasm for the future and eager adoption of Twitter and Facebook. “I think this is the golden age of journalism,” he proclaims, as if wondering how anybody could consider otherwise.

He sees reputation as key for future journalists, but formal education as secondary. “People are going to brands, and they’re going to brands they trust,” he says on the one hand, while dismissing formalised journalism degrees on the other. “You can learn everything there is to know about journalism in three weeks,” he says, “there is no degree to be had”.

I ask him finally who he sees as the future of the profession, who he thinks can carry the torch. Perhaps tellingly, his list reads like a millennial liberal-leftists’ internet history: “the brands that are attracting people are things like *Vice*; *The Huffington Post* is doing well with former conventional journalists, and *The Guardian* has great pull online”.

▲▼ Channel 4 presenter Jon Snow talks to Daniel Gayne (above) and Louis Ashworth (below) (PHOTOGRAPH: CALLUM HALE-THOMSON; LUCAS CHEBIB)

And with that he was off to his next performance, where hundreds waited for him to speak on the topic: ‘how to do good in journalism’. Again he entertained a welcoming crowd with anecdotes and rallying cry for optimism. More of a Paxman-esque nihilist, I remain unconvinced. Ultimately, Snow’s optimism stems from a belief that there are people with the ‘right ideas’ to pass the torch onto, and a wealth of readers to address. The crowd that greeted him proved the latter of those two points, but his faith in social media ignores the deep divisions emerging in news consumption. Snow may reach millions with every tweet, but if these are not the same millions who believe the lies that so enrage him, then his confidence is surely misplaced.



LIBRARY BLUES

Students protest library plans



Sam Harrison reports on the plans to extend the Pepys Library at Magdalene College, which have disgruntled students. **Page 9 ►**

MANAGING DISEASE

Life after Ebola and Zika

Jake Cornwall-Scoones tackles the issue of infectious diseases, interviewing Professor James Wood from the Department of Veterinary Medicine on global strategies for tackling the spread of infection, and the work being done in Cambridge to develop them. He also examines the disease risk narrative, and whether some of the money spent on vaccine research during the Zika crisis might have been better spent alleviating inequality and improving the livelihoods of those living in Rio’s favelas.

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NASTY AND NICE

Degendering US politics

The political world has long fallen back on a maze of contradictions that defend man’s right to dominate within it. The 2016 US election has proved no exception, with Donald Trump stooping to new lows at every debate, hurling gendered remarks regarding Clinton’s appearance, demeanour, and personal life. **Emily Robb** explores the double standards that have blighted the world of politics, examining how Hillary Clinton has attempted to degender American politics, placing the focus on the voices and opinions of the people through her ‘listening tours’.

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HOMOPHOBIA IN SPORT

Lessons from St. Louis

Can it be true that, as former Norwich striker Chris Sutton has said, an openly gay footballer would be “the best thing that happens to the homophobia debate”? **Ted Mackey** argues that we can learn a lesson from the Americans, with the NFL blazing the trail for acceptance of homosexual sportsmen. When St. Louis’ Rams player Michael Sam came out on live television in 2013, there was an immediate backlash. But with such a strong counter-wave of public support, gay players in the United Kingdom might feel some encouragement when the time comes.

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News Democracy Special

CUSU funding changes hit Council roadblock

Harry Curtis
Senior News Editor

Proposed changes to CUSU's affiliation fee model sparked debate at CUSU Council on Monday amid worries that the per capita levy being put forward by the University-wide students' union will negatively impact colleges where the JCR or MCR is currently disaffiliated. The motion was eventually not put to a vote and delayed until 7th November.

There were also concerns raised with regard to what the new fee model would mean for the ability of JCRs and MCRs to hold CUSU to account, with the proposals moving the basis of funding away from common room affiliation to CUSU to personal membership of the union.

Currently, funding is sourced from affiliated JCRs and MCRs with the total sum paid by a common room determined by the number of students that belong to it. CUSU receives £6.70 per undergraduate and £3.00 per graduate student, though the means by which these affiliation fees are paid varies from college to college – at some colleges the fee is taken out of the JCR or MCR's budget, while elsewhere colleges pay the fee on behalf of the common room.

The problem with the current system for CUSU is that students that are members of disaffiliated common rooms remain members of CUSU, which means that – as the motion presented to Council on Monday states – “students of a disaffiliated J/MCR benefit without contributing”.

Under a new fee model – which would also have to be approved by what CUSU President Amatey Doku calls the “shady Bursars' Committee” after it is approved by the Council – CUSU would receive £5.90 for every undergraduate and graduate that doesn't revoke their membership, regardless of whether they belong to an affiliated common room or not. Revenue from graduate students would be split equally between CUSU and the Graduate Union (GU).

The proposals first came under attack from the president of Darwin College Students' Association (DCSA), Elaine Gray. Although Darwin is a graduate college, DCSA is not affiliated to the GU and currently only pays affiliation fees to CUSU – £1,750 in 2015-16.

If the new fee model were to be enacted, however, DCSA's affiliation fees would look set to rise to somewhere in the region of £3,400 to £3,900, since DCSA's disaffiliation from the GU would no longer preclude them from GU affiliation fees. Instead, the onus would be on Darwin students to resign their membership of the GU.

Even then, CUSU's proposals – at least in the form that they were presented to Council on Monday – are unclear as to what happens to the half of the £5.90 per capita levy that would have gone to the GU if the student in question had

resigned membership of the GU.

Vice President of Robinson MCR Mark Driver's reading of the proposal on Monday evening was that, in such cases, common rooms would only pay half of the per capita levy, saying: “If you resign from the GU, CUSU doesn't get that money”. Nevertheless, with the proposal as it was put to Council in the agenda and supporting documents, this reading would appear to rest on assumptions that are far from assured.

There were also concerns raised with regard to what the proposed changes would mean for JCRs that are currently disaffiliated from CUSU, namely Gonville & Caius Students' Union (GCSU) and Corpus JCR.

While moving the basis of affiliation fees from common room affiliation to personal membership does tackle the problem of students benefitting without contributing, the president of Queens'

£5.90

The fee CUSU will receive per student under the proposed model

JCR, Joseph Levin, said that “this proposal has not thought about what happens when you give a bill to the bursar” at those colleges. “There's no convincing reason why they won't just raise fees that they charge undergraduates”, he continued.

Expounding on Levin's comments, the president of Jesus College Student Union, Daisy Eyre, said that there could be potential ripple down effects for other JCR and MCR presidents as well.

Speaking to *Varsity* after Monday's Council, Levin said that there was “a real risk” that the new model could lead to knock-on costs for students, “especially for colleges who are currently disaffiliated and under the new system will be hit with a big bill when they re-join”.

Levin also raised concerns that the changes being proposed will substantially erode the ability of common rooms to hold CUSU to account.

The concerns on this front are born out of the fact that under the proposed fee model, JCRs and MCRs will effectively have a major bargaining chip taken away, since common room affiliation will no longer mean much for the CUSU coffers. Documents circulated by CUSU indicate that common room affiliation will still come at a price, albeit one “less than £100” – a fraction of what affiliation currently represents in terms of CUSU's funding.

CUSU President, Amatey Doku defended this shift of accountability, asking a somewhat loaded question to Council: “Should disaffiliation include a financial incentive?” He was backed up by Driver, who said that common rooms that are currently disaffiliated and not paying are “essentially tax-dodging.”

Levin, however, stridently disagrees.

“There is certainly a groundswell of antipathy towards CUSU”



“Disaffiliation is a totally meaningless gesture if there is no financial consequence for CUSU”, he told *Varsity*. “It is much easier for JCRs to hold CUSU sabbs to account than it is for individual students, and so taking that power away from JCRs isn't right. The fact of the matter is that the only people who show up to council on a regular basis to ask questions and propose policies are JCR reps.”

“Currently the problem of ‘free-riding’ whereby colleges that aren't affiliated get CUSU services off the back of other JCRs paying fees is relatively minor. 29 out of 31 colleges are affiliated! I imagine that means that well over 90 per cent of students are affiliated via their JCR. If 10 per cent or more of individual students wanted to disaffiliate themselves that means CUSU would end up losing money, and especially in the aftermath of that contentious referendum on the NUS last term I can easily see that happening.”

The proposals feed into a much wider conversation about how effectively CUSU is representing students. In the wake of last term's referendum on Cambridge's NUS membership, and the way in which CUSU defunded the print run of *The Cambridge Student* and then dealt with the subsequent outcry, student apa-

▲ Peterhouse students will vote on whether to disaffiliate from CUSU this weekend (LOUIS ASHWORTH)

▼ Selwyn almost turned its back on CUSU in 2013 – which way will they vote this year? (MIHNEA MAFTEI)

thy seems to be turning into discontent in some quarters.

This weekend, Peterhouse's JCR will hold a referendum on whether or not to disaffiliate from the central union – a measure that may prove to be toothless if a per capita levy is approved. “There is certainly a groundswell of antipathy towards CUSU,” eminent Pexiteer Julian Sutcliffe told *Varsity*. “People notice their failings and notice how they ignore student voices over and over”.

And CUSU's affiliation headache doesn't seem set to end any time soon – Selwyn JCR will also hold a referendum on whether they want to retain their ties with CUSU this term, albeit out of constitutional necessity rather than a swell of dissatisfaction like at Peterhouse. Nevertheless, the last time the issue was put to Selwyn students, in 2013, the result was in favour of remaining affiliated only by the narrowest of margins.





Affiliation fees have long been a turn-off, but are they worth it?

Sheyna Cruz
News Correspondent

With the 'Pexit' referendum underway, Peterhouse becomes only the latest addition to a long line of college JCRs who have contemplated the ever-pressing issue of whether to disaffiliate from CUSU.

From Trinity in 2006 to Peterhouse in 2016, the debate has carried on seemingly *ad nauseam*. But like so many aspects of CUSU, the topic of affiliation can appear opaque and irrelevant to the average onlooker.

CUSU is the University-wide organisation whose purpose is to represent students of the University of Cambridge at large. In addition, the JCRs of individual colleges can pay an affiliation fee – determined by a fixed cost per undergraduate – in exchange for participation in, and access to, numerous CUSU schemes.

A report produced by Queens' JCR in May this year outlined the various services provided to colleges through CUSU affiliation, which would have been lost upon 'Quexit'.

Foremost among them is the ability to vote in CUSU Council, the body composed of student officers from each JCR that convenes two to four times a term. In principle, at least, affiliated JCR representatives have the opportunity to shape CUSU's budget and agenda with their vote. A move to disaffiliate would mean that the representatives of the particular college would lose their voting seats.

The disaffiliated college would also cease to be a member of specialised committees including the CUSU Academic Affairs Officers' Meetings and the CUSU

Women's Council, which "allow easy liaison with other colleges", according to the report.

Additionally, CUSU offers ongoing training for access and welfare officers. As of 2015, this service is no longer available to non-affiliated JCRs. However, sexual health training and free sexual health supplies will continue to be provided to each college, regardless of affiliation status.

To top things off, disaffiliated colleges are not eligible to use the secure online voting platform provided by CUSU for use in JCR elections (though the Queens' JCR report notes that Moodle could be used as a viable alternative).

In recent years, referenda to disaffiliate have been motivated by financial concerns. Corpus is one of only two colleges currently disaffiliated from CUSU (the other being Gonville & Caius). Following their 2010 referendum, where 71 per cent of students voted to leave, the Corpus JCR issued a statement citing "sizable affiliation fees" which, they argued, would be put to better use if reallocated into their own budget.

Similarly, the Queens' JCR report states that its £3,336.60 affiliation fee was more than "1.2 times the JCR budget" for the previous year.

CUSU, on the other hand, claims that it charges affiliation fees out of necessity. Its block grant from the University amounts to around £200,000, compared to the hefty £1.5 million national average. Still, the 2016-2017 budget reveals that common room affiliation contributes to just over 10 per cent of CUSU's income.

It remains up to each JCR to decide if the sometimes hazy benefits of affiliation outweigh the more visible costs.

From Trinity to Peterhouse: a decade of disaffiliation referenda

The upcoming Peterhouse referendum is far from the first affiliation-based vote in Cambridge. The history of college referenda goes back more than a decade to the controversy surrounding then-CUSU President Laura Walsh. Following a tied no-confidence vote in Walsh's leadership, several colleges held votes on their affiliation with CUSU. Emmanuel, Jesus, and St John's all voted to remain, while only Trinity voted to leave, by the wafer-thin margin of six votes.

The very next year, however, Trinity reaffiliated to CUSU, in a vote that just 20 students participated in. Despite CUSU claiming the result was "important for Trinity students," *Varsity* at the time reported "absolute apathy" from the student body, with many completely unaware that a vote was taking place as a result of the vote being called with less than 72 hours notice.

Indeed, this week's vote is not even the first time Peterhouse has voted on CUSU affiliation. Concerns

over value for money, a theme of the current disaffiliation campaign, triggered a referendum in 2009, but the vote, held during a JCR meeting, resulted in no votes in favour of disaffiliation, an exercise described as "a good idea for democracy in the college" by then-Peterhouse JCR President Joe Ruiz.

In 2010, both the JCR and MCR of Corpus Christi College held referenda on CUSU affiliation. At an open meeting of the Corpus Christi JCR, one speaker claimed that "CUSU talks a lot but does nothing significant." The result was overwhelming, with 71 per cent of undergraduates and 86 per cent of postgraduates choosing to opt out.

Despite concerns about access provision outside CUSU, in 2012 Robinson College held its own vote on CUSU membership. Despite the campaign of former JCR chair Ewan McGregor, who described those who wanted to reform CUSU as having a better "chance of wearing down the

college with a toothbrush", the college voted to remain affiliated.

In 2013, Selwyn College voted narrowly in favour of remaining affiliated. Shortly after, Gonville & Caius College became the second college to disaffiliate from CUSU. 70 per cent of participants in the vote, which was open to both the JCR and MCR, voted to leave CUSU, and the 36 per cent turnout comfortably cleared the quorum of 12 per cent set by the JCR. Ted Loveday, who would go on to achieve fame as a member of the college's victorious *University Challenge* team in 2015, said at the time: "I think this is a powerful decision, since it will send CUSU the message that they need to justify their existence."

Controversy broke out over CUSU membership at Fitzwilliam College in 2014, as the frustration of the JCR spilled over into the minutes of an official meeting, which reported: "CUSU said they'd send an informative handbook, but hey, CUSU say a lot of things," and called on CUSU

to "put that in your pipe and smoke it." In an open meeting, however, the student body decisively rejected a referendum on affiliation, and no vote was ever held.

The most recent college to hold a referendum was Churchill College, in October 2015. The JCR held a heated debate in advance of the referendum, where last year's CUSU President Priscilla Mensah blasted coverage of CUSU's financial mismanagement as "verging on libellous". In the end, more than 80 per cent of students voted to remain.

This weekend's referendum is nothing new in the world of Cambridge student politics. Past evidence, too, suggests that it is unlikely that the disaffiliation campaign will be successful. However, given the controversy surrounding CUSU in the past year, if Peterhouse do decide to opt out, it is likely that other colleges will follow suit in holding their own votes.

Matt Gutteridge



▲ Caius disaffiliated from CUSU in 2013 (YAKINODI)

News Democracy Special

Campaigning opens for Class Lists vote

● *Vote to switch CUSU's stance will take place next week after months of debate*

Anna Menin
Senior News Editor

Campaigning has opened today for CUSU's referendum on their stance on the public display of Class Lists, with the vote to take place next week.

The referendum, which will run from the 1st-3rd November, will pose the question: "Should CUSU campaign to keep the Class Lists, with an easier opt-out process?"

The official No campaign, announced yesterday, will advocate for CUSU to maintain its current stance, which is for total abolition of publicly displayed Class Lists.

The referendum will be conducted according to CUSU's constitutional rules, which mean that the Yes vote will pass if it receives a simple majority, and over 10 per cent of the total eligible vote, or 2,362 votes.

CUSU's current stance on the issue, in support of total abolition, was decided

after a unanimous vote on the subject at a CUSU Council meeting in November 2015.

This vote followed a petition by the 'Our Grade, Our Choice' campaign. It called for an easier opt-out system for Class Lists, arguing that they "completely ignore the right of privacy for Cambridge students, and their welfare."

Their petition, which condemned Class Lists as promoting "a culture of grade shaming", gained over 1,300 signatures.

In April this year, *Varsity* revealed that the General Board of the Faculties had requested that a proposal be put to the University Council recommending the complete abolition of Class Lists, a move welcomed by 'Our Grade, Our Choice', who called it "the final step in ending an archaic and outdated system."

In response to this, however, a pro-Class Lists campaign was established. 'Save the Class List' launched a petition calling for a referendum on CUSU's stance on the matter, arguing that its decision to support abolition was taken "without students being consulted."

In July, the campaign announced that it had exceeded the 350 signatures required to force a referendum of the student body, triggering next week's referendum.

► The Class Lists are displayed outside Senate House (LOUIS ASHWORTH)



NUS delegates vote brought forward to Michaelmas



Rose Aitchison
News Correspondent

In a break from tradition, CUSU has moved the election of Cambridge's NUS delegates forward to this term.

Each year, CUSU sends five elected delegates, and its President, Amatey Doku, to NUS's annual conference, which takes place around the Easter holidays.

Elections for the role have previously taken place during March, just over a month before the conference, but this year they will place from the 1st - 3rd November.

Proposing the motion at CUSU Council earlier this term, Doku suggested that it would be beneficial for the delegates to have more time to ensure they are accurately representing the views of Cambridge students, and allow them to be involved in drawing up CUSU policy.

He argued that "given the recent referendum on our affiliation with the

NUS, NUS delegates must be accountable and must seek out and represent the views of Cambridge students". This extended period of responsibility for delegates and greater emphasis on accurate representation of students' views comes just months after the Cambridge student body narrowly voted to remain a member of NUS.

CUSU held a referendum on Cambridge's NUS membership last term, with the Remain campaign winning by a margin of 303 votes.

The vote was called following accusations of anti-Semitism within the NUS and against its president, Malia Bouattia, who has in the past described her alma mater, the University of Birmingham, as "something of a Zionist outpost."

