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Friday 19th October 2018  
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# VARSITY



▲ This week, King's College acknowledged for the first time a need for "substantial improvement" to its racism reporting system

(LOUIS ASHWORTH)

## Researchers seek to map racism across University

**Kiran Khanom**  
Senior News Correspondent

In a new effort to pinpoint how racism is experienced within Cambridge, sociological researchers have created a web-based platform for members of the University community to anonymously

record and report incidents of racial harassment and discrimination. The project, 'End Everyday Racism', has been created by a team at the University's Department of Sociology, and is to be officially launched next Friday.

It will compile both numerical and qualitative data of racism experienced by BME students and staff.

Dr Mónica Moreno Figueroa, one of developers of 'End Everyday Racism', said that the project hopes to "account for everyday racism in ways that... can be put as truthful and trustworthy."

Existing processes for reporting incidents of racial harassment and profiling have come under recent scrutiny across the University. On Wednesday, King's

College acknowledged that its existing processes for reporting complaints of racism to the college "need modification and substantial improvement", marking a sharp reversal from its statement in June that the College had found "no wrongdoing" of racial harassment by

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## Cambridge resists Universal Credit

**Stephanie Stacey**  
Senior News Editor

Universal Credit is "a system designed to punish the poor", said Cambridge MP Daniel Zeichner. James Youd, Cambridge Branch Secretary of Unite, said that the new social security scheme is "wreaking havoc on the most vulnerable in society." CUSU Disabled Students' officer Emrys Travis described it as "the epitome of a litany of government cuts and incompetence that actively entrench the marginalisation of the most vulnerable groups in our society."

On Wednesday, the new Universal Credit scheme was rolled-out in Cambridge, and across the country, for those newly seeking social security. According to the UK government, Universal Credit simplifies working age benefits and incentivises paid work, by replacing six other means-tested benefits and tax credits.

Research by the Resolution Foundation, an independent British think tank, suggests that 3.2m working families will lose an average of £48 per week as a result of the Universal Credit roll-out compared to the previous system.

Downing Street has said that £3bn has been set aside to ease the transitional process to ensure that those moving to Universal Credit from the old split system will not initially lose out. However, new claimants won't benefit from this protection, neither will those

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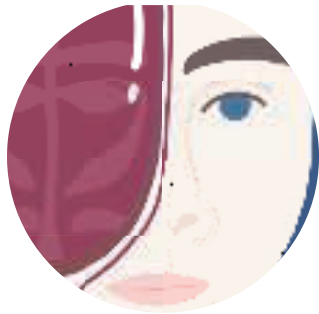


# News

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# Victoria Bateman on 'the cult of female modesty'

**Belle George** talks to the Caius economics fellow about taboos around the body and the effect these have on mental health

**D**r Victoria Bateman met me at the Caius Porters' Lodge on one of this autumn's most glorious days. Bright blue skies contrasted with the foliage of Caius' aptly named 'Tree Court'. Before heading to her office on the other side of Trinity Street, she gave me a quick tour around the inner courtyards of the college where she completed her undergraduate degree, and where she now works as an economics fellow. Walking around the courts, she points out the window of the room she lived in during her final year. It's apparent that this woman feels at home in one of Cambridge's oldest colleges.

Back in her office, Bateman tells me her experience since returning to Cambridge has been "broadly positive." "In many ways on the face of it [Caius] hasn't changed, and there's been this pull of history and of tradition, but in many ways I've actually found it to be an immensely progressive and supportive place when it comes to my own female activism."

Bateman has attracted much publicity in recent years for staging a series of naked protests in objection to Brexit, the lack of focus on women in economics, and the sexual objectification of women's bodies. She points out an ornament on her mantelpiece which she recently bought during a trip to New York. It reads

▼ **A view of Caius College from above**  
(CHRIS HUANG)



'well behaved women rarely make history' - fitting for a woman who has repeatedly chosen to violate the old maxim that 'nude is rude'.

Bateman tells me that with regards to her naked protests, "the most supportive and open-minded response has definitely been in Cambridge." At other events she has received a considerably colder response. Those who respond worst to her protests, she says, tend to be other women.

At an all-female talk about women and art, the naked Bateman was told to cover up after about fifteen minutes because "a couple of men might be coming." At this, she was indignant. "You can't talk about women and art and not bring up women's bodies! The greatest depiction of women in art throughout history has been of their bodies, and we can't just ignore that. We need to confront it and think about it."

She recalls a naked protest she staged last Easter at a "pretty high-profile" economics conference, protesting "economists neglect of women's bodies and their relevance, for example of the lack of reproductive rights, access to birth control, the rights of sex workers and the hypocrisy of how as a society we are happy with women monetising their brains, but not their bodies." Again, she experienced backlash against her protest, not from the male economists present, but the women.

"For the first few minutes it was going fine, I was chatting to people, and then



a very senior female economist came down on me like a tonne of bricks. She said [my protest] was a disservice to women in the economics profession, and I was told that unless I stopped that she would have to consider cancelling the session that I was due to speak in the next day."

This example highlights something Bateman herself spoke of in her recent lecture on feminism and economics organised by the Cambridge Society for Economic Pluralism. Women can themselves be complicit in the enforcement of social norms and practices that keep women in their place. This dynamic is still prevalent within the feminist tradition, despite the valiant efforts made by intersectional feminists to recognise and eradicate it.