The announcement also comes only days before Peterhouse's JCR, the 'Sex Club', hold their own vote on disaffiliation from CUSU over their handling of the NUS's handling of accusations of anti-Semitism.

▲ NUS Conference takes place in Brighton each year (MIKE BEALES)



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News

Farron backs student Lib Dems' mental health campaign

Joe Robinson

Political Editor

Liberal Democrat leader Tim Farron was in Cambridge on Tuesday as he publicly backed his party's student wing at the university in its campaign to increase funding, staffing and resources for the University Counselling Service (UCS) that the Cambridge Student Liberal Democrats (CSLD) has branded "under-funded, under-resourced, and under-staffed".

Flanked by former Cambridge MP Julian Huppert, Farron addressed a rally of student Lib Dems outside King's College, where he lent his weight to proposals for the UCS to hire five more counsellors.

Claiming that the change would make an "immense" difference to students suffering from mental health problems, Farron favourably compared the campaign to those he pursued as a student at Newcastle University in the 1990s.

In contrast to campaigns that felt "borderline esoteric", he stated: "you couldn't get anything more visceral, more important than people's mental health and the reality of having to wait many, many, many weeks, some people having to wait two months for a counselling session when they are in a very extreme set of circumstances."

Speaking to activists following his speech, the Lib Dem leader emphasised the need for early intervention before symptoms worsen. "When you can provide that support relatively early on," he said, "you can prevent [symptoms from] being more personally catastrophic [and] more expensive."

The CSLD campaign has focused on what committee member Matthew Isaacs called the "under-funded, under-resourced, and under-staffed" nature of the UCS.

He added: "Cambridge is privileged as being not just one of the richest universities in the country, but one of the richest institutions, yet it currently does not pay for any of the counselling service."

"We feel that the University should recognise its unique position where it has the resources to make a real difference to students at the University and provide extra funding to the [UCS]."

Sophie Bell, Chair of CSLD, warned that the University could have "a big mental health crisis on its hands" if it "continue[d] to ignore mental health for much longer", stating that she was "embarrassed by the shocking level of funding that the University gives mental health services, especially a university as demanding as Cambridge."

She added that she was "angry that the richest university in the country by a

"You couldn't get anything more visceral than people's mental health"



long shot isn't first by a long shot" in the provision of mental health services.

Bell praised Tim Farron's appearance, saying that it was "absolutely wonderful" and that his signing the petition would be a shot in the arm for the campaign.

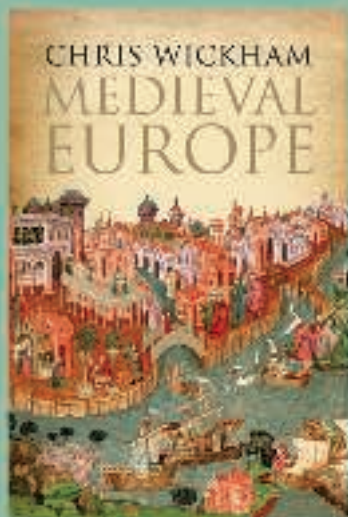
Concerning the funding for mental health services, a university spokesman said: "The University of Cambridge and its colleges take student mental health very seriously and we welcome this recognition of its importance."

▲ Tim Farron spoke to students in Cambridge on Tuesday (LUCAS CHEBIB)

"The level of support available to students at [Cambridge] is unparalleled in most other universities and is complemented by the comprehensive, college-specific services which are also available."

The University claimed that only 1,570 people, or 8.6 per cent of the student population were seen for counselling, of whom 93 per cent said that counselling had helped them deal with their difficulties.

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‘Hideous’ library plans split Magdalene

Sam Harrison
Deputy News Editor

Controversy has hit Magdalene College over proposals for a new library building which students say will have detrimental effects on the College Fellows’ Garden.

The new structure will be constructed parallel to the historic Pepys Building, which houses the current college library, but will not be physically joined to it.

Its construction will require the demolition of a large stretch of greenery which borders the Fellows’ Garden, a move which students have criticised, in addition to its planned appearance and size.

Varsity has seen a discussion among members of Magdalene JCR about graphic designs for the building which have not been disseminated by that committee or by the College to the wider student body.

While some JCR members were broadly positive about the building’s appearance, others complained that it might be “too big” and that it looks “a bit industrial” – a reference to a number of chimneys which are set to adorn the perimeter of the roof.

Varsity understands that, of the nine JCR members who contributed to the discussion, two were content with the building, two were critical and five were ambivalent.

Magdalene students who have been shown the drawings told Varsity that they were not impressed. “It’s hideous,” one said, adding that it was “really disappointing. Magdalene is such a beautiful college. [The new building] is not in keeping with the rest of the college at all”.

Further contention has emerged over the transparency of the committee’s response. One JCR member queried whether it was “undemocratic” for the committee to decide not to oppose the development without broader consultation.

Another member responded that, while it was not “undemocratic per se”, nonetheless the College should not have “got through to a really advanced, almost irreversible stage without the students being shown the plans in any detail, or being asked, apart from a survey a few years ago”.

He suggested that the JCR should “express disgruntlement” at the process, while not “causing a fuss that would be expensive in terms of time, money and goodwill”.

Speaking to Varsity, a spokesperson for Magdalene College defended its development plans, saying that the building would not detract from enjoyment of the Garden, but indeed would “enhance the appreciation of the Fellows’ Garden for members of the College, with working spaces looking out over the Garden and a ground floor gallery and student social space where French doors will open out into the Garden”.

Addressing specifically the loss of green space, the spokesperson commented: “We have taken great care in positioning the building to retain the yew trees that lie to the north of the Pepys Building and to retain the mature trees that lie between the proposed library and Chesterton Road. Although the Library will occupy an area of old orchard we



▲ Concept art for the new building (bottom left and top), and the Pepys Library (bottom right) (LUCAS CHEBIB)

will replace these trees with new apple and pear trees, characteristic varieties native to Cambridgeshire, in a new orchard elsewhere in College.”

The Pepys Library is named after 17th-century statesman and diarist Samuel Pepys, whose collection of manuscripts



it has housed since the death of his nephew John Jackson in 1723, upon which it came into the possession of the college.

Magdalene College JCR did not respond to Varsity’s request for comment.

UUK harassment report released

Bronagh Grace
News Correspondent

A report investigating violence against women, harassment and hate crime among university students has been published by Universities UK (UUK). The report, called ‘Changing the culture’, comes from a taskforce established in September 2015 after NUS evidence showing high rates of sexual harassment and violence at UK universities prompted Minister of State for Universities Jo Johnson to request an investigation.

The report confirms that violence, hate crime and harassment are present in UK universities. Although it commends the positive steps taken, it claims responses are “not as comprehensive, systematic and joined-up as they could be”. It cites government data showing that 6.8 per cent of full-time, female students have experienced a sexual offence, compared to three per cent of all women. The taskforce also recognises concerns regarding ‘lad culture’, referencing a 2010 NUS survey in which 68 per cent of women had experienced verbal or physical harassment on campus, but finds the term problematic, as it may imply something “trivial and not serious”.

Among the report’s key findings is that universities do not adopt a coherent, institution-wide approach to sexual assault, thus damaging the effectiveness of their strategies. The report recommends “data collection, appropriate governance, robust risk management and regular impact assessments”. Continual engagement with students is also considered vital, as well as promoting positive behaviour in students.

It emphasises the importance of collaboration with the police, community leaders and specialist services to ensure adequate training for staff, and the development of effective policies for responding to disclosures of sexual violence.

A 2014 report conducted by CUSU and Varsity found that 77 per cent of Cambridge respondents had experienced sexual harassment. Women’s Officer Audrey Sebatindira welcomed the report and commended the progress made by the university, while noting that “it still has a long way to go and the Report will likely prove an excellent resource as Cambridge moves forward in eradicating sexual harassment and assault on campus”. Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education, Graham Virgo, welcomed the report, commenting that Cambridge “engaged with UUK’s taskforce from the outset and have already developed a robust set of protocols which are consistent with many of the recommendations”, including new procedures for allegations of student-on-student misconduct. Virgo also cited initiatives such as “consent workshops and the adoption of codes of acceptable conduct by sports teams” as further elements in the University’s policy, supporting “cultural and behavioural change founded on mutual respect between students”.



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News

Stigma hangs heavy on Cambridge's homeless

With recent reports of 'fake beggars' circulating, the homeless of Cambridge are increasingly stigmatised. **Devina Banerjee** reports

Devina Banerjee
News Correspondent

Spend any time in Cambridge and you will notice the increasing number of beggars and homeless on the streets. Earlier this month, *Cambridge News* published a story outlining that fake beggars are to be targeted by council enforcement officers. The story claimed that beggars who said they were homeless were making up to £250 a day by "preying" on those that are willing to give. Lynda Kilkenny, Cambridge City Council's Safer Communities Manager, is quoted as telling members of the Safer Communities Partnership: "In fact it's their day job to come into the city and do some begging, and they appear like they are sleeping rough but they are not sleeping rough."

"I'm not saying there isn't an increase in sleeping rough, there is as well, so we do need to do some enforcement."

The article goes on to report that, according to data released by Cambridge-shire police, four out of nine people ar-

rested for begging were not homeless. The Cambridge Constabulary website is quoted: "Contrary to popular perception, most people who beg are not homeless, and are using the money they receive to fuel a drug or alcohol addiction."

"We've been working closely with Cambridge City Council, Peterborough City Council and a number of homelessness organisations in order to encourage those who beg to get help, but also to encourage members of the public to support these organisations rather than hand over spare change to those on the streets."

"Homelessness charities are in no doubt that money contributed by caring members of the public to people begging is, invariably, spent on heroin and crack cocaine, causing ill health, misery and sometimes death."

Is it true that homelessness charities are indeed "in no doubt" about such a sweeping and sensationalist statement? Barry Griffiths, Communities Engagement Officer at Jimmy's Night Shelter,

“It is sad that the Council is ‘taking action’ by targeting beggars”

responds: "Donating your money to professional services according to their alternative giving recommendation is not going to get the individual to access these services – it keeps the problem on the streets."

"In terms of removing professional beggars you have to look at the causes of why they are on the street and tackle them head on." These range from austerity to the availability of housing and employment, mental health, domestic abuse, addiction or the money-making opportunity, as the *News* article emphasises.

Mr Griffiths finds issue with the stigmatisation of beggars and the homeless within the article and the Constabulary's website, as well as the prescriptive attitude put forward. "Part of the issue with what was said is that it infringes upon individual liberty – it is up to people what they spend their money on." Addiction is a big problem for the homeless but one that deserves our empathy, not our judgement. Dealers target the



vulnerable, who are willing to do anything to blot out the reality of living on the streets as well as to help them forget the reasons they are there. If beggars are going to spend your money on drugs or alcohol, your business is only to know that it went straight to the hand that desperately needed it. Are we as critical with where our charity donations go?

The Cambridge Constabulary recommendations could even lead to an

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\$100k up for grabs in 'creative thinking' prize

Angus Parker
News Correspondent

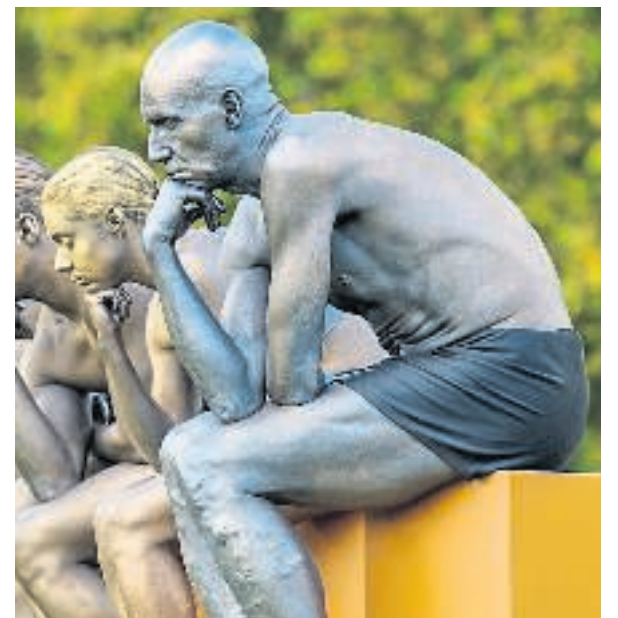
An inaugural prize for 'creative thinking' will offer \$100,000 (approximately £82,000) to outline an argument to the question: "Are digital technologies making politics impossible?"

The Nine Dots Prize is sponsored by the Kadas Prize Foundation, with support from CRASH - a social sciences research centre - at the University of Cambridge and Cambridge University Press. It asks entrants to provide a 3,000-word response to the question, which will then be developed into a short book.

A board of twelve internationally-renowned academics, scholars, thinkers and authors will judge the award, with entries considered anonymously. It will include Cambridge Professors David Runciman, Paul Gilroy and Simon Goldhill.

Speaking about the prize, Professor Simon Goldhill, director of CRASH and Chair of the Prize Board, said that it offered "an incredibly exciting and unique opportunity for thinkers to try out big ideas that have the potential to change the world. The Board will be looking for entries that display originality in everything from the ideas put forward to the ways in which those ideas are communicated".

Professor Goldhill also emphasised the relevance of the question to contemporary society, saying "the topic is obviously right at the heart of current



concerns with political process across the world, and we are looking forward to finding someone who can make a really incisive and effective contribution to the debate."

The winner will receive support and editorial assistance from Cambridge University Press in writing the book, which will be made freely available online after publication.

The deadline for submissions is the 31st January 2017. The winner will be announced in May, before publication in 2018.

▲ The writer with the best ideas will receive editorial assistance (NINE DOTS)



◀ Figures published in September say that in 2015-16 there were 152 registered rough sleepers (LUCAS CHEBIB)

increase in more severe crimes, when people are forced to steal in order to eat or to feed their addictions. It seems the Council's focus is on getting beggars off the streets, whether or not it benefits them, and rather than treating the problems that put them there. It is sad that the Council is taking 'action' by targeting beggars and following them on CCTV (as the *News* article reports) as opposed to tackling the wider societal issues.

The wider implications are that the homeless in Cambridge, who need help in winter more than at any other time, are being equated to lazy, professional beggars who do not deserve our money. The reported figure is that four out of nine arrested beggars aren't homeless – which leaves five who are. Telling the public to shun people living on the street because they may have drug dependency issues is a highly dangerous discourse.



Drop in applications from EU

▶ Continued from front page

to apply to study at British universities," she continued. This nine per cent drop represents an end to the recent trend of rising EU applications to UK universities in recent years. The number of EU applicants for 2017 entry has fallen from last year's number by 620 to 6,240, reversing the eight per cent increase seen in the 2016 applications cycle. Cambridge specifically has reported a 14 per cent fall in applications from EU students, which have fallen from 2,652 last year to 2,277. Addressing this decline, a University spokesperson said: "We are disappointed to see a reduction in EU undergraduate application numbers on last year, which

▲ Oxford bucked the trend, with EU applications increasing this year (TOBY ORD)

reflects the considerable uncertainty felt by these students due to the EU referendum." However, they emphasised that the University "still received more applications from the EU this year than we did in 2012, and Cambridge remains an attractive place for EU students to study." Oxford, however, has bucked this trend: the University has seen a one per cent increase in EU applications for 2017 entry. Although an Oxford spokesperson acknowledged that there has been "understandable uncertainty around the implications of the UK's exit from the EU", they added that the University remains "confident that students from the EU continue to see Oxford as a welcoming and attractive option for undergraduate study."

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Science



‘The greatest risk factor is poverty’: new strategies for tackling the spread of infection

● We sit down with Professor James Wood, an expert in infectious diseases at the Department of Veterinary Medicine

Jake Cornwall Scoones
Science Correspondent

Global health, and in particular emerging infectious diseases, is a theme of extensive research within Cambridge. I spoke to Professor James Wood, leader of the Cambridge Infectious Diseases group and head of the Department of Veterinary Medicine, to find out about what is being done in Cambridge and elsewhere to improve health and tackle infectious disease globally.

The ethos behind global health is based on both democracy and context: all global citizens deserve equal access to the healthcare they require, depending on the associated diseases of different locations and socio-economic backgrounds that determine an individual's health. Much of the research of Wood's group is based in West Africa. "If you want to understand the processes of disease emergence, you have to work in areas where these diseases most emerge and if you look at all of the work that's been done in evaluating this, the tropics are hotspots."

Wood's research has a particularly interesting focus, looking at the crossover between human and animal diseases – in his words, "trying to understand the process of spillover and the human responses to the spillover". This, of course, is all in an effort "to try and mitigate the risks of people suffering from these diseases". Following the Ebola epidemic, the group have recently expanded their research to the Kenema Hospital in Sierra Leone, one of the major treatment facilities.

ties. The key idea is to focus on both the medical science and the socio-personal effects of this deadly infection, alongside the Institute of Development Studies in Brighton.

This longer-term work is coupled with more short-term efforts by other Cambridge departments. "I think the work that Ian Goodfellow, in the virology division of the Pathology department, has done on Ebola diagnosis, setting up a lab and a sequencing facility in Sierra Leone with Wellcome Trust funding, is really exciting. It's a great example of how response to a really big problem can actually be turned into longer-term advantage for the local community."

Yet global health need not, and indeed must not, be limited to simply the exchange of empirical research and technological innovations. Wood suggests that efforts to overcome obstacles that inhibit health-care workers and systems' ability to carry out necessary research and provide effective treatment are equally fundamental in shaping the future landscape of global health.

£10m

The amount raised by the Cambridge-Africa programme

scape of global health. Africa Day, which took place last Tuesday at Emmanuel College, exemplified some of the efforts of the Cambridge-Africa programme. The project was founded by parasitologist Professor David Dunne of the Department of Pathology in 2008, supported by Wood, and has since brought in well over £10 million.

The aim of the project is capacity-building, Wood tells me: "to help them do research on African problems in Africa rather than thinking that we've got a solution to all of their woes. The solutions need to come from Africa but we can help by helping them to develop their sites and in bringing funding into what they do." Top-down approaches to

“The key idea is to focus both on the medical science and the socio-personal effects”

policy are rarely effective, as people on the ground tend not to trust those implementing the policy. Seeding a bottom-up approach puts power in the hands of the people and countries affected, reducing reliance on foreign aid in the long run.

The idea of One Health – a movement to improve cooperation between medical and scientific experts across the world – has sprung up recently in the world of policy as a method of cross-linking human health, ecosystem health and animal health, thinking about these three as a single entity. One Health, suggests Wood, puts pressure on science to deliver "things for local communities that are useful for the people living in them. [It's] absolutely essential and is particularly important for neglected diseases, which often don't spread rapidly but have a high burden of disease." He also points out that the concept of disease burden – the total impact of a disease, financially and socially – must not be limited to human suffering. Often these diseases are caused by zoonotic spillover events: "if you think just of the burden of the disease in one species, that's only half of the story. I think it's an essential approach for us to take."

Yet it seems, at the moment, One Health remains a useful and potentially influential idea but without any real-world application. "People are talking about One Health but not many people are doing it. That's something where here in Cambridge Vet School, we are trying to take a real leadership role in promoting this approach to the infectious diseases that many of us study." It seems a movement towards a One Health approach to policy and action would help facilitate the true integration of the different kinds of knowledge – social, biological, mathematical – needed for curative and preventative measures. The work of Wood and others in pushing this agenda forwards will hopefully encourage this transition.

The Ebola epidemic scared the world, with its horrifying symptoms and the chance of a worldwide pandemic. With

▲ A young boy has his temperature checked at an Ebola clinic in West Africa (YOUTUBE: NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC)

changing social environments and increasing population sizes, scares like this will likely become increasingly regular. So learning what went right in controlling this epidemic, suggests Wood, is integral to the response efforts of the future. "What distinguishes an effective response from one that's ineffective actually relates to how people 'work'." Key, he adds, is "ensuring the systems we set up to try and respond to these outbreaks are resilient enough to deal with all sorts of different outbreaks, rather than thinking: 'Do we have a drug or a vaccine? If we don't have a drug or a vaccine we can't do anything.'" But there's more to it than science: "it's not just a technical solution that we need to produce. It's a locally informed solution that relates to resourcing and human behaviour," he tells me. "I think that the longer-term solutions to infectious disease problems will come from multidisciplinary teams working holistically together."

This cross-fertilisation of knowledge between disciplines, which showed considerable efficacy during the Ebola outbreak, is also crucial behind the scenes in prediction. Wood suggests it is "important for biologists to work with a really solid quantitative framework, working with mathematicians in making mathematical models" providing a more rounded framework for how infectious diseases are studied.

It is also necessary to understand the daily lives of those affected by disease. "For all infectious diseases in the tropics, probably the greatest risk factor is poverty, so anything that can be done to reduce poverty probably has the greatest impact on infectious disease."

Diseases don't transmit in a vacuum: they propagate via people. Hence, in many ways, coping with global health challenges relies as much on the human sciences as the natural sciences. Improving living conditions and sanitation, stabilising health-care facilities and promoting education will be central in curbing the effects of infectious diseases in the future.

“The concept of disease burden must not be limited to human suffering alone”

With infectious disease, whose risks really count?

Jake Cornwall Scoones
Science Correspondent

Early this year, Zika hit the headlines. In the aftermath of Ebola, it was feared that the Zika epidemic in South America would pan out in a similarly devastating fashion. As Rio 2016 approached, many athletes began pulling out of the Olympic Games, including the world's number one golfer, Jason Day. But were those fears justified?

Zika is a mosquito-borne virus, carried by *Aedes aegypti*, mostly producing mild symptoms similar to influenza. Fears of a pandemic-like spread of Zika were due to its suggested link to microcephaly, a condition where babies are born with abnormally small heads. Some suggest the virus is toxic in early fetal brain development; others have found viral traces and Zika antibodies in the amniotic fluid of infected mothers. Yet a statistic that the media seldom report is that most women who contract Zika have healthy babies.

To evaluate accurately the risks of Zika, it is important to understand the social lives of mosquitoes. *Aedes aegypti* has evolved to live in the urban environment, breeding in pools of water such as those found in old tyres and plant pots. It feeds from human blood alone and – unlike malaria-carrying mosquitoes –



during the day.

The favelas of Brazil – slum areas with densely-packed, poorly-built housing without running water – have become the breeding grounds for *Aedes aegypti*. The result has been the spread of Zika in Latin America's poorest hotspots. As most athletes remained in the Olympic Village and didn't visit these areas, there was minimal risk of contracting Zika.

Like many other emerging infectious diseases, Zika is a disease caused as much by social inequality as the virus itself. The most impoverished are the least likely to receive treatment and the most likely to be infected.

While millions of dollars are being pumped into generating a Zika vaccine,

“*Zika is a disease caused as much by social inequality as the virus itself*”

favela-dwellers remain poor and without access to basic sanitation and healthcare, surrounded by puddles of festering water: hubs of mosquito reproduction.

Perhaps money spent on vaccine research and development over many years could be better directed to alleviating inequality and improving livelihoods in poor neighbourhoods. Once the vaccine becomes available, it will only be available to a few, given the costs. Those lucky ones will comprise of tourists and the local elite, but not the poorest who need it most.

Epidemiologist Neil Ferguson, from Imperial College London, suggests that the “Zika spread is not containable”. It's not all doom and gloom however.

▲ Crowded favelas are breeding grounds for infection
(SARAH AHEARN)

He adds: “the epidemic will burn itself out within two-three years.” This would render the vaccine useless.

Unlike in previous Zika epidemics, the rate of termination of microcephalous fetuses has been very low during the current outbreak. Nearly 65 per cent of Brazilians are Catholic, a religion that deeply opposes abortion, and the medical procedure is illegal, with few exceptions.

Despite this, rich Brazilians have always been able to get access to abortions, irrespective of legality. But poor women are much more vulnerable, with no access to safe abortion. Women most likely to get Zika are therefore the least likely to get treatment before birth, and the least likely to receive the kind of specialist help that the elite can afford.

Addressing social inequality, improving livelihoods and urban environments, and promoting women's rights and access to healthcare for the poor is thus crucial to controlling Zika. Wider responses are probably more significant in the long term than the more traditional control efforts being implemented, or the search for a vaccine.

Framing the disease risk narrative around those who are most affected, such as the favela-dwellers of Rio, and not wealthy Olympians or tourists, will ensure a better allocation of resources in future epidemics.

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Comment

Sneering at Anglia Ruskin is Cambridge at its worst

Lampooning ARU may seem harmless but it reveals a deep-seated elitism which often goes unnoticed



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College

Aleks Griebel-Phillips

For those who don't know it, there is a perceived contention between the two universities of Cambridge, one apparently being a slightly better establishment than the other. Yes, beyond the exclusivity and self-importance of intercollegiate arrogance, we have just enough pomp reserved for looking down our noses at the Mudbloods of Anglia Ruskin University (ARU).

Before I start, I should probably say that while I go to Cambridge, my partner goes to ARU. Now, some may feel this instantly makes me biased, that I am sticking up for the little guy, or she is currently breathing down the back of my neck, analysing every word I write with something sharp and metallic pressed between my ribs. Perhaps, but hopefully some of the things I say will be true regardless of whether or not you spend your weekends bumming around CB1.

Coming from a diverse city like London, I love the feeling of there being a multiplicity of universities, colleges and campuses in one town. Not only does it mean that there is a grand mixture of different people who are passionate about a cornucopia of subjects (including, and I dare to say it, non-academic ones), but it means that, through my partner, I have a wider social circle than I would have only going to Cambridge.

Surely that's something that everyone wants? Apparently not. As soon as you sneer at an individual or a group, you preclude yourself from being friends with them. At the heart of it, snobbishness simply means you have fewer kids to play with. Sounds a lot like something your mum would tell you, right? Well, it applied to the swings in the park and it still applies now.

I think in part this snobbery has something to do with the well-oiled stereotype of Cambridge being home to the wealthy and self-entitled. But I think it's more than that; it's about the fact that Cambridge is populated by the types of people that were, themselves, sneered at. To get to Cambridge, you have to be at least a little bit clever, and we all know that the cleverest ones at school were ostracised for it. Now, in a position of power, they can get their own back on the little people.

To get to Cambridge, you convince

yourself that academic prowess and achievement are the one true sign of intelligence. You can only be considered clever if you do well at mathematics, not drama, principally because Cambridge only 'deals' with the academic subjects. I don't think a measure of a person's ability is that easy; growing up with a silver-smith mother and a father who refused to 'call the man in' on manual labour tasks, I am a firm believer that genius is not only judged by academic work. Our papers and TV screens are full of people who are judged masterful not by how good they are as biologists or theoretical physicists but rather how convincingly they can act or whether their latest album is up to much.

My point is that society doesn't hold academia as the greatest good one can achieve, and so sneering at students from ARU who do non-academic subjects is simply kidding yourself. They are good enough at what they do and they are going to the right place to do it.

I also think a lot of the snobbishness comes from a disassociation in the first place. Neuroscientific studies have shown people tend to care a lot less about an individual's situation if they can't see and therefore empathise with them. My partner has been accepted by all my Cambridge friends because they got to know her as an actual person rather than a faceless ARU student. When I went to watch a debate at the



Cambridge is home to more than one university (JD)

Union, however, one of the senior members publicly likened sleeping with an ARU student to putting his little man in a dead pig's head. While I fear that he was the type of gentleman who would have only done one of those acts and not the other (if you catch my drift), and so could not compare the two, had he actually taken the time to know some of the ARU students he probably would have thought twice about saying what he did, and would realise that he was preventing himself from befriending some people much nicer and better-looking.

Perhaps some, if not most, of the sneering wouldn't exist if ARU didn't



▲ The CB1 campus is often treated as another world (MOHAMMED TAWSIF SALAM)

have a campus in Cambridge. Some feel that, in existing in the same city, ARU is attempting to take on some of the grandeur of the university for which this city is better known, like the kid who buys the fake Armani belt to try and cosy up to the cool kids with the real ones. But it seems to be the university and not the students perpetuating this – we've all seen the 'Home of Anglia Ruskin' signs at the train station. It is something that ARU definitely shouldn't do; they should be proud to be their own university rather than a pale imitation of another.

At the end of the day, we all ultimately got into the institution that best suited us. Because Cambridge is not necessarily the right place for everyone. It's not always best to try for a rigorously academic institution, otherwise this country wouldn't be home to such amazing drama schools, art colleges and conservatoires. Everyone tends to go to the place that best suits them. If you sneer at those at ARU because they didn't get into Cambridge then you have to sneer at everyone from every university who didn't get into Cambridge, only perpetuating the view that we are, in fact, an elitist bunch.

“Genius is not only judged by academic work”



Sophie Bell

A mental health crisis is coming

At the start of this term, Cambridge Student Liberal Democrats (CSLD), which I chair, launched a campaign to get five more counsellors hired by the University. The aim is to reduce waiting times at the University Counselling Service (UCS), which is incredibly understaffed. According to their website, waiting times are currently two to three weeks. In reality, students have faced waits of up to eight. Last year, I waited six weeks. Once I got my sessions, they were wonderful. The UCS is an incredible resource, with well-trained and approachable counsellors. But it is overstretched.

Part of the problem is that the UCS is funded by the colleges, some of which have their own independent counselling service. This results in a disparity in care, and also underfunding, as colleges are unwilling to increase their contribution if they already pay to run their own. Mental health care should not depend on which college you go to. The University should invest its own money into the UCS to ensure all students see a counsellor when they need to.

We at CSLD have been comparing Cambridge's approach to mental health with that at Oxford, a comparatively wealthy university. Both universities produced a report on their counselling service a few years ago, and while Oxford's is 30 pages, featuring statistics, funding information and an in-depth analysis of its service, Cambridge managed only five pages, lacking in quantitative data – perhaps to prevent a damning comparison with the 'Other Place'.

The UCS claims that students are seen within two to three weeks. According to Oxford's report, their students face an average wait of 7.4 days for an initial assessment. Fewer than 10 per cent of Oxford students had to wait 16 days or more, which Cambridge advertises as the norm. Even more damning is that 40 per cent are seen in five days or under. These statistics are despite Oxford seeing 1949 students in 2013/14, compared to Cambridge's 1592.

At Oxford, the University and colleges both contribute. Cambridge should be doing the same. If nothing is done soon, we are going to face a huge mental health crisis in Cambridge.

Cartoon by **Ben Brown**



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Cards on the table – kids today are missing out

From playing cards to playing apps, kids today have lost the simple joy of rummy at a restaurant



Will Hall
studies English at
Emmanuel College
and often performs
at Footlights
Smokers

Will
Hall

Oh god. You could feel the tension mount, first at number 12 itself, and then – slowly but surely – spread to neighbouring tables. Here, in a fashionable restaurant in a chic part of town, a crisis was upon us. Milo and Millie's iPad had run out of charge.

The power drained from the teasing one per cent (that ambiguous halcyon period of battery life which can last anything from half a minute to a few years) to the ghostly whiteness of the spinning wheel of death, as so too did the happiness from our heroes' eyes. Barely had these kids come to terms with the loss of their technological playfellow when they appeared to misplace their shit.

The eatery was plunged into the cacophony of the two terrors losing touch with their iPad, and in turn, their senses, faced with the multiple horrors of hunger and boredom. There was an unspoken agreement between patrons and waiters, customers and management, which said "something must be done". Looks were exchanged. Murmurs were murmured.

Now don't worry, I'm not one of these cantankerous diners who can't enjoy his salmon en croute unless there's a silence to rival the research wing of a municipal library. In fact, I rather like a loud, buzzing atmosphere while eating (pretty cool, I know). However, this was, as previously mentioned, a trendy outfit. Screaming children was not the vibe they were going for. They had dispensed with their 'family friendly' image around the same time they dispensed with plates (if it couldn't be served on a board, it couldn't be served at all).

As the waitress negotiated with their mother, who couldn't understand why her darling offsprings' screaming could possibly be a bother to anybody ("such articulacy!"), the waitress suggested that she get some cards from behind the bar. Addressing the little rascals themselves now: "Playing cards! That'd be fun, wouldn't it?"

Milo's response? "Mummy, what's 'playing cards'?"

Reader, I wept. Suddenly the choice between buttered kale hotpot and Mediterranean quinoa salad paled into in-

significance, as I contemplated a future without playing cards. A whole generation growing up without this simple pleasure. Now, you should understand, I'm not criticising the children here. They were experiencing one of the most painful passages of time imaginable: the wait for food. It shouldn't come too quickly – that would ruin the excitement.

But the reverse is even more insidious – make the wait too long and suddenly no culinary creation could sate the hunger pangs that stir within. Even the triple-baked lovechild of Delia Smith's rolling pin, Nigella Lawson's whisk and Heston Blumenthal's blowtorch couldn't live up to the expectations the mind creates in its heightened hankering for nourishment. This is not hard to understand. It's alimentary, my dear Watson.

That is why I sympathise with our protagonist's anguish back on table 12. A horrible fate to endure, delayed food, but – and here's a little known fact – the very reason why cards were invented: specifically, I tell you, to fill the time between children ordering and consuming food in restaurants. An age-old problem.

It saddens me to think that I might be part of the last generation to have enjoyed this experience. Having now graduated into the land of conversa-



▲ "The nostalgic world of parlour games, now lost to the app store"
(MATTHEW SEC-COMBE)

tion, I am not a man too old to remember the exciting feeling of a quick game of Rummy or Cheat as soon as the menu had been cleared. That thrilling sensation of getting a perfect hand in Go Fish or that less thrilling sensation of sustaining a semi-serious flesh wound in a particularly aggressive game of Racing Demons with your sister. (No? Just me then.)

It wasn't just restaurants – almost any instance of childhood ennui could be cured by the 52 friends in your pocket and bit of imagination. (I had actual friends too. Honest.) And if cards weren't available then it was Noughts and Crosses, Hangman, or I Spy. The nostalgic world of parlour games, now lost to the app store.

I realise this makes me sound like a Luddite, and I'm not. I think I'm just jealous I never had such exciting toys as a kid myself. Or maybe I'm sad that I never get to play Pontoon anymore, which would once sustain me for endless rounds. Whatever it is, I still hope that one day, when the battery's drained and the screen has flickered its last, there's someone who still remembers the rules to Whist. God knows I've a lot to thank it for.

Anyway, I'd better stop reminiscing now. My food's coming.

Comment

The state of the Union debate is simply farcical

The Union and the presidential debates are equally irrelevant. It's time to consider the future of debate



Carl Wikeley
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Carl
Wikeley

“No puppet. No puppet. You're the puppet!” belated Donald Trump in the final presidential debate. In the run-up to 8th November – or as it's also known, 'Apocalypse Now: Please Let us Burn, Anything Would be Better than this Shitstorm' – Trump and Clinton have faced each other in three debates, each hosted by a different news network, and each leading us to ask why we deserve this.

From Trump shouting “Wrong!” over Clinton, to Clinton coining the least well-improvised fake off-the-cuff catchphrase, “Trumped-up trickle-down economics”, these ‘debates’ have shown us the art of rhetoric in its most grotesque form. With even debates at the Cambridge Union becoming increasingly obsolete, is it time to ask whether there is no way back from this perpetually consumerist and popularised situation in which we find ourselves?

I am not suggesting that the staggeringly awful state of debate, especially in American politics, is a new phenomenon. Since their inception in 1976, televised presidential debates have been the stage for gross manipulations of truth and other general fuck-ups. Then, Gerald Ford happily concluded that there was “no Soviet domination of Eastern Europe”, and in 1992's VP debate, Ad-

miral James Stockdale threw the entire format into disrepute with the very fair question: “Who am I? Why am I here?” I don't know, Admiral, and if I'm honest, I don't quite know why presidential debates are still happening.



The problem with these debates, and debates more generally, is twofold: first, any vestige of what could possibly be considered true has vanished into the ether; secondly, the popularisation of the format has led to its brutal manipulation by both the media and the candidates, transforming what should be an informative and important debate into a farce.

In a brilliant article for CNN, Kate Maltby compares Trump's behaviour in the second presidential debate to theatre and reality television. Recall the moment that Trump walked around the stage to stand close to Clinton, while she was talking, to remain in shot? What resulted was a bizarre but effective blend of entertainment and presidential debate.