Bateman recalls that when she was a "younger feminist" she was "very aware of the whole issue of men versus women." However with age and experience in protesting, she has "seen this resistance from other women, particularly when we use our bodies in a way that is not





considered as conforming to the ideals of being a feminist.”

The notion that women should fight to have their brains recognised and their bodies ignored can be observed in some strains of both feminism and economics. Bateman outlines the problem as she see it: “As young, intelligent women we are taught from a young age that if someone sees our body, if we show off too much of body, that will undermine the way that people think of us, that that will make people see us as less worthy, less valuable and that that will detract from our brain.”

Bateman calls this phenomenon “the cult of female modesty”, and says it can be “extremely dangerous”, creating “a lot of anxieties in our everyday life about this feeling that if we have a loose button on our blouse or if our skirt blows up – we have a constant worry about what you are or are not revealing about your body.”

We progress to speaking about this “cult of female modesty” in the context of Cambridge. Bateman had watched

▲ **Bateman in Caius Court last week** (BELLE GEORGE)



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Varsity’s recent video where current students talked about body image at university. “It really pulled at my heartstrings,” she says. Bateman recalls her own experiences as a student and in her twenties. “I felt increasingly disconnected from my body and therefore quite anxious and uncomfortable, and quite unhappy with myself as a person as a result.”

It’s easy for this to happen at Cambridge, she explains, where there is an assumption that “we’re here because of our brains so it’s as if we can completely ignore what is going on with our bodies.” This dismissive attitude towards the body can be seriously damaging, she says. “The whole idea of body versus brain really underlies a top university like Cambridge which might not be aware of and might not acknowledge the issues that this creates.”

Bateman insists that Cambridge’s attitude towards the body must change. “I think the very first thing Cambridge can do is to admit and face up to the fact that there is a problem – that many students do suffer with issues surround-

ing disordered eating, body image, a lack of confidence.”

However, she acknowledges that the root of the problem lies much deeper than the academic realm. “There is a wider society problem which is that, particularly in a modest country like Britain, the only time that we see other women’s bodies is in advertising or in pornography. As a result we don’t really see ‘normal’ women’s bodies. We just see them in a sexualised context.”

The solution? “The more we see the body in a non-sexualised context, the more we stop associating women’s bodies just with sex.” Bateman argues we need to challenge taboos around the body.

“Now I’m not saying that everyone should throw off their clothes and walk down the street naked – although I would be happy to join anyone who did – but I think if you look at some other countries like Scandinavia... where people are happy swimming naked, bathing in the sunshine naked, where people are used to seeing all the different body shapes

“*The whole idea of the body versus the brain really underlies a top university like Cambridge*”

and sizes around us from a young age; I think that generates a much healthier relationship between ourselves and our bodies.”

She laughs, quipping “a hundred years ago we associated women’s ankles with sex because they were only ever seen in the bedroom, and now – we can show our knees even!” Becoming serious again, she concludes that while “a lot of the problem is rooted in society”, issues of body image become a particular issue at university, where “any anxieties that we have about our bodies and about eating become magnified in an environment of pressure and stress of a kind that Cambridge has.”

Three weeks into my second year at Cambridge and this conversation with Victoria Bateman was the first time I had heard an academic speak about the body, rather than the brain. Her open manner when discussing this typically taboo subject is refreshing. This is a woman who is not only willing to stand up for what she believes in, but willing to stand up ... starkers.



## News

# 'Race has been a silent issue' Report finds few BME historians across UK universities

**Jess Ma**  
Senior News Correspondent  
**Rosie Bradbury**  
Senior News Editor

The Royal Historical Society announced its launch of a new working group focusing on the challenges facing black and minority ethnic historians in UK higher education in May last year. The Race, Ethnicity & Equality (REE) Working Group published its first report yesterday.

The report found that 96.1% of university historians are white. Fewer than 1% of university historians nationally are black. It also noted that only 11% of history students are BME – well below the average of 25% nationally for university students.

One-third of BME respondents to the RHS survey also reported witnessing “discrimination or abuse of colleagues and/or students based on race or ethnicity during their academic employment”, and 29.5% reported having experienced such discrimination themselves.

The Royal Historical Society’s report was drawn from a survey of 700 historians at British universities, as well as a year of research.

In investigating BME issues in the discipline, however, the working group found that, in many cases, “the data just [did] not exist, or if it [did] exist, [was] just not accessible”, the co-chair of the working group and a Gonville & Caius fellow Dr Sujit Sivasundaram told *Varsity*.

The working group’s report stated that “research and focus groups conducted by the RHS highlight the need for more diverse content of curriculums in schools and universities”, as well as for “historians to articulate more clearly the benefits of studying for a History degree to prospective and current BME students.”

Dr Sivasundaram, a reader in world history, expressed his opposition to the idea of BME history being treated as separate to other studies of history: “That, in a sense, is another form of narrowing of the curriculum: What we want is a really diverse range of history taught because it’s for all of us, it enriches all of us to understand history’s greatest width”.

He further elaborated on the report’s recommendations of incorporating greater diversity of topics in BME history taught in secondary schools beyond the history of slavery: “The point

we were making in the report is that we need to diversify the histories that we tell about ethnic minority communities, and slavery is really really has to carry on being taught in addition to other sorts of history.”