In the media, the debates have been hyped up farcically. NBC's trailer for the second presidential debate was literally more dramatic than that of any *Die Hard* film. The opponents were compared to boxers and their faces juxtaposed in a Cage/Travolta *Face/Off* parody – except this was completely unironic.

The downfall of truth is staggering. At least 28 of Trump's statements in this most recent debate were either partially or entirely false. Clinton's claim that her tax plan won't add “a penny” to the national debt was no better, but it is impossible to get away from the obvious lies of Trump – like his assertion that Clinton will double taxes, that her state department lost \$6 billion, and that his sexual harassment accusers were not known to

“I don't quite know why presidential debates are still happening”

him. Oh, and of course, the lie that the election is rigged.

Look around you, and you'll see that things are not much better in Cambridge. The Cambridge Union Society has been a venerated space for debate for over 200 years. But that's exactly the problem: it has remained the seat of intellectual discussion for the privileged, by the privileged, and is set to stay that way. There is no comparably-sized arena for a more equal debate in the University. The presidential debates are doomed because they have become too popularised, while the Union debates are irrelevant because they shun the masses

So where does the future lie for debate? I know that my comparison between the Union and American politics may seem tenuous, but both represent the potential death knell of rhetoric for different reasons. Perhaps the introduction of live fact-checking in presidential debates would solve the problem – although Jeremy Kyle-style lie detector tests seem more fitting. Eliminating reality TV from serious debate may be difficult when one candidate is an overgrown child *Apprentice* star, but some form of neutering is necessary.

As for the irrelevancy of Union debating in Cambridge, I might suggest a number of answers: abolish the fees and rid us of the society entirely, or fund a free, more open debate stage. Let's reclaim debate from the privileged few – but just make sure we don't give it to the Americans.

◀ Donald Trump is lowering the level of debate in the US (NBC NEWS)

Hillary Clinton shows man power is overrated

The web of double standards which keeps “nasty” women out of politics is being undone by Hillary Clinton.



Emily Robb
studies English at
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Emily
Robb

Reading back over the transcript of Wednesday's presidential debate, Donald Trump's “such a nasty woman” glares out at me. Small and smug, it sits there intrusively, a vial of poison leaking through her words and tarnishing them, once again, with the stain of misogyny.

‘Nasty’ catches in the throat like a rasp, an irritation, and hisses there venomously. It reminds us of its sibling – ‘nice’: that placid, simpering, bland box that we're told women fit so perfectly into. Trump didn't just call Hillary nasty, he called her a nasty woman. Her nastiness pivoted around its being incongruous with her femininity, around its destruction of the ‘niceness’ she should have spent her life oozing, rather than shaking men's conceptions of their own superiority by running for president. Virginia Woolf wrote that, when man criticises the work of women, he is “concerned not with their inferiority, but with his own superiority”. In Trump's misogyny nothing could be so clear. By hitting Clinton with empty insults like “such a nasty woman”, he roots his criticism in nothing but a contrast between his gender and hers. Frustrated by her competence and with nothing of substance to retort, he

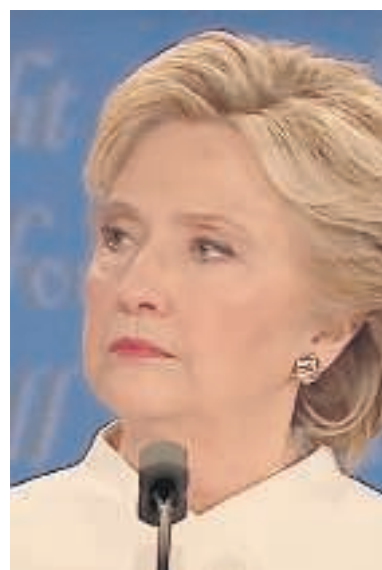
▶ Hillary Clinton is changing what it means to be a woman in power (NBC NEWS)

instinctively takes aim by reducing her to an infamous trope: the troublesome woman.

The political world has long fallen back on a maze of double standards that defend man's right to dominate politics, and woman's unsuitability for it. By creating a checklist of paradoxical conditions which women can never fulfil, governments have protected their patriarchal core – masculinising concepts such as power, authority and debate such that women struggle to find a place where they will not be criticised on the basis of their gender. If she attempts to exert authority, she is obnoxious, loud and nasty. If she shies away from it, she's too shy, weak and nice. The same has never applied to men, the makers of the rules. Men shout and we call it debating. Hillary Clinton raises her voice a decibel and critics hound her for being “unrelaxed”. Donald Trump is largely criticised as an individual. Hillary is considered a wife, with Trump infamously tweeting, “if [she] can't satisfy her husband what makes her think she can satisfy America?”

So skewed are public expectations for women in power that Clinton managed to stand with pneumonia through a 9/11 memorial service, take a brief break, before resiliently returning to work, and still be attacked for weakness rather than heralded for strength. Nothing signifies more aptly the state of our gendered political world than a media who will give infinite air time to footage of Hillary collapsing, while providing only limited

“Hillary has placed emphasis on the voices of the people”



coverage of the questionable legitimacy of Trump's own medical letter.

Toeing the line between nasty and nice has always been an impossible minefield for women who attempt to navigate the male-dominated halls of politics. We see it throughout history, from Queen Elizabeth I's defence: “I know I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman; but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England too”, to Margaret Thatcher taking elocution lessons to deepen her voice, while distancing herself from the women's rights movement. It all boils down to this: women in power flee from their gender for fear of it disadvantaging

them. To play the man's game, one must dress the part and talk the talk.

But that isn't entirely how Hillary Clinton has done it, and it is this attempt to degender politics which makes lingering champions of the patriarchal American Dream, like Trump, uncomfortable. Where masculine politics has placed emphasis on rhetorical command, conviction and domineering presence, Hillary has sought to undo this, placing focus on the voices and opinions of the people. Her ‘listening tours’ are carving a new, more inclusive path in politics that we shouldn't be so quick to dismiss. A frustrated *New Yorker* article in 2000 condemned these tours for trying “to elevate nodding into a kind of political philosophy”, but when we consider how Clinton's policies have been crafted like patchwork from thousands of scribbled-down suggestions voiced by her electorate, this criticism seems immature. Hers is not the politics of replication, trying impossibly to mould herself into the patriarchal model of what we expect a politician to be. She is innovative and willing to experiment, not only in order to create a new space for women in politics, but to improve the political machine as a whole.

Hillary Clinton is one of the most powerful women today, and she is doing it by reinventing what we understand as authoritative, as brave, as strong. Donald Trump can hit her with hollow insults as much as he likes, but they all come down to nothing. If she's a nasty woman, then I want to be one too.

It's not just 'napalm girl' Facebook is censoring

Beside the family photos and videos of pets, the social media giant is stirring controversy



James Snell
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James
Snell

It provides, whether we like it or not, the backdrop to much of our lives. In the age of social media, Facebook, the ageing titan, the weary juggernaut, still retains its prominence. Its policies matter, because they affect the lives of its billions of users. And something which may seem small, but is actually rather significant, is Facebook's policy on news and images.

Some websites – many of them irritatingly modern and faddish – derive most of their traffic from Facebook shares, using them to generate millions of clicks. The social network has led to certain of these sites becoming big almost overnight – the sheer weight of numbers, captured through likes and shares, has made this an inevitability. That's why there are so many videos of disembodied hands making unrealistic meals in under a minute; it's why so many viral videos, little more than a compilation of less well-known clips, exist. The power of Facebook is assured, and unlikely to diminish in the coming years, even as its average user gets older and younger people are less likely to take it up, on the promise of connectivity and sociability which so many other apps and websites now offer.

Upworthy, BuzzFeed, any number of side-projects or imitators – none of these would exist, at least in their cur-

rent form, without Facebook. As annoying and utterly insubstantial as they prove, it is difficult to suggest that such websites are actively malign – they are simply dull.

It is because of the perception that what happens on Facebook is newsworthy that any change in its policies merits coverage – it directly affects the news. This is what makes any claim of censorship on Facebook so disturbing, and why so many will, perhaps ironically, weigh in on social media with their perspective.

The latest round of this perennial subject was initiated when Facebook deleted a photograph. This is not exactly rare, and although it sometimes does not act to remove spectacularly violent content – gangland beheadings in Mexico, suicide bombings in Iraq – when it does, Facebook's intentions and mechanisms are well known and well understood.

But this was different: the thing under consideration was a work of real historical importance – it was the so-called 'napalm girl' photograph, a shot from 1972 of a badly burnt girl, fleeing a South Vietnamese napalm attack during the Vietnam War. The photograph won the Pulitzer Prize. It was shared by several politicians in Norway, including the Prime Minister. But that was not sufficient justification, it seems, for Facebook

to avoid deeming it in breach of its terms of service and deleting it.

One can, in a way, see why this happened, especially in a world where such things are decided by two different but occasionally complementary impulses: the algorithm-heavy way Facebook trawls through the millions of posts made every day, and the manual way in which images are reported and flagged for deletion by concerned users. Regardless of all this, however, and regardless of the leaden tools with which Facebook polices its service, it cannot be argued that the image warranted deletion. It is unpleasant, with its evident pain and emotion and unvarnished portrayal of human misery, but such is the lot of war, and such, too, is life. These things cannot be edited out or glossed over. This fact was recognised by Facebook itself, and the images were restored soon after.

But this was still something of a big deal. It represented an editorial decision to remove content shared by elected officials in a democratic, modern state. This was also, in a way, an American firm interfering, even unintentionally, in the domestic politics of a fellow democracy. Some said this constituted censorship, not an honest mistake. They said it was part of Facebook's apparent long history of censoring news – normally, of course, news appealing to the accusers' own political persuasion. They said such things were sinister, and altogether too common.

This is not entirely accurate. The re-



▲ Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg has a great deal of power

(ALESSIO JACONA)

“
Human
misery
cannot be
edited out
”

verse of all this is Facebook's recent decision no longer to curate news stories for its 'trending' bar, which can direct many millions of people to news of varying degrees of seriousness and respectability. This has its own problems, and means that conspiracy theories and outright lies, always common on social media, now have more traction than ever before – they can get a seemingly official rubber stamp just by being popular.

The effect Facebook has on its users is immense and still not entirely understood. The site has recognised its error and restored the offending image in this case, but its policies could poison the well of public discourse in years to come. What happens next may shock you.

'Psycho girlfriend' stereotypes need to die

Whatever popular culture may tell us, we need to reclaim caring as cool



Anna Fitzpatrick
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Anna
Fitzpatrick

“Go ahead, shit on me, I don't mind, I'm the Cool Girl.” This line in Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl* captures a cultural attitude that in my experience seems to be pervasive: that it is cool not to care. I can't count how many women, including myself, who have declared themselves 'such a psycho' – simply for feeling emotions.

How many of us haven't stared at our phone waiting for the person we like to text us back? How many of us haven't feared cardiac arrest upon seeing the three little 'typing' dots pop up on our screen? I don't feel that same kind of panic when I see that my mum is typing a message, before frantically notifying my best mate that 'OH MY GOD SHE'S SEEN IT!'

It would be weird if I felt like this during any given communication, right? Except that it's not weird, if you're wading through the murky waters of an undefined relationship, to feel at least a tiny bit anxious about it. It should be okay to care. In current pop-culture, the giddiness felt at new flirtationships is largely confined to the trope of a naïve, giggling schoolgirl. Think Taylor Swift's nauseating lyrics in 'Teardrops On My Guitar': "Drew talks, to me...I laugh 'cause it's



▲ Rosamund Pike in 'Gone Girl': 'such a psycho' (20TH CENTURY FOX)

just so funny". I'd love to know what 'Drew' said that was "so funny". Apparently making indeterminable noises with his mouth is enough to make any woman piss herself.

But the fact that the dominant expression of this manifestation of interest is portrayed through young 'feminine' characters seems to make it deeply uncool to feel this way. In the social context of misogyny as a permeating attitude, it is shamefully embarrassing to be compared to a 'little girl'. When being excited about relationships is captured by the mental imagery of schoolgirls screeching 'OMG, BOYS!' the implication is that if you want to maintain social dignity you can't let on that someone has affected you emotionally. No, you're too 'cool' for that.

“
I'm
supposed
to feel the
same as
Taylor
Swift...
aren't I?
”

In my cultural experience, the equation of 'femininity' to emotionality and 'masculinity' to objective rationality has made it shameful for those labelled as 'men' to cry. Through the reductionism of binary categories that are portrayed as polar opposites, it is implied that to be emotional is to be irrational. If irrationality is associated with craziness, what this is saying is that to be emotional is to be insane. To be emotional is to be 'such a psycho'.

This explains the stereotype of the 'crazy feminine' pursuer. No one wants to be the woman from the 'overly attached girlfriend' meme. Pop culture would have you believe that, in heterosexual, gender-normative relationships, being hysterical is the feminine pathology. This explains me or my friends arrogantly claiming that we're 'such fuck boys' for not wanting to pursue a relationship with casual sexual partner X, Y or Z. I'm supposed to feel the same as Taylor Swift...aren't I? This cultural conditioning makes women feel like freaks of nature for failing to be suitably infatuated with people they've slept with.

Then the rock alternative to this hard place is the shame women have been conditioned to attach to 'caring' as a gendered expression. My friend being upset that her boyfriend ignored her text is not grounds for diagnosing her with psychopathy. Doing so normalises emotional manipulation and makes it harder for us to spot non-physical abuse – particularly when men are the victims. We need to stop gendering the idea of

'craziness'.

Possibly, my friend's boyfriend ignoring her was an inconsiderate thing to do. Not pointing this out to him for fear of being labelled 'crazy' echoes Flynn: "Go ahead, shit on me, I don't mind, I'm the Cool Girl." The unspoken consensus seems to be that as a woman, 'being chill' means accepting being treated like shit. Being 'cool' is to 'like every fucking thing he likes' – another *Gone Girl* line – and not ever complain.

'Crazy' is a term thrown disproportionately at women when their express feelings become too inconvenient. With guys being told that talking about their feelings is not okay, and women being stigmatised as 'crazy' for doing so, relationships between them have a tendency to become a competition: whoever cares the least wins. But when this attitude prevails, everyone loses.

I believe that most who claim that they don't care what anyone thinks of them are lying. Generally, people are at least a tiny bit insecure, craving the validation from someone else that they are an okay human: that they qualify to be loved. I take some comfort from the impression that my friends like me, even just a little bit. In his song 'All Falls Down', Kanye West says: "we're all self-conscious, I'm just the first to admit it." If this holds true, I'll be the second to admit it.

We're all tiny little people in a big, confusing world. Sometimes we need a pat on the head and to be told that we're okay. Embrace it.

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An investigation into Cambridge's worrying homelessness epidemic

by Monty Flynn



Where did you sleep last night?

Vulture

FEATURES · CULTURE · FASHION · THEATRE · MUSIC · REVIEWS

The number of rough sleepers in Cambridge increased by 145 per cent since last year. **Monty Flynn** asks why the town has been hit so hard, and what you can do to help

Illustrations by **Dani Ismailov**

“Hi, mate, could you –”, “Sorry, I don’t have any change,” I mutter, lowering my head and shuffling quickly past. I feel guilty at the barefaced lie I’ve just told, but the feeling swiftly fades as I reassure myself that I’ve done the right thing. It would only be spent on drugs and alcohol, after all. During my first year in Cambridge I had many experiences like this and each time I believed the reassurances I gave myself less and less. Eventually I became uncomfortable with my ignorance and decided to get a better understanding of homelessness in order to challenge the preconceptions I had. The topic of homelessness had often come up in conversation: “why are there so many homeless people in Cambridge?” The same ‘intuitive’ explanations were always given; “Cambridge’s affluence and student population must attract them; surely addiction in the end leads to the streets.” A 2014 social attitude survey exploring the attitudes of residents in Cambridge towards homeless people confirms what I’ve noticed anecdotally. As I began to learn more about the issue and talked to charities, politicians and other students, I realised how wrong some of these misconceptions were.

Even our understanding of what it takes to be homeless falls short. We tend to conflate homelessness with the people we see ‘sleeping rough’ on the streets. The reality is that the homeless population is far bigger than what is visible to us on a given day in the city centre. Hidden homelessness has many forms, from sofa surfing to staying in impermanent accommodation such as B&Bs. Cambridge City Council data show that in 2015-16 while there were 152 individuals sleeping rough, 418 households presented as homeless. This is particularly shocking as a household could be anything from a single individual to a family of five. Unfortunately, what is not a misconception is the scale of homelessness in Cambridge. The numbers of homeless people and those sleeping rough have exploded over the past five years. Since 2011-12 there has been a 190 per cent increase in households presenting to be homeless and a 145 per cent increase in people sleeping rough from June 2015.

In order to understand the causes of this rapid growth, I went to speak to Community

Engagement Officer Barry Griffiths from Jimmy’s, a local charity that has been at the forefront of working with homeless people in Cambridge for over 20 years. Standing in the reception area, it feels far more like a hotel lobby than the stark picture of a homeless shelter I had in mind. Indeed, the people who stay here are called guests – they’re not nameless faces here for one night and gone the next. Small choices of vocabulary like this play a big part in removing the stigma that people in this situation face and restoring the self-confidence that is lost with your home and livelihood. Through glass doors I peer into the lounge; one guest is scrolling through Facebook while others sit on the sofas watching the news. The clean and airy space is a haven of normality, a much-needed refuge for people whose lives can be so transient and unstable. Talking to Barry made me realise both the variety and complexity of the causes of homelessness. There is normally no single reason, but a combination of many. These include relationship breakdown, lack of support after leaving a care home or the army, domestic violence and previous sexual or physical abuse. Alcohol and substance addiction do play a part as causes, but they are more often turned to as a coping mechanism when things have already gone wrong. None of these, however, explain the recent spike in the numbers of homeless people. Nor can the rise be explained by our intuition that people must come from outside of Cambridge; 90 per cent of people who come into Jimmy’s are locals. Instead we must look at the wider social and economic circumstances in which this increase has taken place. It is, perhaps, no coincidence that the rise in homelessness has converged with the implementation of austerity. Over his time working at Jimmy’s, Barry has observed that “homelessness is a social barometer for the wider problems facing our society. It takes three or four years after major policy change before we start to see the impact”. There are two areas that are particularly relevant to homelessness: housing and mental health. The former is in crisis and the latter still stigmatised and underfunded. Barry notes: “the problem is not that it’s hard for a homeless person to

get a house or to receive mental health care, the problem is that it’s hard for any-



▲ What words come to mind when you hear the word ‘homeless’?

“Mental health is a huge barrier to getting off the streets”

one to get a house or receive mental health care”. Jimmy’s does a fantastic job of alleviating the homelessness that already exists. It is “only one piece in a broken jigsaw”; but the more systemic causes can only be solved at the level of local and national policy. I met with Executive Councillor for Housing, Kevin Price, to discuss what Cambridge City Council is doing to counter homelessness. Recently the Council has focused on preventing homelessness, mainly through the provision of debt and benefit advice. In September a grant allocating over £700,000 to local anti-homelessness charities was also approved.

The Labour councillor cited the shortage of social housing in Cambridge as one of the main causes of homelessness. He argued that Conservative policies such as Right to Buy had compounded the housing shortage, halving the number of city’s council houses from “14,000 in 1980 to 7,000 in 2016”. He believed the situation is equally bad in Cambridge’s “overheated housing market”, where house prices have risen faster than any other town or city in England since 2010. This means that the Local Housing Allowance, which is used to calculate housing benefits when renting from private landlords, does not even cover the lowest rents in Cambridge. Other barriers we discussed include the idiosyncrasies of statutory homelessness, the category you



must fall into in order to be housed by the Council. The vague criteria requiring you to be local, 'unintentionally homeless' and in 'priority need' have some absurd consequences. For example, if you are served notice by your landlord and leave willingly then you are intentionally homeless; only if you stay and are forcibly removed would you qualify as statutorily homeless.

Ultimately, national government is responsible for providing a coherent policy agenda in order to reverse the recent trends. According to the MP for Cambridge, Daniel Zeichner, "whilst the previous Labour government made huge progress, overseeing a 70 per cent fall in homelessness, resources have been cut and cut and cut". Instead of preventing people from becoming homeless, "now we have to deal with them after the event". He was adamant that the "first thing we need to do is change the government", followed by focusing on "early intervention and investing in social housing". Liberal Democrat and former MP for Cambridge Julian Huppert emphasised the importance of addressing mental health in order to tackle homelessness. According to Homeless link, 45 per cent of homeless people have been diagnosed with a mental health problem, and yet "we're still in the dark ages" when it comes to treating them. It is unlikely that a radical change in policy will occur very soon, but luckily there are lots of fantastic charities and student organisations working hard to help homeless people in Cambridge. Wintercomfort stands alongside Jimmy's as one of the first ports of calls. As a day centre running seven days a week they provide a welfare service of breakfast and lunch provision and also an impressive learning and development programme. This includes being the local co-ordinator for The Big Issue Foundation and running two social enterprises, Overstream clean and Food4Food, that give people the work experience and self-confidence to return to employment.

Student run project Streetbite have over 80 volunteers who distribute food, tea, and coffee to homeless people around Cambridge. Volunteer Jake Leighton said: "his perception of homeless people has dramatically changed" during his time with Streetbite. Cambridge Homeless Outreach Programme (CHOP) works to provide students with opportunities to serve the homeless community in Cambridge. Past projects have included producing the zine as part of the 'Hope & Home' campaign to raise awareness, painting shelter rooms and various fundraisers. Raising and Giving (RAG) is supporting Jimmy's this year as well as running a homeless appeal to aid Wintercomfort's drive for essentials running up to Christmas. Homelessness is a devastating and complex problem, but it is not intractable. Many of the volunteers at the charities I visited, like Solly from Wintercomfort, had been homeless, but with help from others and perseverance they'd turned their lives around. Speaking to people sleeping rough, you get a sense of the solidarity of the homeless community; conversations have ranged from their favorite punk rock songs to being invited to a Halloween party. There is much we can do as students, but more than anything we need to lift our head outside the bubble that we create for ourselves and take the time to engage with the people we share this city with. To get involved with helping the homeless in Cambridge get in contact with Streetbite, CHOP or RAG via email or on Facebook ●

The life of a Cambridge bouncer

Bouncers play a vital role preventing incidents of sexual assault. Nina Jeffs ventured to the other side of the queue

You see them every single week, most likely – but not limited to – on Wednesday evenings. With just a single wave of their hand, they determine the fate of your evening – whether you'll be welcomed into a sweaty S Club 7-themed grotto, or be condemned to another hour in a freezing cold queue. But, most importantly, they're there to keep people safe, an extremely serious task in light of a CUSU survey that found nightclubs were the most common places for sexual harassment to occur. I interviewed a Cambridge bouncer to find out what life is like on the other side.

To do this involved walking around central Cambridge on a Wednesday at midnight, stone cold sober. If, like me, you are studying anthropology and want some hands-on experience, I can definitely recommend this expedition for some interesting insights. A taxonomy of campus tribes roam Market Square under the cover of darkness, as do many large personalities and hopeful BNOs. Among these diverse characters I supposedly met an obscure prince (trying to negotiate a queue jump fee), and even a Parkour expert. However, the main thing you're likely to discover on this expedition is some sympathy – and a lot of respect – for the bouncers in Cambridge clubs.

For George (name has been changed), one of Fez's doormen, his job is all about "people skills." He meant it more seriously than most of us do when peppering it throughout personal statements. During our conversation he seamlessly welcomed people into the club and humoured drunk storytellers, not to mention preventing Parkour enthusiasts from taking the concept of queue-jumping too literally.

George emphasised the personal aspect of working as a bouncer: not just striking up friendships with regular patrons, but also ensuring people's safety. He went into great detail explaining his response to witnessing, or receiving a report of, sexual harassment. Typically, this includes discussing the incident with the victim and talking to the perpetrator to assess their frame of mind. From here, he would decide the most appropriate response, keeping in mind the victim's desired course of action. This generally involves a warning for the perpetrator or expulsion from the

premises. In the face of such negative statistics on campus, his serious attitude and rigorous training was reassuring. Bouncers can't stop the toxic attitudes which condone sexual harassment in our society, but they do play an important role in ensuring people's security.

Some clubs in Cambridge have taken notice of rising student pressure against harassment and violence. In September last year, Kuda and Ballare (a.k.a. Life and Cindies) introduced the 'We Care' campaign, which introduced free phone charging facilities, as well as taxi escort services for 'vulnerable' people. The clubs also hired female Customer Care Ambassadors, presumably seeking to change perceptions of bouncers as unapproachable for women. These efforts to build relationships between staff and customers are especially important given that, as a survey found, 88 per cent of cases of sexual harassment and assault go unreported, and hence only a small proportion of perpetrators are ever punished.

However, for these services to be effective, awareness is essential. I certainly hadn't heard of any of these services during my first hazy nights out in Cambridge. Greater promotion is needed, especially during Freshers' Week, to ensure students' safety. With Life and Cindies taking the lead in this respect, the rest of the clubs in Cambridge could definitely step up their game.

Sexual harassment and violence are deeply rooted issues in student culture at Cambridge and across the UK, which efforts from establishments and their staff alone – however commendable – simply can't resolve. We as students need to address the root cause of these issues, and point out problematic attitudes when we see them arise.

But it's also worth remembering that bouncers are more than just people to practise your debating skills on. They're people doing an essential and often thankless job who are genuinely trying to help us have a good night out.

I'll continue to enjoy the quintessential Cambridge night out: visiting the same four sweaty clubs, pretending not to notice the repetitive playing of Carly Rae Jepsen songs, and stopping off for cheesy chips on the way home.

The only thing I think we need to add? A dose of gratitude for those helping to keep us safe ●

“
We support
the victim
every step
of the way
”

Culture

Beyond the Bubble

Culture Editor **Jon Cooper** treks past the train station to find out more about Cambridge's premier performing arts venue, The Junction

The Junction is often beyond the radar of Cambridge students. Situated just past the railway station, adjacent to the strangely corporate and soulless leisure centre best known to nearby Homertonians, the Junction's surroundings used to be the site of a decrepit cattle market discernibly outside of the city centre. The architecture of the original building is testament to the City Council's intention to stop noise escaping from the venue, originally created to give youths something to do as the rave scene of the 90s was emerging. The Junction was, and to some extent continues to be, firmly on the 'town' side of the town/gown divide.

Describing itself as "committed to art and entertainment that is up-and-coming, youthful and cutting-edge", with Lottery and Arts Council grants, the Junction has grown and expanded over the past 25 years to become something more considerable than a doghouse for Cambridge's loud and dance-prone teenagers. Over the first 17 years of its existence, the Junction grew from 400 to 1,500 capacity, while the number of annual events tripled, increasingly surrounded by urban development and sprawl – a Travelodge, cinema complex, and plenty of chain restaurants.

Yet its sense as a venue for residents, rather than a haunt of Cambridge's transient and temporary student community, seems to persist. Despite having an incredibly impressive line-up, the intimate and well-equipped venue is rarely attended by Cambridge students. As a former sixth former in Cambridge, this quirk seems a little wasteful – I remember some of my first live music experiences at Little Comets and Local Native gigs in J1, and seeing a contemporary dance piece my sister was involved with in J2. The Junction is friendly, cheap and offers something quite different to anything else in the centre of the city.

I caught up with the Junction's Art Producer, Daniel Pitt, to find out more about the venue, and what it had to offer university students. Daniel doesn't only put on a programme of contemporary theatre, dance, live arts, spoken word performances and avant garde festivals, but also works on artist development. Troop, which was created just over a year ago, gives an opportunity for those living in Cambridge or East Anglia (including students) interested in contemporary performance to get support (with residencies, advisory meetings and workshops), meet other like-minded people and join a community to help propel their work forward – for just £5 a year. Testament

▲ **The facade of J2 at the Junction** (Wiki-commons)

“
The Junction was, and continues to be firmly on the 'town side' of the town/gown divide
”

to its slogan 'art meets life', the Junction is focused not only on providing a venue for audiences, but on enriching the role of the arts in Cambridge by supporting its creators.

When I ask about what makes the Junction so special, the answer quickly follows that not only is it a history "of the people", and that it supports local budding artists with contemporary works that respond to real life, but that it is "youthful, and not stuffy". Daniel tells me it is the "liveness of theatre" that interests him; capturing what cannot be captured on film, and helping support immersive environments that are perhaps being lost by an increasingly digital millennial generation.

It's not just a theatre, but an arts centre: while hosting experimental and cutting-edge improvised theatre, it also puts on drum and bass nights that continue until the early hours of the morning. It is a dynamic space, not re-performing *Macbeth* for the umpteenth time as many students seem inclined to, but attempting to establish a real relationship between the city and the arts.

It's important for Cambridge – we lack spaces like this. As a city that never had much industry, it's difficult to convert warehouses and factories into venues like the Tate Modern, Dalston Superstore or the Warehouse Project's Store Street. That same re-purposing of industrial space makes Berlin, Łódź, La Sucrière and Basilica Hudson thrive. In many ways, the fabric of the city doesn't allow for this kind of regeneration. Ade & Abet existed in a warehouse near the train station for about three years, but have since downsized to a studio space called ELAN (Experimental Local Area Network) as the CB1 development takes hold. If it's true that there's not much space in Cambridge, and little room for a scene to thrive, it's just as true that Cambridge students aren't making the most of, least of all participating in, what we do have.

Management at the Junction seem aware of the future, and aim to harness Cambridge's



▲ **Inside J1 (Junction)**

unique tech-driven trajectory of economic development into a reflective arts scene. Collusion is an organisation intended to cross the intersection between artistic expression and technological innovation in Cambridge, bringing experimental work to the fore in the city with "disruptive outcomes". This year, it was successful in a bid of £325,000 to the Arts Council for its project 'in_collusion' to establish the city as a pioneer in this field, aiming to "deliver critically engaged artistic work that is a product of the unique resources within the city".

Rachel Drury, co-creator and director, has collaborated with the Junction on the Sonic Pi:Live & Coding digital research project. Sonic Pi was developed by Sam Aaron at the University of Cambridge Computer Laboratory, in collaboration with the Raspberry Pi Foundation (based at Cambridge Science Park), to turn the small computer into a full musical instrument. By harnessing the University and city's technological prowess and intellectual potential into an avant garde arts programme, the Junction is taking an alternative course to the post-industrial entrepreneurial trajectory of development in larger metropolises.

And Daniel tells me the Junction is hoping to grow: one potential course of development has been featured in Cambridge News, with the venue hoping to transform itself into a "creative hub with a multi-arts programme and creative industries focus", creating eight floors of creative and tech-oriented work space. Plans to expand are supported by the City Council.

The Junction, however, is ultimately what the active audiences and budding young artists it aims to attract make of it. In order to make this city more liveable, more reflective, more engaged, and to encourage more cohesion between the city and the University, there is every reason for students to participate in the Junction's programme ●

Visit the Junction at junction.co.uk, and see over-leaf for Vidya's article on World Factory

Don't miss »

Upcoming events you can't afford to forget

Stutterer / Wellcome Genome Campus
Until 5th January 2017

The UK home of the Human Genome Project, the campus' current exhibition, by artists Thomson and Craighead, is "an instructional artwork, a poetry machine that uses the human genome like a music score to play back a self-assembling video montage spanning the thirteen years of the Human Genome Project." Open to the public on the first Thursday of each month. Free for visitors.



Find more cultural content online at:
varsity.co.uk/culture



◀ A photo from the interactive theatre piece (Courtesy of METIS)

By the time my custody of the *World Factory* ended, I had used 3,000kg of cotton, 2,000kg of synthetic fabric and 505.75kg of non-recyclable fabric. This required 60,000,000 litres of water and 3,000 litres of oil. In the process I had to lower the wages of all of my workers by one-third, in order to retain the whole force, while paying them to stay in the city during the holiday rather than returning to their home villages.

World Factory is an interactive theatre piece, conceptualised by Zoë Svendsen, Artistic Director of the Cambridge-based performing arts company, METIS. A Research Fellow in Drama and Performance at the Faculty of English, she carries the academic rigour of her work with the University into the research and development process of her theatrical pieces.

World Factory invites the audience to become the participants, taking part in a Monopoly-esque game, whereby they determine both the material fortunes, and that of their workers, of a textiles factory on the other side of the world. Dealers stand at each of the four corners of the room, seductively sliding past in air-hostess attire, slipping fake banknote bribes to each "Factory-table" as those who sit around it are forced to choose between their profits and their morals.

But the dynamic of the game isn't simply a binary between the two. There are two billion routes through the game, accommodating the shifting position of the audience-participants throughout. For Svendsen, there isn't a choice: "Ethics and the way you act – it's a false dichotomy. Ethics should be the way you act." On the screens around the room, a film of Madame Wang, owner of a clothing factory in Shanghai, was projected. On the relentless pace of work in her own factory, she remarks "All these dreams, I cannot not keep going forward." The audience themselves is then made to move forward through the game by the chugging of pressure vessels and electrical mills on the screens around them.

World Factory is the product of five years of painstaking research into the capitalist supply chain by Svendsen. But it is also the product of a shirt. Madame Wang presold 200 shirts to Svendsen's company as a condition that they be allowed to film inside her constituent factories. The process of button-making, threading and stitching each part of the shirt was recorded on camera, to be projected in the factory of the audience in the room. It is a slight disappointment that the rich backstory and atmospheric quality of the film fades into the milieu during the show. Audience members are too busy counting up the fake banknotes comprising their capital, or debating whether to take bribes. In effect, they are too busy playing the game.

But perhaps that is the point of *World Factory*. In one hour, the show's running time, we hardly have the time to introspect on our decisions and reflect on their implications for those around us. It is cut-throat capitalism distilled into a paint that coats the walls of the auditorium in Cambridge Junction.

Perhaps there is hope for such performance projects to make a marked and lasting impact on the consumer choices of their audience. Members of the Judge Business School attending *World Factory* mutter appreciatively about Svendsen's performative brainchild: "It could be a great pedagogical tool for social responsibility," says one faculty member. A colleague echoes: "I quite like the added dimension of drama; I'm just fed up with the traditional case-study method; it's so dry."

The issue still remains as to whether we have the time for this. Do we have the time, both in our tenure as the owner of *World Factory*, and in our own lives, to consider our choices, and modify them accordingly in line with an index of ethics?

The words of Engels, printed in bold black on white paper are handed out to each member of the audience: "HE KNOWS THAT, THOUGH HE MAY HAVE THE MEANS OF LIVING TODAY, IT IS VERY UNCERTAIN WHETHER HE SHALL TOMORROW" Do ethics have a role to play in such a world of global capitalism? Play the game of *World Factory* if you want to find out ●

“
World
Factory
invites
the
audience
to
become
the
partici-
pants
”

Sludgy Portrait of Himself / Museum of Cambridge Until 5th February 2017

British artist Jesse Wine creates a narrative from objects, light and sound, inspired by the folklore that inhabits Cambridgeshire's fens. Visitors will be guided by a soundtrack composed by London-based musician Daniel Woolhouse. Part of Kettle's Yard's 'In New Places and Spaces'. £2 for concessions.

◀ **Stutterer**
(Thomson & Craigshead)



29th OCTOBER – 5th NOVEMBER

What's on this week?

JEWS, MUSLIMS AND CHRISTIANS IN THE MUSICAL LIFE OF ISLAMIC IBERIA / Faculty of AMES



TOP PICK

This talk aims to discover the intricacies of musical life in medieval Iberia, and asks how the religious communities that inhabited the locale formed what we deem "Andalusian" music.

Free to attend on Tuesday 1st November, from 5-6pm.

Saturday 29th Art, Language, Location: Guided Tour

Angela Ruskin University, 1pm-2pm or 3pm-4pm

Director Robert Goode offers a detailed insight into the numerous installations and interventions created by the participating artists, which challenges our view of the relationship between language and art, as well as the constitution of an art gallery.

artlanguagelocation.org

Sunday 30th Build a Day of the Dead altar

Museum of Archeology and Anthropology, 12pm-4pm

The museum and Cambridge's Mexican Society collaborate to offer you the chance to help build and decorate their altar in preparation for the Day of the Dead.

maa.cam.ac.uk

Wednesday 2nd Josh Widdicombe

Corn Exchange, 8pm

As part of his 'What Do I Do Now' tour, the familiar face from TV programmes such as The Last Leg and Live at the Apollo is available to see for £20.75.

cambridgelivetrust.co.uk

Thursday 3rd Kettle's Yard Chamber Series: Thomas Oliemans, baritone and Roger Vignoles, piano

Old Divinity School, St John's College, 8pm.