Discussions to reform the history curriculum have been underway in Cambridge. At present, out of 24 papers offered for Part I History at Cambridge, there are two world history papers offered, and two American history papers, compared to 6 European history papers and 10 British history papers.

Dr Sivasundaram noted that he viewed progress as still being needed in ensuring that intellectual discussions were “intersectional” of race, gender, sexuality, and class, and for a broadening of the curriculum to include more indigenous history, as well as a greater range of topics in the pre-colonial world.

“That is in keeping with the nature of what history is, really... to be open to more and more perspectives because those perspectives enrich our interpretation of the past”, he commented.

“[Race] has been a silent issue for too long. And we just need to acknowledge it, and institutionally, set in place mechanisms to do so.”

“It enriches all of us to understand history’s greatest width”



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In January, Dr Sadiya Qureshi, a senior lecturer in modern history at the University of Birmingham and member of the working group wrote: "Over two decades, I have only ever met two female professors of colour working as historians within Britain and a handful of men of colour."

The report identified several key factors contributing to the underrepresentation of BME academics in history departments across the UK:

- The narrow scope of the school and university curriculum if "programmes of study and research grounded uncritically in White histories and Eurocentric approaches to the past"

- Stereotyping of BME students' and researchers' interests

- Dismissive comments about BME historians' language competence

- Funding constraints on research conducted outside the UK and a pervasive unwillingness to grapple with difficult histories

Its recommendations for active measures to improve ethnic and racial diversity aim to reverse what Dr Sivasundaram pinpointed as some of the structural impediments to greater BME representation: "The whiteness of the discipline and the classroom increases as we go further and further down the track, and what that generates in turn is the need to defend oneself, the need to find one's voice, in an increasingly white space as time passes by."

◀ Dr Sivasundaram is a Gonville & Caius fellow (ROSIE BRADBURY)

“The whiteness of the discipline... increases as we go further and further down the track”

▶ Cambridge's Faculty of History is currently considering a range of reforms to its curriculum (ROSIE BRADBURY)



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Applications are now open and will close November 23, 2018
- > Full Time Analysts 2019  
Strategic Advisory & Restructuring (London)  
Applications are now open and will close October 26, 2018
- > Spring Insight Program 2019  
Strategic Advisory & Restructuring (London)  
Applications are now open and will close January 4, 2019

We review applications on a rolling basis, so early submission is strongly encouraged.

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## News

# Investigation reveals share of Cambridge undergrads on loans

**Jack Conway**  
Investigations Editor

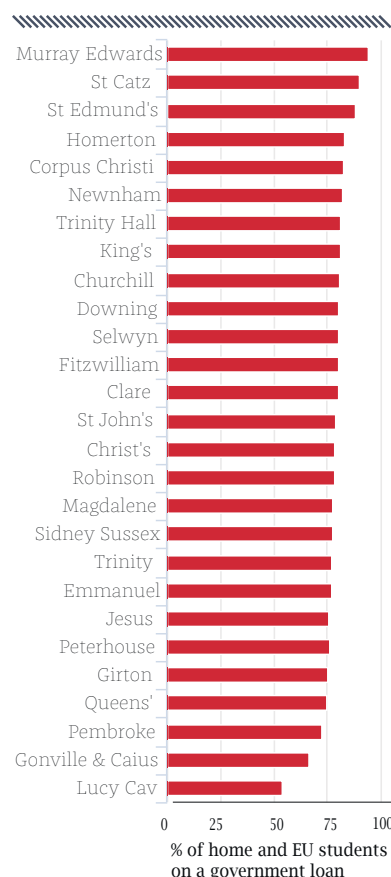
A *Varsity* investigation has revealed the share of undergraduates at each college who receive government loans and Cambridge bursaries to cover their tuition fees and living costs.

According to the most recent data from the Student Loans Company, 93.4% of all English-domiciled university students received student loans, which is greater than the 82.9% of home students on a loan at Cambridge.

This information, which offers another way to reflect upon the University's track record in attracting students from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds, is set against the background of the University's plans to raise additional £500 million for student financial support.

Across all 27 undergraduate colleges that provided the information asked for in *Varsity*'s Freedom of Information Request, 78.6% of UK and EU undergraduates received a loan from the UK government to cover their tuition fees in the 2017-18 academic year. Only residents of the UK and the EU are eligible for such loans, and although five colleges did not distinguish between the fee statuses of their students, 82.9% of UK-domiciled students and 60.2% of EU students took out loans at colleges that made the distinction.

This information shows that the share of Cambridge students at each college who are able to forego government assistance in paying their tuition fees is above the national average. Many students who are not on a government loan may pay their tuition fees using family resources, although a number of students seek assistance from other sources.



► Murray Edwards has the highest percentage of its students on a government tuition fee loan of any college (VIVIANNE HOPLEY-JONES)

78.6%

The percentage of UK and EU students who receive a tuition fee loan from the government



Another measure of socioeconomic diversity is the share of students on the Cambridge Bursary, which is a grant that the University gives to students with household incomes of under £42,620. The grant, usually £3,500, is also only eligible to residents of the UK and the EU.

Fewer colleges were able to provide data on the Cambridge Bursary, but a large majority of the responses showed between 20% and 30% of UK and EU undergraduates at each college receiving a Cambridge Bursary.

This means that a relatively low share of the University's UK and EU students come from households with incomes of under £42,620, which is still substantially higher than the UK median disposable household income of £27,300.

In response to *Varsity*'s request for comment, Dr Sam Lucy, the Director of Admissions for the Cambridge Colleges, said: "The University and colleges work hard to ensure that talented students from across the UK can come here to study, regardless of background."

She also pointed out that the University passes the benchmark set by the government for recruitment from areas with the lowest participation in higher education.

"The University invests more than £5m each year in outreach activities, working with schools in those under-represented areas."

The University and the Colleges provide a number of measures to support those in financial need, including support for low income students through a range of bursaries," she added. She also noted that not everyone who is eligible for a bursary accepts one, so the number of eligible, meaning more students may be eligible than the 2,663 who received it last year.

**Lucy Cavendish defies loan and bursary trends**

Though many colleges have similar shares of students on government loans and Cambridge Bursaries, there is some variation between them.

Murray Edwards College has the highest share of students on a government loan, with 94.4% of UK and EU students receiving one. It is followed by St Catharine's, with 90.2%, and St Edmund's, with 88.3%.

On the other end of the scale, only 53.9% of UK and EU Lucy Cavendish students are on a government loan. It is followed by Gonville & Caius with 66.7% and Pembroke with 72.8%.

In response to a request for comment, a spokesperson for Lucy Cavendish pointed out that a number of factors, including completion of prior study or receipt of funding from other sources, mean that not all UK and EU students are eligible for government support. As a mature college with many international students, Lucy Cavendish is disproportionately impacted by these factors. When taking into account only those who are eligible, the figure for Lucy Cavendish is 74.3%.

There is a weak positive correlation between the share of students receiving government loans and the share who have incomes low enough to receive Cambridge Bursaries, though Lucy Cavendish defies this trend. It has the highest share of eligible students receiving a Cambridge Bursary – 50%. Following it is St Edmund's, with 33.3%, and Homerton, with 31.6%.

Gonville & Caius is the college with the smallest share of eligible students on a Cambridge Bursary of the colleges that provided this information – only 15.6%, which is 34.4 percentage points

lower than Lucy Cavendish – followed by Clare and Pembroke, with 19.2% and 21.7% respectively.

Clare responded to its position by commenting that "some fluctuation in bursary numbers is to be expected, but we continue to examine all the data carefully as part of our ongoing and sustained commitment to access and outreach."

Pembroke's Admissions Tutor, Dr Caroline Burt, also responded, saying that "at Pembroke we are very proud of our outreach work, and we are fully committed to improving access to Cambridge for the most able and committed students."

Dr Burt went on to point out Pembroke's significant investment in outreach and its success in admitting more students from state schools and low-income areas, with the college above the University average by both measures. "There is always more to be done and we are never complacent in our approach, but we are proud of our recent record in recruiting bright young people from a diverse range of backgrounds," she said.

**A backdrop of growing access efforts**

Two weeks ago, Vice-chancellor Stephen Toope announced a campaign to raise £500 million over the next six years to expand postgraduate studentships and bolster the Cambridge Bursary Scheme.

The University launched a Colleges Bursaries Taskforce last year, which aims to standardise and integrate additional college-level financial support into an enhanced University-wide system.

The aim is to give a boost to students in the "squeezed middle" – those with family incomes too high to qualify for University funding but who receive inadequate funding from the government and their families.

*Gonville & Caius is the college with the smallest share of eligible students on a Cambridge Bursary of the colleges that provided this information – only 15.6%*



# UCU ballot closes on possibility of further staff strikes

**Sarah Orsborne**  
Senior News Correspondent

Industrial action may once again hit the University as final votes are cast in a strike ballot concerning higher education (HE) pay. The ballot, set by the University and College Union (UCU), will close this Friday, 19th October.

UCU members can vote “yes” or “no” to strike action, called in response to declining values of pay, pay inequality, workforce casualization and increasing workload in the HE sector.

Earlier this year, 65% of voting UCU members indicated that they would be willing to strike over these issues, which were highlighted during the recent pensions strikes, as staff protested what they considered to be an increasingly marketised higher education system.

The UCU is the biggest trade union in the UK for HE staff and therefore strike action would impact 147 universities, including Cambridge.

Earlier this year, the Universities and Colleges’ Employers Association (UCEA) made a final pay-rise offer of 2%. The offer was subsequently rejected by the UCU on the grounds that the “below-inflation pay offer does nothing to address years of decline in the value of higher education pay”.



▲ Lent term saw 14 days of escalating strike action (LOUIS ASHWORTH)

The UCU claims the proposed 2% pay rise falls short of the 3.5% inflation rate and that HE pay has decreased by 21% in comparison to RPI (retail price index) increases since 2009. They have further criticised disproportionate increases in the salaries of university vice-chancellors. Cambridge’s vice-chancellor, Stephen Toope, was last year forced to defend his £365,000 salary.

An open letter to Toope, published this month by the UCU and UNISON Cambridge branches, urged the vice-chancellor to support “action to address the spread of precarious contracts and pay inequality.” They referenced an email sent by Toope to University staff in which he expressed the University’s commitment to “a higher uplift in basic pay than 2%”, regardless of national HE pay changes.

The open letter emphasised that Toope’s “commendable words” should be “backed by action”.

Unions are legally required to demonstrate at least 50% voting turnouts before industrial action can be called, in accordance with the 2016 Trade Union Act, so strike action will only proceed if more than half of UCU members vote in the ballot, irrespective of the ballot’s outcome.