The Dutch baritone and the internationally recognised pianist bring an evening recital of Schubert's 'An Silvia' and Hugo Wolf. £6 for students.

kettlesyard.co.uk

Friday 4th Hammer and Tongue November

Cambridge Junction, 7:30pm

This spoken poetry event involves former UK and international slam champion Keith Jarrett, as well as Jack Bateman, whose poems/performances explore sexuality, gender and identity. Tickets are £7.50.

junction.co.uk

If you'd like to submit a **listing**, send details to
culture@varsity.co.uk

What is LawBot?

Ludwig Bull (Managing Director): LawBot is a website, a chatbot – it's an artificially intelligent software program that can help you to understand whether you have been a victim of a crime.

Right now we cover most of the criminal offences in England, and you can go to LawBot, explain what happened to you, and LawBot will ask certain questions, and then conclude whether it amounts to a crime.

What inspired you to create this?

LB: We think the world is missing this. There's a real problem with access to justice as people don't know what the law is. At the moment you need lawyers as interpreters, because the law is a language people don't understand. There's already lots of legal information on the web, but what's lacking is someone to explain it in non-legal terms. This chatbot bridges that gap.

Rebecca Agliolo (Marketing Director): We try to strike a balance between being concise and incorporating legal knowledge so that it is precise, and also being user-friendly and understandable.

We consider LawBot to be a preliminary assessment, so if you're on the fence about whether to contact a lawyer or not this should help you decide. We are the world's first criminal law chatbot – there's nothing like us anywhere.

Is it like speaking to a human?

RA: We worked really hard to make it as little robotic as possible [sic]. We have randomised responses, so even if you input the same thing, no two conversations with the bot will be the same.

We've incorporated sympathy and compassion, so it will say things like "I'm



Varsity Introducing...

LawBot

Anna Jennings meets two of the founding team behind LawBot, the world's most advanced chatbot lawyer – created by undergrads here at Cambridge

really sorry that happened to you". We want to make it as user-friendly as possible to help our clients feel comfortable. It's also completely confidential, secure and non-judgemental, which may make it better in some ways to talk to than a person.

How was it created?

RA: We're a team of lawyers dipping our

toes into technology. We're all current undergraduate Law students at Cambridge, working on different aspects to bring the bot to life. It's a real labour of love – we really enjoy doing it.

LB: I do all the coding of the bot itself, and we have someone who's helping us with designing the website and the interface. I taught myself. It means we can incorporate

the legal knowledge very easily, because I've got a background in law.

How's the project gone so far?

RA: At the moment we're only seven weeks old. We went live two weeks ago, and we've been focusing on getting people to interact with it and asking for their feedback.

LB: Currently we've had around 14,000 bot interactions – which consist of one input and one output – and we've already had some confirmed cases where people have gone to the police after speaking to the chatbot.

What are your plans for the future?

LB: Right now it deals with English criminal law. We're already looking to broaden that out to judicial review, human rights, civil cases and other jurisdictions, as the technology is very scalable and transferable. We'd like to expand globally – we're already in touch with some other universities.

We're never going to do advertising, or any services which are payable. Of course, at some point it may be useful for us to get some money to expand the services which we can provide. We could get money from solicitors who are interested in partnering with us. But the cost would never fall on the user.

Finally, I said 'hello' to LawBot

LawBot: Nice to meet you, *Varsity*. I can help you understand if you have been the victim of a crime. If you don't understand what I am saying, just say so and I will explain. If you don't understand a word, just ask me about it and I will give you a definition. Would you like to get started?

You can find out more about LawBot and try it out for yourself at www.lawbot.info, and you can follow @LawBot_UK



Saved by The Bell Jar

Alice Chilcott explores the place and profundity of the mental health memoir in modern Britain

Everyone has a book that saved them. Not necessarily their life – although books have done that – but changed their perception of the world, or, less drastically, brought into focus or clarity an element of their existence. Walking through Waterstones, one cannot help but notice *Reasons to Stay Alive*; *Shoot the Damn Dog: A Memoir of Depression*; *An Apple a Day*; *Mad Girl*. Books written by celebrities or public figures, and occasionally by ordinary people whose experiences have been extraordinary. What I'm going to call the 'mental health memoir' is

fast becoming a genre in its own right, in a society facing what experts warn is a "mental health crisis".

To attempt a loose definition, the mental health memoir is a prose work whose central dilemma is located in a struggle – usually the protagonist's – with a mental health problem. If they do not mimic them exactly, they are at least loosely based upon, or inspired by, the author's experience of the same issue. Though largely conventional in terms of their narrative style, many have a certain verbosity which would not be out of place in poetry.

If one book could define this genre, it is *The Bell Jar*, published in 1963 a few months before the suicide of its author, Sylvia Plath. It's a quasi-autobiographical account of Plath's struggle with depression and nervous breakdown, so close to the truth that it was initially published under the pseudonym of Victoria Lucas so as not to offend the real-life equivalents of some characters featured in the book.

The beauty of *The Bell Jar* is that it's not a re-perspectivised self-help book. The narrator, Esther Greenwood, has a view of her mental illness which is often disarmingly cynical, wry and politically incorrect, and a version of reality which is palpably distorted by that mental illness. There is no straight progression from illness to health, and although the ending is cautiously optimistic (she's leaving her rehabilitation clinic), the overall effect of the book is to disorientate the reader, forcing them to question the boundaries of sanity and wellness that (patriarchal) convention has bequeathed them.

Thirty years later, the mantle was taken up by Susanna Kaysen in *Girl, Interrupted*, another account of a breakdown and recovery set partly in the very psychiatric hospital where Plath stayed as a patient in the 1950s. Kaysen's book seems deliberately to set itself closer to reality than Plath's. It describes itself as a memoir; it is less poetic, and attempts a more forensic examination of the other patients in her ward. But this is offset by a bizarre opening in which the narrator compares insanity to a parallel world. Again and again, the mental

health memoir probably qualifies as the prose genre most likely to straddle the line between fiction and reality.

There are many reasons for this. As with Plath, fiction serves as a veil for many people writing about their own past. Then there's the Freytag Triangle that some writers feel pressured to mimic, which leads to a distortion of the ordinary human experience, so lacking in the peaks and troughs that often feature in a good novel. The main barrier, however, must be the difficulty associated with accurately recalling and conveying subjective emotions and experiences. All of which combine to make the mental health memoir changeling and artificial, but also intense and profound. Reading *The Bell Jar* sometimes feels like looking at the world through those fly-eye magnifiers we used as children: the colours and shapes of the real world are still there, but it's pixelated, stylised, and abstracted.

For anyone whose experiences remotely resembles the author's, it is this lack of exactitude which is invaluable. We may go to a fantasy or historical novel to escape the world that we know; we open the mental health memoir to confront our experiences, rather than see them wrested from us. Where accuracy of detail would deny us access to our own memories, preventing us from projecting them onto the storyline, the fly-eye of the mental health memoir validates our experiences through incorporating them. And for as long as we can identify with unhappy protagonists, we may be able to imagine our own happy endings (Image: Mike Krzeszak) ●

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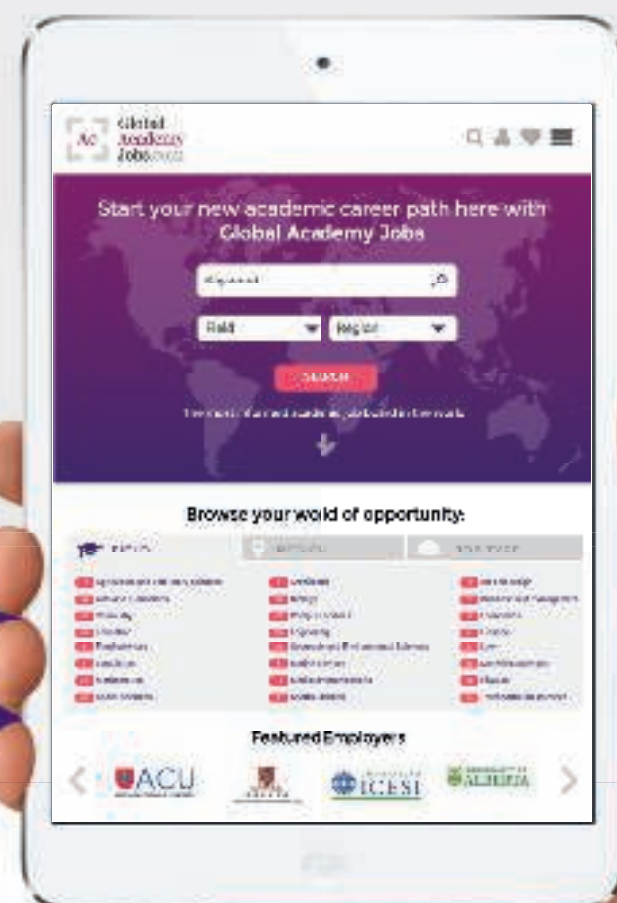
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Fashion



In the back streets

Just a few metres from the magnificence of the central colleges, the stone and marble are replaced by brick and the hallowed halls become offices and lecture theatres. Less touristy and more studenty, Cambridge's back streets are the setting for this week's photoshoot, with autumnal layering, flashes of shine and smart tailoring to create a casual, everyday elegance.

STYLIST AND MAKEUP
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Flora Walsh

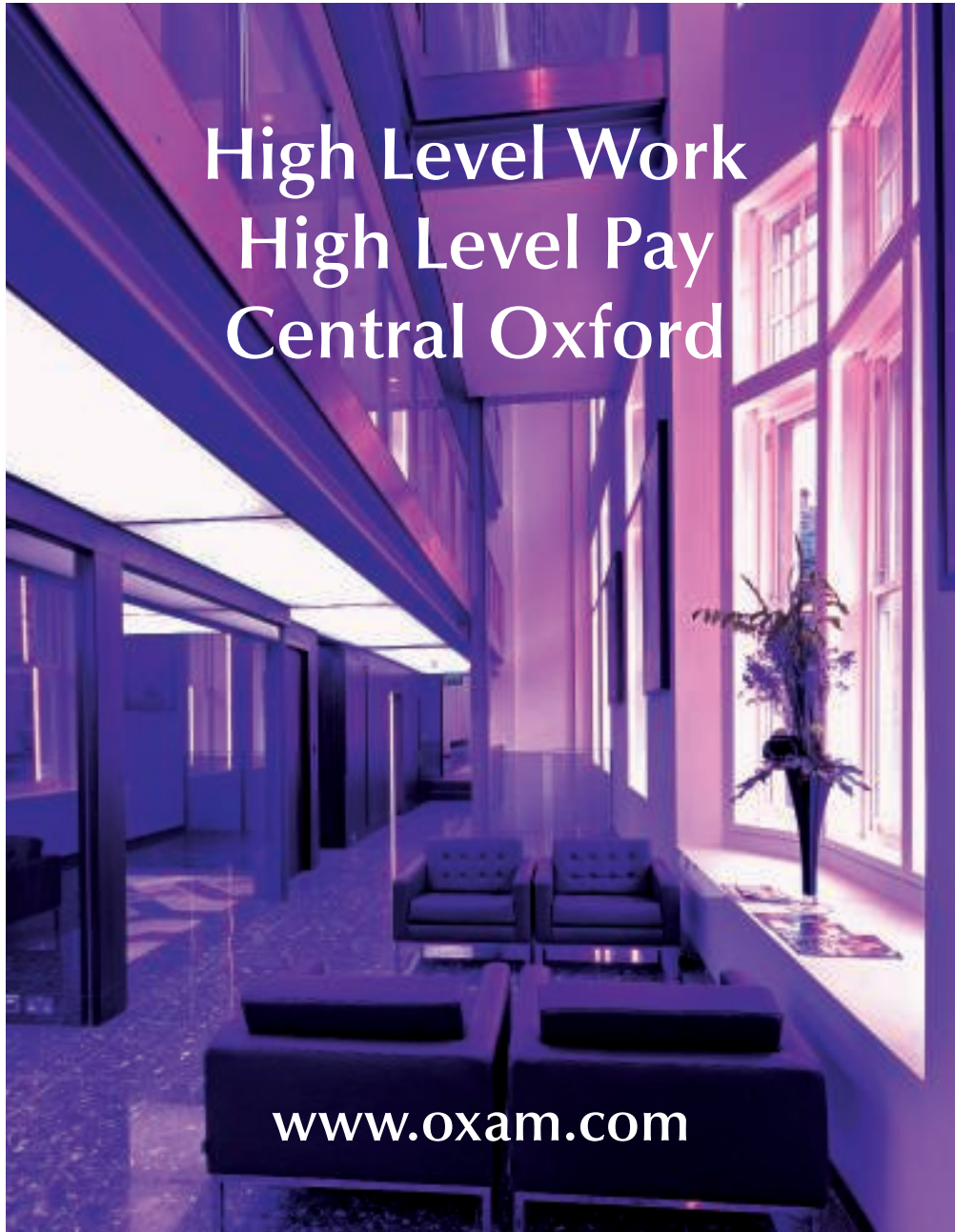
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Theatre

PREVIEW

‘The audience will feel trapped and exiled like the characters’

A production with huge potential to illustrate a new feminist angle on the history of exile, writes **Peter Chappell**

exile
Corpus Playroom
1st - 5th November, 7:00pm

New production *exile* promises to be an arresting exploration of women cast off from their communities. The play follows the interactions of six female characters desperately searching for water; through their desperation they are forced to unearth their stories of persecution. As they piece their separate lives together, they begin to see the connection between their stories, building a kind of sisterhood to offer a message of hope. Written and co-directed by Rute Costa with Faye Guy, it feels like a production with huge potential to illustrate a new feminist angle on the history of exile.

When I ask what the play is about, a smile breaks across Rute's face as she looks to the other cast members. "Oh... shit..." This sparks a chorus of unsure laughter. She explains that inspiration came partly from the Tragedy Paper. "The idea came when I was reading Greek plays, Medea being the best example of this... she, of course, gets exiled. We have done a lot of research to explore other incidents of female exile throughout other cultures around the world." But the cast seem wary to pin the play to a specific cultural context; the desert setting is a space where Greek Medea (Niamh Curran), Nepalese Samasti (Claire Takami-Siljedahl) and others come to explore what their exile means, and is one reason why Rute and Faye have focused on creating an atemporal space.

What does performing in the Corpus Playroom bring to *exile*?

Niamh: This would be impossible to do in any other place (in Cambridge) but Corpus.

It's quite claustrophobic in a useful way and the audience will feel trapped and exiled like the characters themselves.

What have you been up to in the rehearsal period?

Beatriz Santos: Rute's writing and having her there really allowed us to get to the heart of the play and rewrite and change if something wasn't working.

Rute: Because it is a student-written play, we have building the characters together in a collaborative process [sic]. The cast and production have been able to modify the script to fit the performance, an exciting departure from having to adhere to the minutiae of a bought script.

Lola Olufemi: We have done a lot of work so [the characters] don't become caricatures. It is easy to take your character and base it on someone and when you put them all against each other it could become too simplistic.

▼▲ *exile* in rehearsal
(Johannes Hjorth)



“There is a distinct lack of access for BME actors”

What we have been trying to do is to make sure you express an individual voice without making them political for no reason.

Faye: We realised through this process that there is a distinct lack of access and opportunity for BME actors that people in Cambridge and at the ADC are working really hard on to address. We hope that having a diverse cast will encourage BME actors to audition for more plays and for directors to be more actively aware and inclusive.

This is a student-written play. What is the Cambridge creative writing scene like at the moment?

Lola: Now more than ever there is space for student writing. It means you can put on plays that you care about and explore issues that you normally don't see on stage. Directors are often restricted by 'what's popular' or familiar to Cambridge's audiences.

Rute and the cast seem attentive to not casting their characters solely as victims, but rather as strong in the face of adversity. Ruby Kwong aptly quoted Judith Butler: "happily, we are all dispossessed together," which just about sums up the tone of this feminist creative experiment ●

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Little Shop of Horrors
 ADC Theatre
 18th - 22nd October, 9:30pm

▶▶ **Little Shop in rehearsal**
 (Oscar Yang)

All casts tend to be enthusiastic about their own shows. But I have never encountered a cast who are quite as excited and energetic as the giddy bunch I met during the stage rehearsal for *Little Shop of Horrors* at the ADC. When I asked them to describe the show, I was greeted with genuine chorus of "Amazing! Fun! Camp! Crazy! Hilarious! Unreal! Out of this world!" So, clearly the cast are totally and utterly in love with this show? But should you be? *Little Shop of Horrors* is definitely not your typical musical. Throw away any thoughts of *Wicked* and *Les*

Misérables. This is on a planet of its own. The plot? Take a deep breath: an underachieving orphan works in a failing flower shop, on the aptly named Skid Row in New York. He is in love with his co-worker, only she doesn't know, because she is in a relationship with a sadistic dentist. Throw into this a greedy and grumpy shop owner, some sassy street singers, and finally, a giant speaking, singing plant from space.

Oh, and I should probably mention that the plant eats people. Chopped up, whole or limb by limb. It started life as a non-musical black and white B-movie, shot in two days on the set of another film in 1960. Turned into a musical in 1982, it was an absolute smash hit. It landed in the West End, before being remade into a cult film directed by none other than Miss Piggy (or at least the man behind her: Frank Oz).

Adam Mirsky plays the geeky Seymour, whose life consists of being a slave in a flower shop, and a slave to unrequited love. "The show is actually crazy", he tells me. "Where else do you get a loner with a psychotic alien plant for a best friend!?" Adam is more used to playing Shakespeare, and can barely contain his joy at being let loose to sing.

Choreography is by Toby Marlow, who explains that his vision is "a sheer over-the-top camp extravaganza". Director Rebecca Vaa is

equally buoyant as she explains that the show is about life and love, and Faust and flowers, and generally celebrating the craziness that musicals have to offer. "It doesn't take itself too seriously: it sends up the idea of musicals, the oddness of people bursting into song, and the ridiculousness of the plots. But it does it fantastically."