The legal firm, Pinsent Mason, was criticised by the UCU this month for

suggesting universities advise their employees to abstain or vote against strike action in order to “influence the outcome of the ballot at their centre while they still can.”

The UCU condemned this advice as a “dangerous campaign”, adding, “education institutions should be defending democratic values not seeking to discourage their own staff from participating in a democratic vote.”

47.7%

**The turnout in the UCU’s last ballot, which requires 50% to call strikes**

Strike action was supported by 65% of UCU consultation respondents with a 47.7% turnout in June 2018.

In the Cambridge UCU consultation, support was even higher; over 90% of members rejected the UCEA’s offer and 76% supported strike action, while turnout at the Cambridge branch well exceeded 50%.

Unprecedented industrial action struck the University of Cambridge last year, with over 1,000 staff members joining picket lines over pension disputes. The very close results of the UCU’s last ballot suggest that strike action is a very real possibility this time around.

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## News

# ‘Designed to punish the poor’ Universal Credit rollout faces sharp criticism

► Continued from front page

whose circumstances change, or who come off and then back onto benefits.

Cambridge Unite Community, Cambridge Labour, the People’s Assembly and others, including students, staged a demonstration outside the Cambridge Job Centre to coincide with the rollout of Universal Credit on Wednesday. Around 35 people gathered to condemn the new social security scheme, holding up printed letters spelling out “Scrap Universal Credit”.

Speaking at the protest outside the job centre on Wednesday, Youd, one of the protest’s organisers, said: “this job centre is going to cause misery, as it has done for the past 8 years.”

Youd elaborated that “the sick, the disabled, those in low pay and the out of work” will be unfairly disadvantaged by the new system, and emphasised his belief in a “compassionate welfare state” that offers “dignity” to “our vulnerable fellow citizens.” Youd noted specifically that Cambridge’s high rents and overstretched support services mean that Universal Credit will “needlessly lead to rent arrears, debt and homelessness.”

Cambridge MP Daniel Zeichner told Varsity that he has opposed the Conservative government’s Universal Credit plans “from the start”.

He described Universal Credit as “a system designed to punish the poor, not to provide a civilised standard of living for everyone that a rich country like ours can most certainly afford.”

He also explained that, in his view, a simplified system cannot “capture the complexities of the many different cir-

“  
This city  
is already  
one of two  
halves  
”

“  
This job  
centre  
is going  
to cause  
misery  
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cumstances faced by different people in very different situations across the country.”

Asked about the impact anticipated in Cambridge, Zeichner said: “As many of us are aware, this city is already one of two halves. With high housing and living costs, it is very easy for families to slip into a spiral of poverty.” He warned that there will be increasing use of foodbanks, and increasing rent difficulties, making it harder for those on benefits to access rental properties.

Addressing gathered protesters on Wednesday, CUSU Disabled Students’ officer Emrys Travis highlighted an oft-cited ‘town versus gown’ divide in the city: “We, the students of Cambridge... have been failing to organise with people in the town.”

They explained that issues such as Universal Credit “affect all of us”, and that students “don’t do well enough in making those links” with the local community.

They added, “I just wanted to say a quick solidarity from the students of Cambridge University, from CUSU, and

we are going to work on building those links in the future.”

Speaking to Varsity, they described Universal Credit as, “the epitome of a litany of government cuts and incompetence that actively entrench the marginalisation of the most vulnerable groups in our society.

“[It] puts disabled students in particular in an impossible bind”. They elaborated that students already receiving certain benefits such as the Disability Living Allowance will now need to undergo a work capability assessment, rather than simply providing medical evidence as before, in order to access the money they need.

Co-Chairs of Cambridge Universities Labour Club (CULC), Katie Clark and Ali Hyde, slammed Universal Credit as “another Tory policy of which the negative impact will be felt most by the most vulnerable in society.”

They said that poverty in Cambridge is “very well hidden” from both students and tourists who “rarely have to leave the grandeur of the centre”, but noted that even in the centre, in certain col-

leges that may not yet pay the living wage, “this roll out of universal credit will affect college staff; cleaners, catering staff and contracted workers on low earnings.” CULC will further seek to “highlight the fact that in areas where Universal Credit has already been rolled out, Food Bank use has proliferated”.

Gabriel Barton-Singer, Chair of the Cambridge University Liberal Association (CULA) was less firm in his criticism, though described the Universal Credit scheme as a “good idea in theory” but a “disaster in practice”, placing blame on “massive underfunding.”

He described the Universal Credit “shambles” as “the latest policy cock-up produced by a government that is obsessed only with Brexit and can’t get on with the day job.”

The local Cambridge Conservatives branch did not respond to Varsity’s request for comment.

A march calling for Universal Credit to be scrapped is planned for Saturday, from Great St Mary’s Church to Henry Giles House, the location of the city’s job centre.

## What is Universal Credit?

Universal Credit is a single system to replace six benefits: Child Tax Credit, Working Tax Credit, Jobseeker’s Allowance, Income Support, Employment Support Allowance and Housing Benefit.

It was launched in 2013 by conservative Iain Duncan Smith, and started being rolled out to job cen-

tres across the country in 2016, at a rate of around 50 per month.

Universal Credit will be offered in every Jobcentre for new claimants by December 2018, and the remaining 3.95million existing benefit claimants will then be ‘migrated’ to the new social security scheme from July 2019. After many delays since its first launch, it is

expected that the rollout of Universal Credit will not be completed till March 2023.