Musical director Joe Beighton explains with pride that this version has a bigger orchestra than the original New York production.

The show features the most astonishing gigantic carnivorous plant puppets: having seen them being lovingly built, I really want to give away the cleverness of the surprises.

But I've been sworn to secrecy. But apparently I can mention the bubble machines, the UV lights, the smoke machines, and the general brilliance that the lighting and design crews have put together. I get the feeling that they're having even more fun than the cast.

Fun is definitely the key word for this show. So, if you need some fun in your life, and

have always wondered what sort of voice a man-eating extraterrestrial plant has, then come along.

And even if you've seen the show before, I can guarantee, this plant has a voice like none you'll have ever heard ●

Thomas O'Connor



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Music

FEATURE

In Defence of Kanye

Miikka Jaarte praises the much-criticised musical legend



It is genuinely difficult to find a celebrity figure as polarising as Kanye West. Just look at any comment section on a YouTube video referencing Kanye to find out. He's been one of the biggest names in hip-hop, both as a rapper and producer, for the past ten years (especially impressive considering the short shelf-life of hip-hop artists) and seems to sell anything his hands have touched, from sneakers to £100 plain white t-shirts.

On the other hand, there seems to be a significant number of people who seem positively enraged by his fame - starting with the 130 000 people who signed the petition to cancel his Glastonbury performance because, and I quote, "Kanye West is an insult to music fans all over the world".

Now I'm not one to pay a terms rent on a pair of Yeezys, but I must admit that I'm puzzled by the intensity of Kanye-hate. More importantly, I think the reasons rock music fans especially hate Kanye reflect wider issues of race and music-elitism.

There are plenty of good reasons to dislike Kanye, like his tendency for misogyny, but most common complaints strike me as either untrue or unfair. So here is my attempt to confront these attacks.

He's arrogant.

Yup, he sure is. Kanye has compared himself to Disney, Shakespeare and Jesus. Guess who else is arrogant? A whole lot of artists. Oscar Wilde, Lou Reed, Andy Warhol - the list goes on. In fact, the list of horribly egotistical and offensive things that Noel Gallagher alone has said seems significantly longer (and less funny) than Kanye's.

Yet, I don't recall people boycotting Oasis for Glastonbury. Why is it that the arrogance of these people is not such a hot topic as whenever Kanye jokingly compares himself to Steve Jobs, or calls himself a genius in an interview? If there was only some easily identifiable difference between Kanye and these artists. I just can't think of any!

I don't like his music.

Fair enough.

He has no talent.

Not so fair. To me, this reeks of the kind of shallow rockism that motivates those hilari-

ous "GOD, SEND US BACK KURT COBAIN AND WE'LL GIVE YOU JAY Z" YouTube comments you used to see from kids born in the wrong generation, who still can't quite accept that rap is 'real music'. You may not like Kanye's music, but his influence extends to artists you might.

From Future, Drake and Chance the Rapper in hip-hop to indie-darlings like Bon Iver and Tim Hecker. No, Kanye can't sing or play guitar - but listen to the beat of 'Jesus Walks', his verse on Chicago street-violence on 'Murder to Excellence' or, hell, literally anything off *My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy*, and tell me with a straight face that Kanye West has no talent. I'll wait.

He only raps about money and women.

This is just factually untrue. See 'All Falls Down', 'So Appalled', or 'Real Friends' for a start. Kanye's talent has always been more in production and songwriting than clever lyricism. But apart from occasional misfires (like 90 per cent of *The Life of Pablo*), Kanye has been a politically active, topical and most of all hilarious lyricist for his entire

career. Come on, admit it, it is pretty damn funny that he compares himself to Malcolm X because he'll "buy any jeans necessary".

He's too loud and opinionated.

This is true, but how is it a complaint? Starting from proclaiming that George Bush doesn't care about black people on live TV in 2005, Kanye has never had a problem telling us his political opinions. Kanye, unlike a great many of his peers in mainstream music, does not stay silent about unarmed black teenagers being shot by the police, or racism in the fashion and music industries.

He's also not just talk - he's spearheaded charity projects for Hurricane Katrina and inner-city education, as well as broader issues like global poverty and human rights. He's not always smart about it, and has a tendency to go on nonsensical rants.

I wouldn't endorse the man's presidency. But Kanye is a prominent political and unapologetic voice in an industry that promotes apolitical silence to maximise appeal.

He's Illuminati, racist against white people and a gay fish.

Come on, man ●

OPINION

Bob the Noble Bard

Bob Dylan earned his win, says Cornelius Dieckmann

Last Thursday, the world of literature was split into two camps. As word spread that the 2016 Nobel Laureate was not Don DeLillo, not Haruki Murakami, but was in fact Bob Dylan, a argument began over a fundamental, deceptively easy question: is this literature?

With previous winners including TS Eliot, John Steinbeck and Toni Morrison, Dylan joins an eminent host of American writers who have received the distinction. Sceptics, however, argue that he doesn't belong among these ranks, simply because he is not in the business of literature. Indeed, the native Minnesotan is the first musician among the 113 honourees in the award's history.

But it's too narrow-minded to dismiss Dylan solely on the grounds of medium and genre. Granted, every introduction to literary studies lecture impresses upon the starry-eyed undergraduate that the three major genres of literature are prose, drama and poetry. So where do you put Dylan? His advocates came running swiftly, proclaiming Dylan a poet; the 20th-century Bard. But although he was called "the greatest living poet" by Van Morrison decades ago and continues to be labelled in the same vein, this also misses the mark.

Dylan is that somewhat awkwardly branded breed called 'singer/songwriter', and there is no shame in saying it out loud. Literature and music have always been sibling art forms; nothing speaks against a significant intersection between the two. Dylan won the prize "for having created new poetic expressions within the great American song tradition". What, if not evolve material from their national song tradition, did the likes of Wordsworth and Tennyson do in their day? They printed their poetry

in books; Dylan presses his songs on vinyl and CD. What they have in common is the immensely innovative treatment of the English language and its cultural heritage.

But it's not just the folk tradition handed down from Woody Guthrie and Lead Belly that gave Dylan his artistic credentials. In his 2004 autobiography *Chronicles*, he writes of his early interest in literature. Poems by the English Romantics and novels ranging from Dickens to Dostoyevsky fascinated him profoundly. He later befriended beat poet Allen Ginsberg and in an admittedly rather marginal volume of prose poetry entitled *Tarantula* (1971) even made his own foray into book writing. The 75-year-old certainly didn't win the Nobel Prize by pure association with all things literary, but his legacy is far bigger than that of a mere folk troubadour.

It should be obvious that the clean separation of one from the other is a futile project. Poets such as Leonard Cohen may come along who have a strong affinity for music, and songwriters may exhibit inspired engagement with the printed word, as Suzanne Vega has done in her most recent album.

The Nobel Committee, usually perceived as a stuffy institution, has opened its doors, and with Dylan ushers in a people's writer. Not in the sense of an avid interaction with fans on Dylan's part - on the contrary, he is notoriously laconic and avoids publicity. But in the wide-reaching ways in which his work has touched the life of the everyman; listening to *Highway 61 Revisited* or *Blood on the Tracks* is arguably less intimidating than the perusal of the collected works of Samuel Beckett.

Those still apprehensive should be comforted, for the awarding of the prize to a songwriter doesn't mean that next year's won't go to a writer of the more conventional kind. If anything, the Nobel Prize has strengthened its significance by demonstrating a progressive, non-prescriptive understanding of literature.

The wonderful richness of Dylan's songbook ranges from readily approachable folk balladry - those songs in which he recognisably carries the torch of the American song tradition - to the puzzling realms of modernist poetry. Nobel Prize or not, Dylan's work is that of one of the greats ●

▲▼ Dylan performing in 1963



★★★★★ = AMAZING
 ★★★★★ = GREAT
 ★★★★★ = GOOD

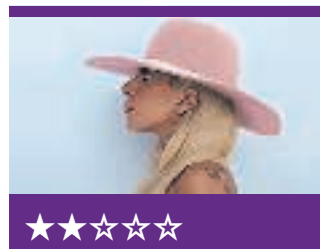
★★★★☆ = OK
 ★★★★★ = BAD
 ★★★★★ = ABYSMAL

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New releases

ALBUM



Lady Gaga Joanne

This is not 'stripped-back Gaga'. This is not 'the real Gaga'. Most reviewers would have you believe that *Joanne* is raw, powerful and ultimately true to self. But don't believe what you hear – Gaga's latest album is confused, lightweight and devastatingly disappointing.

The character that Gaga has invented for *Joanne* is a vague, pseudo-country girl. The album is full of nostalgic references which ultimately

ring hollow as they have no grounding or reference point. Vocals in the titular song 'Joanne' reek of Dolly Parton's melancholic lines, but entirely miss their target. Instances when any pretenses are disposed with and Gaga gives in to tropes and clichés, such as in 'John Wayne' (think Mustangs, whiskey and horse riding), are ironically more convincing.

Sadly, for idolatrous Gaga worshippers such as myself, these moments of drive are few and far between in what is essentially an album of confusion and contradiction.

It's a story of missed opportunities wherever you look within the album: 'Dancin' in Circles' and 'A-YO' begin with a Sweet Escape-era Gwen Stefani sound, which could provide an interesting counterpart to the country aesthetic.

But instead Gaga shies away from any interesting fusion, reverting to a post-artpop Eurovision style.

Once you become aware of the slightly Eurovision sound present in many of the songs, it's difficult not to hear it in every gap.

And what of the big hits? As predicted, 'Perfect Illusion' and 'Hey Girl' are two of the highest trenders online. But I can't help wondering whether

they will fade away, unlike 'Paparazzi' or 'Poker Face'. Lady Gaga is simply trying to do too many things, and ends up doing them all in a mediocre way.

Whether Lady Gaga set out to explore her own sound, or whether she aimed to please the greatest number of people with a plethora of styles, she sadly succeeds in neither

● *Carl Wikeley*

“
 Moments
 of drive are
 few and far
 between
 ”

28th OCTOBER – 3rd NOVEMBER

Highlights of the week

Friday 28th GoGo Penguin

Cambridge Junction, 7pm (doors)
 Acoustic-electronica trio GoGo Penguin, from Manchester, are pianist Chris Illingworth, bassist Nick Blacka and drummer Rob Turner. **£16 adv**
 ● Read Varsity's interview with GoGo Penguin online at: varsity.co.uk/music

Saturday 29th Myles Sanko

Cambridge Junction, 8pm (doors)
 Making some of the finest new soul music around, Myles Sanko is the rising star to watch at the moment. **£13 adv**

Sunday 30th Young Composer of the Year Competition (Festival of Ideas)

West Road Concert Hall, 2.30pm
 Hear talented young composers have their work performed by the inspirational Hermes Experiment ensemble. **FREE**

Thursday 3rd November Jennifer Johnston plays Wagner

The Old Library, Pembroke College, 8pm
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Reviews

THE TOP 5

Halloween Films



The Shining (1980)

Jack Torrance takes the job as caretaker at the ominous Overlook Hotel. When the Torrance family arrive, their son's disturbing power reveals images of the dead, past and future.



Beetlejuice (1988)

A comedy-horror-fantasy, after their death, Adam and Barbara Maitland find themselves trapped in their home and, with the help of a *Handbook for the Recently Deceased*, attempt to scare away the new inhabitants.



The Exorcist (1973)

Based on William Peter Blatty's novel and the real-life story of Roland Doe, this cult classic is a disturbing depiction of the exorcism of a little girl after she begins exhibiting strange behaviour.



Hocus Pocus (1993)

A children's classic, *Hocus Pocus* tells the story of three witches (Bette Midler, Sarah Jessica Parker and Kathy Najimy) who are resurrected on Halloween night in Salem and begin a quest for eternal youth and beauty.



Carrie (2013)

A 1976 remake, *Carrie* is about a shy girl, dominated by her religiously pious mother. Carrie is invited to the prom by her crush, Tommy. However, the night is spoiled by a cruel prank and Carrie takes horrific revenge.

Got your own **Top 5** List?
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FILM



'Never has the impact of a punch felt so muted'

An action film that doesn't actually deliver on the action, writes Pany Heliotis

Jack Reacher: Never Go Back
Dir. Edward Zwick
Opens 21st October

★★★★★

What is the correct way to review Ed Zwick's *Jack Reacher*? Do we apply the cine-literary criticism one might employ to the latest Scorsese or Apichatpong Weerasethakul film? Or do we judge the film based on its own blockbuster criterion? A measure of our primal cinematic wants: explosions, one-liners, and some neutered sexual tension. Arguably, the critic's duty is to assess it on both levels; but it's precisely the latter critique *Jack Reacher*

“

Blood is for painting walls but is never seen leaving the body

”

invites. Because while *Jack Reacher* offers a few bangs for your hard-earned buck, it certainly doesn't deliver anything close to cinematic. Let's take its locations. Sure, it's set in Washington, but so generic are the interior and exterior shots they might just as easily have set the film on Studio 1 on the Paramount lot. A move to New Orleans in the film's final act similarly anodises the city's carnival splendour.

All shots of Cruise are in hotel rooms, dark alleyways and, most notably, scaling roofs. The party is in the streets, not on the roof. A potentially interesting juxtaposition is squandered between the defiant ebullience of an American city that survived destruction ver-

▲ **Tom Cruise doesn't quite master playing Jack Reacher** (Paramount Pictures)

▼ **Viewers are reminded of Cruise's previous, more successful, films** (Paramount Pictures)

sus the surreptitious destruction of America's international reputation by errant mercenary groups in Iraq.

Oh, sorry, errant mercenary groups I hear you ask? America's sullied international reputation? These don't sound like observations fitting of a brainless Tom Cruise action 'epic'. Well, so keen is the film to ground itself within a contemporary political landscape these are ideas you'll be forced to reckon with. Pointlessly. Is *Jack Reacher: Never Go Back* slyly subverting attitudes of America's conduct abroad or excusing its interventionist strategy, blaming any misdoings on the whims of a greedy few? Who cares? You're not here for political satire in action movie packaging – this isn't a Paul Verhoeven film. You're here for the action, the bangs and booms that soundtrack your celluloid dreams. Well, you're about to be disappointed.

Suffering from *Batman Begins* syndrome, action sequences are shot mostly in the dark and in close-up. Never has the impact of a punch felt so muted. Blood is for painting walls but is never seen leaving the body, as though the characters are filled solely with air and bad dialogue. As for stand out set-pieces, you'll be hard-pressed to pick one: all blur into one. One might cynically say that *Jack Reacher: Never Go Back* is trying to catch a PG-13 rating. One would be right. But perhaps this isn't the point. Never has a film so crudely tried to pander to the star's myths. Did you like *A Few Good Men*? Well, there's a scene in a military court. Fond of *Born on the Fourth of July*? Tom – sorry – Jack shakes the hand of a paraplegic Iraq War veteran who looks uncannily like Ron Kovic. Fan of *War of the Worlds*? Jack wears a leather jacket and runs a lot. Perhaps *Jack Reacher: Never Go Back* was never about us and what we wanted. Maybe it was all about Tom, about reminding us why we love him. But it's got Tom wrong. To cast Tom as a blank urban cowboy is to negate his appeal. Tom, master of the stoical squint n' exhale of chronic constipation, loves to act. He likes to sweat for us, frown for us, laugh maniacally for us. So why hide it behind a character so bland you'd think he was carved out of rock and butter? I want the old Tom back. Top of the sofa Tom. Barely Suppressed Scientology Tom. Not this one. *Jack Reacher: Never Go Back*. I won't ●



★★★★★ = AMAZING
★★★★☆ = GREAT
★★★★ = GOOD

★★★☆☆ = OK
★★☆☆☆ = BAD
★☆☆☆☆ = ABYSMAL

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Double Review: Ken Loach's gritty masterpiece

FILM

I, Daniel Blake

OUT: 21ST OCTOBER

Loach's portrayal of 'Broken Britain'

★★★★★

Cambridge Film Festival began its exciting two weeks of screenings on Thursday evening with Ken Loach's Palme d'Or winner *I, Daniel Blake*, an incredibly moving tale of one man's struggle with a faceless bureaucratic machine intent on treating him as a 'service user' or 'scrounger' rather than as a person.

Daniel failed to score the

required 15 points in the humiliating government benefits eligibility test, and is forced to look for non-existent jobs while appealing the decision through a Kafkaesque system of unreturned calls and perpetually postponed hearing dates.

Ken Loach's brutal realism is humbling and shaming as his characters are stripped of their humanity and offered no recourse to claim it back. Loach trains his eye on what David Cameron coined 'Broken Britain', and rages against the ethos he thinks broke it.

At a place like the University of Cambridge you could be forgiven for thinking that the story told in *I, Daniel Blake* is an exceptional one. But the power of the film lies not in a narrative of how scarily things *can* go wrong, but in how scarily things *are* going wrong ●

Harry Robertson



◀ Loach debunks the stereotypes of benefits scroungers (*Sixteen Films*)



Read the full versions of both reviews online at:
varsity.co.uk/reviews

An ungratuitous emotional punch

★★★★★

With a background in stand-up comedy, Dave Johns pushes himself into different territory here, with a convincing performance as the eponymous Daniel Blake.

At the heart of the film is the friendship that develops between Daniel and Katie, a single mother newly arrived to a council flat in Newcastle after being relocated from London. Loach is at pains to debunk the stereotypes of benefits scroungers, insisting heavily on Daniel and Katie's desire to work. While this does occasionally feel slightly over-played, Loach shows a masterful ability to present his characters as victims of a system without

patronisation.

The de-humanising world of the job centre is compounded by the mechanical phone help-lines and online application forms. This world is made more chilling by a strong documentary feel. The woman playing a volunteer at a local food bank really does work there: these characters are not exceptions but exemplars.

The film packs an emotional punch, but not in a gratuitous way: the cinematography is stark and the only music is the lonely tune Daniel listens to that precedes Radio 4's shipping forecast.

Loach's political commitment is clear, and we see his criticism of the system's bewildering incongruences from Daniel's eyes only. A bleak portrayal of modern Britain but one that demands to be seen ●

Sarah Hill

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Sport



Andrew Burnett Is rugby as gay as it looks? A CURUFC player's perspective

Rugby, taken out of its sporting context, is about as homoerotic as a platonic activity can get. Yet somehow, the game where thirty muscular, (mostly) in-shape men hug each other has the reputation of being the pinnacle of masculinity. Lad culture and rugby players go hand-in-hand. One would presume the LGBT+ community was a foreign concept to these patriarchy-upholding brutes. But from my experience, that's the opposite of the truth.

I became obsessed with rugby at the same age I began to realise I was gay: 11. The two went together quite nicely – my puppy fat and inner aggression could be tamed by running into people. I became quite good at this and, by the age

of 15, I was playing for my school's first team, the peak of grammar school social recognition. I was very lucky to have this social capital to protect me when rumours emerged that I was gay.

Enough of my self-indulgent coming out story. (If you didn't know, I'm gay and play rugby #niche)

The only bit of in-game homophobia that has ever been directed at me came in one of my first XV games when the opposition hooker emerged from a scrum and called me a "f***ing f*ggot". Taken aback, and too knackered to acknowledge this, I began to jog away before the game was stopped as our prop took a slightly more proactive approach and throttled the abuser. It was this reaction which has epitomised my relationship with homophobia: in rugby, your teammates have your back.

It sounds cheesy, but while you're in a rugby team, you're in a family. The infamous socials are all part of developing this familial relationship. You have to be prepared to get beaten up for the man beside you – that requires a pretty strong bond between teammates. For the family to function, you have to embrace every individual, and trust me, there are some weird blokes. So, although scary, com-

ing out isn't all that controversial and I've only ever been greeted with interest and respect.

For one reason or another, the LGBT+ community isn't particularly visible in sport. Because of this, I get asked a lot of questions from some of the players who have had less exposure. My favourite recent one has been: "Do you watch gay porn? Because I watch straight porn, but I just look at the girl." In fairness to the man, he was very drunk and I think on sober reflection he could have answered the question himself.

This innocent ignorance does filter through to what I would refer to as 'lazy homophobia'. General "locker room banter", to quote Mr Trump, is omnipresent – like calling someone gay for not enjoying the defensive aspect of the game. Comments like this don't make someone homophobic, but they do paint an image of an unwelcoming environment, which can make it very intimidating to come out to people – particularly if those around you are older (and bigger).

I think it's a shame that flippant comments like this give the impression that rugby is not a sport for all sexualities because, while it may seem discouraging from the outside, homophobia, from my

experience, is not particularly apparent in a team.

A major reason for this is the high-profile openly gay individuals who are beginning to bring rugby's hidden diversity to light. Nigel Owens, who is widely recognised as one of the best referees in the world, is openly gay and has been vocal on how the rugby world has been hugely accommodating. He has, however, also recognised that there is always going to be that one per cent of people who are not accepting. It is the sport's responsibility to positively promote anti-homophobia, and anti-bullying in general, so that the majority of people who are accepting have a louder voice than those who protest.

So to sum up, I've been very lucky. At school and at university – I play in the front row for Cambridge University Rugby Union Football Club – the rugby team has been where I have felt I could be myself the most. I realise this may not be universal, but I do get the impression that rugby in general is a surprisingly liberal sport. I can safely say that all the rugby lads I have played with are fine with having had a gay in their midst.



▲ Andrew Burnett (centre – pictured in action for RGC High Wycombe) plays as a forward for the CURUFC

(OLI BUTLER)

The NFL's lessons on homophobia

► Continued from back page

to be selected for a high-paying professional football career. Sam was no different: for him, this was the culmination of years of hard work, training, and dedication. So when he found out he had been drafted, like many others, he shared a kiss with his partner – except his partner was a man. The kiss was broadcast on live television, and almost before the broadcast had finished, social media went into a frenzy.

"I'm sorry but that Michael Sam is no bueno [sic] for doing that on national tv," tweeted former Super Bowl Champion Derrick Ward. "Man U [sic] got little kids looking at that draft. I can't believe ESPN allowed that to happen," he added later.

His vitriolic comments were shared by others in the NFL, including Miami Dolphins safety Don Jones, who tweeted "horrible" and "OMG" after the kiss was aired. Jones was sent to "training" for his recent comments on social media, according to the Dolphins, but it is doubtful said "training" was more than

a token gesture amid such a culture of homophobia.

Opprobrium wasn't limited to the Twittersphere either, with Fox News running several pieces on whether the kiss was appropriate.

Contributor Rick Sanchez decried the moment of intimacy between partners as "a publicity fuelled act" with "an element of going for shock value" – falling into the old homophobic trope that being LGBT+ is fine, so long as 'normal people' don't have to see it.

But alongside this tide of vitriol, there was a new wave of support. Sam was awarded the Arthur Ashe Award for Courage, presented annually to individuals whose contributions transcend sports. Even President Obama stepped in with a statement, saying that, "from the playing field to the corporate boardroom, LGBT Americans prove every day that you should be judged by what you do and not by who you are".

To many Americans, the anger that Sam's kiss generated was a remnant of a bygone era. One tweet that went viral after the controversy simply stated: "How do I explain Michael Sam to my

kids? A man with TWO first names?" This echoed the sentiment that most Americans shared – that these attitudes ought to be ridiculed.

And this is the crucial difference between today's world and that which Justin Fashanu came out to in 1990.

Michael Sam's NFL career was short-lived, and he never actually played a full season, transferring to the Canadian League after a year (becoming the first openly gay player in the CFL too). However, the importance of his illumination of the NFL's entrenched homophobia cannot be overstated.

The answer to the question 'could a UK footballer do the same thing?' is, undoubtedly, yes. The tide in the UK has shifted so far in favour of the LGBT+ community in the past decade that, when a gay player does decide to come out, it will be a moment for celebration. Of course, it will not be without resistance, Twitter has a habit of encouraging the worst in people, but it is only by shining a light on trolls and making it clear that their views are no longer accepted that football can finally catch up with the rest of us.



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Fallen from grace: the demise of Novak Djovokic

Charlie Stone
Deputy Sports Editor

As the 2016 tennis season comes to an end, the world number one, Novak Djokovic, seems to be falling apart.

By the time Wimbledon came around in June, Djokovic had already won six ATP titles, including two Grand Slam tournaments. He had won the French Open for the first time to secure a career Grand Slam, and become one of the few players (the first in 47 years) to hold all Grand Slam titles at the same time.

Since then, though, the player people had been calling unbeatable – the player who seemed destined to beat Roger Federer's record of 17 Grand Slam titles – seems to have fallen off a cliff. Most recently, Djokovic was defeated yet again in the semi-finals of the Shanghai Masters the Saturday before last – leaving the Serbian with only two more chances for a title this year.

But it is not just these examples, and the fact that he failed to regain his Wimbledon and US Open titles. Instead, it is the manner of the defeats, and their earliness in tournaments, that have raised eyebrows over the past three months.

First up, there was Sam Querrey in the third round at Wimbledon. Querrey was facing a man on a 31-match Grand Slam

winning run, a man who was the red-hot favourite to regain his Wimbledon title. But after winning a gruelling first set tiebreaker, Querrey eased through the second set 6-1.

Rain intervened, and the match was postponed to the next day, with the world number 41 two sets to love up. As expected, Djokovic fought back and when he claimed the third set it looked like one of his trademark comebacks was on the way again. However, in perhaps the biggest shock of the year, Querrey won the fourth set to claim what may well be the best victory of his career. And while Djokovic had looked drained during the match – even disinterested – this was a huge scalp nonetheless.

Such is the brilliance of Djokovic that pundits labelled this performance a mere anomaly. Indeed, after winning the Rogers Cup in July, the stage looked set for the Serbian to win his first ever Olympic gold medal, with many seeing him as the favourite to usurp Andy Murray to the title.

Yet, in only the first round, Djokovic came up against an inspired Juan Martin Del Potro – an Argentinian ranked 141 in the world at the time – who defeated him 7-6 7-6. In tears, the world number one described the match as “one of the toughest losses in [his] career”.

And it was after this defeat that whis-

perings started over why Djokovic's form had dropped in the major competitions. Exhaustion, problems with focus, and unspecified personal issues were all put forward as potential reasons for the mini-collapse of such a tennis titan.

The strength of these rumours was tested at the US Open in late August, where Djokovic appeared well-rested despite reports of a knee injury that had the potential to hamper his progress. His first week in the competition was perfect: two walkovers and one win enabled Djokovic to rest his knee and achieve full fitness for the second week. And another retirement – Tsonga in the quarter-finals – meant that on reaching the final, Djokovic had spent eight hours less on the court than his opponent, Stan Wawrinka.

Again, though, it was the Serbian who looked the more tired in a four-set defeat. He suffered from blisters in the fourth set, but this was a result of Wawrinka being so commanding. Afterwards, Djokovic declared he had had issues with focus and desire over the past months. But in this match, there was no doubting his passion: the simple fact was that Wawrinka was dominant.

And then, two weeks ago, Djokovic succumbed to another defeat which did little to dispel the murmurs of his imminent demise. On the ATP tour, to lose



Is Djokovic in decline? (GAVIN ZAU)

is forgivable, but in the Grand Slams, it is far less so.

There were signs of a lack of form even when Djokovic was winning Slams early on this year: gruelling matches against Giles Simon in the Australian Open and Mikhail Kukushkin in the Davis Cup, and even a 6-0 loss in a set to Thomaz Belucci at the Italian Open. Djokovic is now, undeniably, beatable.

The most plausible theory as to why this seems to be is because he has lost his mental presence on the court. In the past, while occasionally vulnerable to frustration, the Serbian would channel his temper into improving his game.

Now, however, it seems that when he is not playing well, he allows his temper to overcome him. Players have got into his head – like Del Potro, Wawrinka, and now Roberto Bautista Agut in Shanghai – and used that to prevail over him. Ultimately, it is not that Djokovic's game has been worked out – he has just lost the mental edge he used to have.

This is, of course, something that can be worked on in time. But what Djokovic has shown is that he has a weakness. It is the unforced error, not the forced error, that makes him angry. He may yet regain the 'unbeatable' tag next year, but this half of the season will have given all his rivals confidence that no player, not even Novak Djokovic, cannot lose.

Sir Clive Woodward talks leadership at Churchill College

Paul Hyland
Chief Sports Reporter

When England rugby fans reminisce about their country's famous World Cup win in 2003, they probably think of Jonny Wilkinson's dramatic extra-time drop goal that consigned Australia to defeat on home turf. They probably do not think about computers and statistics.

But, explained Sir Clive Woodward on Tuesday, they played almost as big a role.

The Cambridgeshire-born coach, whose England team beat Australia 20-17, spoke at Churchill College on what makes an effective leader, and how IT can be used to steal a march on opponents.

“During my business career I learned the saying ‘whoever wins at IT tends to win,’ he said. “When I became England coach, one of the first things I did was to give all the players laptops. It got a lot of headlines at the time because these were big tough guys, and only about five per cent of them knew how to use a computer.”

He explained that giving his players laptops with which they could watch videos of themselves training was no mere publicity stunt, noting that having a team of players equipped with personal computers helps a coach to figure out who is a sponge and who is a rock.

Woodward is a keen advocate of the statistical approach, taking match data provided by statistics compilers Pro-



Zone, known nowadays as STATS. With the aid of data collected during matches, players could see what they were doing well and where their performances were falling short.

“We didn't win the World Cup because of IT, but we used it to leverage the potential of players like Jason Leonard, Martin Johnson and Lawrence Dallaglio,” he said. “Everyone always says that team had great leadership, but these guys only became great leaders because of the knowledge and understanding they had of their own performance.”

After the World Cup, Woodward founded his own company and he credits his time in the business world for much of his sporting success.

“After I finished playing rugby I spent 16 years in business, working for Xerox before setting up a small leasing and financing firm,” he said. “Running that company gave me the perfect skill set for becoming England rugby coach. When you work in the corporate world, success can sometimes seem like it comes easily, but we were going head-to-head with the big banks, and in that situation, you have to learn quickly because otherwise, you lose everything.”

◀ Woodward addressed the Churchill Leadership Fellows programme, which is run by the Møller Centre at Churchill College (WORLD RUGBY)

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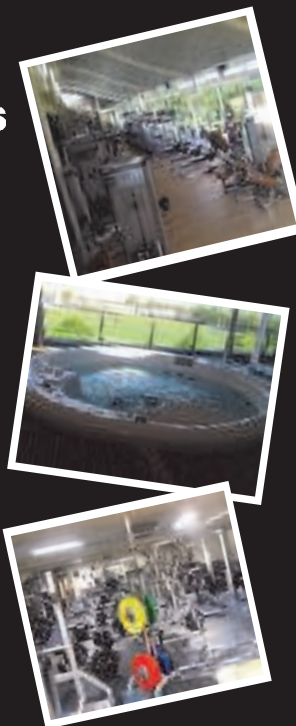
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Sport



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▲ Cambridge put in a convincing performance on Wednesday night

(DEVARSHI LODHIA)

Controversial refereeing unable to curb resolute CUBBC

Cambridge 90

Birmingham 80

Devarshi Lodhia
Deputy Sports Reporter

Cambridge University Basketball Club (CUBBC) put in a fine performance to narrowly overcome the University of Birmingham 90-80, with the scoreline not doing justice to the Light Blues' dominant display at the University Sports Centre on Wednesday night.

Following a disappointing narrow loss to a side from the University of Nottingham in their season opener last week, the game against Birmingham provided the perfect opportunity for the newly promoted Light Blues to record their first win of the season in the BUCS Midlands 1A League. And that they did in a sublime fashion, with a controversial refereeing decision in the final quarter leaving the scoreboard to flatter the away side, who

found themselves thoroughly outclassed throughout by a team who seem to have adjusted well to life in the Midlands 1A League after promotion last season.

The first quarter was a cagey, back-and-forth affair, with both teams trading scores, while also conceding a number of unnecessary fouls. CUBBC made a strong start to leave their mark on the scoreboard early courtesy of two quick-fire scores from Sam Bedell, who was particularly lethal from his free throws. But Birmingham managed to peg the Light Blues back towards the end of the quarter with some fine attacking play, leaving the home side with a narrow 14-13 lead at the end of the first period.

While the first period was a more reserved affair from both sides, the Light Blues really began to turn on the style in the second using lightning-quick passing moves to cut through the Midlands' defence. Jack Clearman was particularly impressive: nailing an inch-perfect three-pointer midway through the half and hitting a buzzer-beater to extend CUBBC's lead to 49-35, the American was playing some scintillating basketball.

Assisting Clearman in the dissection of Birmingham's defense were Croatian

Luka Skoric, Portuguese Eduardo Baptista, and Serbian Milan Krstajic, each of whom brought some European class to proceedings, stuffing the stat sheet with aplomb as the first half of the match reached its conclusion.

However, Birmingham rallied. The away side opened the third quarter on a 6-0 run to cut the Light Blues' lead to 8, but CUBBC withstood the flurry and pushed their total up to 70 points by the end of the third period as the Midlands continued to struggle defensively.

But it was not all good news for the Light Blues. Man of the Match Clearman was to be denied the ending to the night that befitted his play, as he was ejected in the fourth quarter following what the referee dubiously deemed to be his second technical foul of the night. Both teams were clearly outraged by what CUBBC coach, Tim Weil, would later describe as a "potentially game-changing" decision, with even the Birmingham coach vocally disagreeing with the officials.

But the protests fell upon deaf ears and Clearman was controversially sent back to the changing rooms with, ominously for the side, nearly the entire final quarter still to play.

The match became increasingly tense, with the Light Blues desperate to ensure that their misfortune did not cost them the match. And, after some dogged and determined defensive play, the Light Blues managed to hold on despite the loss of their talismanic American to record a 90-80 victory.

Speaking to *Varsity* after the match, CUBBC's Patrick Lundgren was in a positive mood, praising his team's performance: "We played well but we should've won by more," he said. "We were unlucky not to beat Nottingham in our last game so it was nice to get the win tonight. There's a few new players in the team and we are just getting used to that."

Having spent all of their promotion-winning campaign last season undefeated, this match provided the Light Blues with a welcome and confidence-boosting return to winning ways that should be set them in good stead for their next contest, a trip to the West Midlands to face the bottom-of-the-table side from the University of Worcester.

CUBBC: Kurdi, Abolins, Clearman, Bedell, Bernov, Lundgren, Miller, Adebayo, Skoric, Walsh, Krstatic, Baptista

Ted Mackey
The NFL shows
Britain is ready
for openly gay
footballers

Ah, the age old questions. Why are we here? Where did we come from? Is the Premier League ready for an openly gay player? As with all such questions, the debate rages on.

Former Norwich striker Chris Sutton certainly seems to think so, writing in the *Daily Mail* (known for being a bastion of tolerance) that an openly gay footballer would be "the best thing that happens to the homophobia debate". And in the very same week, FA chairman Greg Clarke advised that gay players would still suffer "significant abuse" should they choose to come out publicly.

For a sport that, at its best, can unite people across the world, football's seemingly entrenched relationship with homophobia remains one of the scourges of the modern game.

The tragedy of player Justin Fashanu's suicide in 1998 still looms over any discussion of football's extreme heteronormativity, and although the wider acceptance and legal protection of LGBT+



Michael Sam (left)

(JAMARI FOX)

individuals has improved manifold since then, the world of football seems to have lagged behind. Campaigns such as the FA's 'Kick it Out' have helped to reduce the acceptability of homophobia, and yet the year is 2016 and we have still not had an openly gay player in the BPL.

Part of the problem is that it is a great unknown: for many players, coming out might mean career suicide – or would it? Looking across the pond, to that game Americans call football, the NFL, might offer some kind of idea.

In 2013, Michael Sam became the first openly gay American football player to be drafted into the NFL. The NFL draft is a hideously complex affair, quite different from the Premier League, but the culture of toxic hyper-masculinity is one and the same. Indeed, from the very moment he was drafted – 259th pick, by the St. Louis Rams – Sam generated controversy.

The NFL draft is one of the big moments in American sporting television, when college hopefuls find out whether or not they have done enough

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