It has been criticised for leaving families and claimants worse off, and for large delays. Unlike the previous system, Universal Credit is paid to just one person per household rather than to individuals.



▲ Protesters gathered outside the Cambridge job centre on Wednesday calling for Universal Credit to be scrapped (EVELINA GUMILEVA)

## Zero Carbon disrupts Shell recruitment event

Amy Batley  
Senior News Correspondent

Pro-divestment student activist group Cambridge Zero Carbon interrupted a ‘Shell Breakfast’ networking event on Thursday morning, demanding that the University “cut ties with Shell”.

Four members of Cambridge Zero Carbon Society unfolded a banner reading ‘Shell: recruiting to create climate killers’, before reciting statistics about the climate and Shell’s energy sources.

The breakfast, which was organised by Cambridge University Women in Banking and Finance Society, was held in the Pitt Building, the University’s conference centre on Trumpington Street. The event was advertised as an opportunity to “meet senior professionals from the finance and trading department of Shell”, as Shell Trading and Sales sought to attract Cambridge students for internships and graduate schemes.

Speaking to Varsity, a spokesperson from Cambridge Zero Carbon said “this University should no longer be a place

they [Shell] can use to legitimise fossil fuels and recruit more oil executives”. Alongside Thursday’s disruption, the group promised that they “will continue to fight this year to restructure the investment office” and bring about “a fully-divested University with no place for Shell”.

Thursday’s interruption is the latest in a series of action by activists and academics to push the University to end its relationship with fossil fuel companies, particularly leading up to University Council’s decision in June not to divest the University’s £6.3bn endowment from fossil fuels.

University Council’s landmark decision on divestment, passed in an extraordinary meeting of Council last month, decided against any commitment to full (or partial) divestment, and rejected recommendations from its divestment working group that it eliminate all remaining indirect investments from tar sands and thermal coal, the most pollutive industries in the sector.

It also decided against adopting the recommendation by its divestment



working group that it allocate 10% of its endowment specifically into Environmental Social and Governance (ESG) Funds, opting instead to hire an ‘ESG officer’ to be employed in the Investment Office. Over the summer, Zero Carbon also called for a formal review of the Council decision.

Zero Carbon’s past action has in-

▲ The Pitt Building is a conference centre in central Cambridge (ANDREAS PRAEFCKE)

cluded occupying Greenwich House, the University building which houses its finance offices, for seven days. Their forceful eviction from the site received criticism from the CUSU sabbatical team, 12 student groups and was protested at a rally attended by over 100 students.

Women in Banking and Finance did not respond to a request for comment.



# News



## WHEN TIME STOPS Corpus Clock 'rests' during maintenance

The Corpus Chronophage Clock has been stopped and covered after two stoppage incidents were reported last weekend, and Huxley Bertam Engineering Limited, who constructed the clock in collaboration with designer Dr. John C. Taylor OBE, is now conducting the necessary maintenance. The glass protecting the iconic clock is now covered, and bears a sign saying: "Sorry for any disappointment - the Chronophage is resting". Corpus Christi College reassured Varsity that "the Chronophage will be devouring time again soon."

## WILLIAMS IS COMING Maisie Williams to speak at St John's

Game of Thrones star Maisie Williams will be coming to St John's College to take part in a free 'In Conversation' event in November. She will be speaking about her life and career. Maisie Williams is famous for playing Arya Stark, a feisty assassin, in popular TV series Game of Thrones. She has recently launched a social network app for young artists called Daisie, which aims to connect artists across fields and provide a platform for collaboration and sharing.

## FAIRY GODMOTHER Free washing-up liquid for students

P&G is giving out a limited supply of Fairy washing-up liquid to every undergraduate college in Cambridge in a corporate outreach act. The liquid has been available since Monday 15th October in porter's lodges and JCRs. Procter & Gamble Company (P&G), an American multi-national consumer goods corporation, are offering the popular washing-up product, priced at just over £1 in Sainsbury's, in an attempt to increase awareness. Students will likely be grateful for the opportunity to passive-aggressively gift the soap to their kitchen-mates.

## BLACK HOLES OF MONEY Hawking is bookies' favourite for £50

The Bank of England has announced this week that the public will be given a chance to nominate figures to be put on the new polymer 50 pound note. Book-makers Paddy Power have Hawking as odds on favourite at 9/11, while several news polls show similar estimates. The Professor has come out on top with 42% of the votes in a recent Lad Bible poll and came second to Princess Diana in a Sky News poll, though the official nomination process has yet to begin.

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## News

# New anonymous reporting platform to record incidents of racial bias

► Continued from front page

porters toward Churchill academic Dr Priyamvada Gopal.

The College said that will work with students and minority officers to develop “clear and simpler means of reporting incidents” of racial profiling, four months after Dr Gopal began a boycott of supervising King’s students, following what she counted as 13 incidents of being racially profiled by college porters and gatekeepers during her 17-year tenure at the University.

Dr Figueroa is one of the University’s Race Equality Champions and has conducted research into the lived experience of race and racism. Although the University does technically have a process for the anonymous reporting of incidents of harassment, the Office of Student Conduct, Complaints and Appeals (OSCCA), Dr Figueroa noticed that it was mainly used to report incidents on sexual assault and misconduct, and wanted a platform that could be used to focus on reporting racism.

‘End Everyday Racism’ is a collaboration with The Whistle, a research initiative led by Dr Ella McPherson which has developed an automated tool designed to verify digital evidence. ‘End Everyday Racism’ will use similar technology to collect and analyse data on incidents of racism as The Whistle, an app in its pilot stage which facilitates the reporting and verification of human rights violations around the world.

Dr McPherson identifies a clear common purpose between the two projects: “The big data problem is that there are potentially tons of stuff out there if people were to look on Twitter, Facebook and social media platforms elsewhere – but how do you get that together and do something with it?”

“There are ways to put your voice out there – it’s being heard and having whatever you’re saying being taken up and done something with to make a change – that’s the problem.”

Devika Ranjan, the third member of the team, who has worked on The Whistle as well as with the Decolonise Sociology working group, told *Varsity*: “I was shocked by the amount of racism embedded in the institution. Not only racist experiences I had myself, but also things I would hear about from the people around me. And a lot of this, we talked about amongst friends and we were outraged – and then it got no further.”

“What’s exciting for me here – these experiences that we have get to be part of this larger collective.”

Last week, Clare second-year Oliver Moodie spoke out about his experience being verbally attacked with racial abuse at a Cambridge nightclub. Commenting on Moodie’s experience, CUSU BME Campaign said that many BME students have remained silent on their experiences of racial abuse, where “the way racist harassment and abuse is always underplayed or reactions to it [are seen] as ‘overreactions’ has meant that many BME students are hesitant to escalate matters”.

The team hopes that the platform can

► Devika Ranjan is a member of the End Everyday Racism team (EMILY BRAILS福德)

“We talked about [it] amongst friends and we were outraged – and then it got no further”

“[I hope] it will help fuel a bigger conversation about racism in Cambridge”



be used to record trends in incidents of racism that would not usually be recorded for fear of being too minor or difficult to capture. They have said that they encourage “any and all” incidents of racism: Individual experiences in classrooms, colleges and on the street, but also less concrete experiences, including racism within University structures.

Because the project is intended for advocacy rather than to pursue specific cases, the reporting tool will be anonymous. Dr McPherson argued that anonymity would not compromise the app’s legitimacy, as those using the platform will be required to input their University of Cambridge email, noting that the emails would not be recorded or viewed by those reading reports.

The team plans to encourage anyone who has witnessed acts of racism or who wish to report on behalf of a friend to use the platform, and to seek out reports

► Dr Figueroa is one of the platform’s developers (IMKE VAN HEERDEN)

from both University staff and students. It also hopes that the data gathered can be used to inform antiracist advocacy in the University: whilst the project is to an extent a research project, Dr Figueroa emphasised that it was also an “antiracist intervention”.

A spokesperson for the University said that they “welcome the creation of the ‘End Everyday Racism’ platform”. They added that Cambridge has “recently updated the wording of the anonymous reporting tool to make clear to everyone that this tool can be used for the anonymous reporting of any type of harassment or discrimination, including relating to race.”

Rashidat Animashaun, Facilitator for FLY, a network and forum for women and non-binary people of colour at Cambridge, said that she hopes the project will be “a wake-up call that Cambridge and the people within the institutions

are not as progressive as they believe themselves to be.”

FLY were consulted about the questions asked on the web platform, as well as its layout and general accessibility.

Christine Pungong, CUSU and GU Welfare & Rights Officer and a student representative on the Race Equality Communications Working Group, commented that the platform “has an important social function in that it provides a sense of relief to BME staff and students who have something happen to them that they feel is ‘too small’ (not my opinion) to formally report or tell anyone about. My main hopes for the project are that it will help fuel a bigger conversation about racism in Cambridge, on both a micro and macro level, and that this visibility will help the University think about the role that racism and unconscious bias plays.”

The Cambridge branch of the University and College Union (UCU) and the Black Cantabs Research Society have also supported the program’s launch. Cambridge UCU Secretary Dr Waseem Yaqoob praised ‘End Everyday Racism’, saying: “The platform will be a first in providing an accessible way for BME staff and students to report racist incidents in a confidential manner”, where “currently many incidents and micro-aggressions go unrecorded, because the burden of pursuing a formal complaint through University procedures rarely seems worth it”. “[It] will address the lack of visibility of racist incidents”, he added.

The team will publish a report on the data collected within two to four weeks, and hope to create a map of Cambridge where incidents have been reported. Dr Figueroa suggested that ‘End Everyday Racism’ could be introduced at universities across the UK.





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# Features

## To all the orgasms I never had

**Emily Christiansen**  
writes a letter to  
the thing that's  
been missing from  
her life

I don't really know you. I know you only by reputation — you are the bringer of screams and whimpers, the embodiment of female pleasure. A source of empowerment, a reliever of stress. A myth, according to some, the majority of whom just never bothered to find you.

You definitely don't know me, so let me introduce myself. I enjoy sex. A lot. To me, sex can be intimate, it can be casual, it can be love, or it can mean absolutely nothing. I talk about sex openly, which some men find terrifying. I have a lot of sex. What I've never had, however, is you — at least not in the context of someone else being around.

I've heard about you, I've pretended to know you when male entitlement and fragile masculinity have been at their peak. My closest friends and worst enemies are well-acquainted with you, or at least claim to be, but I'm not even sure what you look or sound like.

I think of you like I think of the tooth fairy or Father Christmas: benevolent, non-existent, present only for those who deserve or who believe. Maybe the lack of importance I often ascribe to the act of sex means I don't deserve you. Maybe I just don't believe any man is capable of bringing me that amount of pleasure.

I know your brother very well. The male orgasm is like the postman. Or an alarm clock. I know he will be there (almost) everyday without fail.

But you, the female orgasm, are so much more elusive. You are a chameleon of sorts, and in the few blurry glimpses I've had of you, you've always looked different

### To the one I had to fake

This should really read 'ones.' I've faked knowing you more times than I've faked knowing anything about British politics. I immediately regret it when I see the smug faces of my partners, reveling in the fact they've finally 'cracked the code.' I've even had men complain about how easily they've succeeded, with assertions that 'I prefer when it takes longer, that was so quick.' I roll

my eyes into the back of my head, and not for the good reason — never for the good reason.

These days I'm less bothered with faking it. When I finally started being honest about not knowing you, men have tended to relish this fact, often assuming I'd just been with the 'wrong' lover. Suddenly I became an exciting challenge.

These are the men who give up after spending less than a few minutes prodding inside me, as if they were searching for a set of car keys in a deep bag. These are the men who sulk when they fail, leaving me having to stroke their fragile egos, with a lot more effort than they put in to stroking me. No wonder we fake it when the response to our honesty is being made to feel guilty. It's just so much easier to pretend. And clearly so easy to be convincing, despite the fact that I'm a terrible actor and avoid opening birthday presents in front of people such that they won't see the disinterest in my eyes.

### To the one from the mansplaining 'feminist'

It's really no mystery why we never met. He even dared to tell me that we actually had: 'maybe you are having an orgasm but you just aren't noticing it,' before trying to convince me that he'd often encountered girls with that 'problem.' He told me to 'do my research.' 'Google it,' he said. 'Try harder,' he said. As if I don't already know this body inside and out. As if the only time I should bother being in tune with it is for another's satisfaction or for the sake of their pride.

Maybe that's why we've never met. No one has ever truly wanted to introduce you to me for anything other than to further their own gain.

As a result, our interactions have been superficial and forgettable, like someone you meet in passing among a crowd of strangers without your contacts lenses in and with both ears cut off.

“No one has ever truly wanted to introduce you to me for anything other than their own gain”



▲ Illustration by  
Lisha Zhong for  
Varsity

### To the one from the guy who wouldn't stop talking

I was so close. So close to seeing you. Unfortunately, there was a lot of background nattering from your source and not even the dirty kind, just general comments on what he'd done that day. And poof — just like my interest in what he ate on his piece of toast that morning, you were gone.

### To the one from my first one night stand,

It really shouldn't have come as a shock not to see you here. You certainly set the tone for future casual encounters, teaching me that nights like these are rarely about my pleasure, and always about his. Maybe because he knew he wouldn't see me again, he wasn't bothered about impressing me. Maybe it's me being a high-achiever, but I don't follow that logic - even if it's just one night, I always perform at my best.

### To the one from the two-year long relationship

You must be the biggest disappointment of them all. There's really no excuse for you not coming (or rather, for me not coming). It's easy to try and excuse how the one-night stands and the men I didn't really like failed to get me there. But in a trusting and intimate relationship of love, there's no explaining it. As the relationship gradually lost that love and intimacy, so my glimpses of you became blurrier, until you no longer made any kind of appearance, and nor did he.

### To the orgasm he never had

You were the alarm clock that failed to go off. I assumed, having become used to the sulky response men have given when I don't climax, that I'd be a lot more understanding when the roles were reversed. I was wrong. For you to not show up surprised me, and I couldn't help but feel slightly hurt, my ego bruised. For me, and a lot of heterosexual women, sex is defined by the male orgasm. That is how it ends, the final release which marks the crossing of the finishing line. Without it, there is a sense of incompleteness that is so much less tangible in the absence of the female orgasm.

You taught me the truth behind why I had been faking it, because sex is validation and an orgasm is the final seal of approval. And ultimately, people really just want to please, sometimes more than they want to be pleased themselves.



# Teetotal truths

**Felix Peckham**  
reflects on life at  
Cambridge as a  
non drinker

I didn't choose to go teetotal and stop drinking alcohol; it was an imperative for my own mental health. I haven't consumed alcohol since January – minus the occasional, and much regretted blip – and it's been a harsh adjustment.

Simultaneously turning 21 and shunning my age bracket's social lubricant of choice has been difficult to do. I always enjoyed getting drunk and being able to interact with other people without the burden of insecurity or acute self-awareness. It was a welcome escape from the everyday toil of being me.

Transitioning to somebody who does not drink – at the University of Cambridge at least – feels like trying to walk in the opposite direction to everybody else. This isn't to say that friends haven't been accepting and supportive of my decision not to drink. However, there is still a chasm of misunderstanding and

“Starting not to drink felt like trying to walk in the opposite direction to everybody else”

a lack of protocol between friends consuming alcohol around me, and the level of comfort I actually experience during these interactions. Recently, while with a friend in Novi, a group of students from ARU who were sharing our table with us, took to taunting me for not drinking and trying to pressure me into drinking shots.

This challenge has yielded some surprising results and observations. First and foremost, I've realised how weird alcohol and the behaviour that it enables is. As a teetotaler, you get an entirely new perspective on the behaviour that people exhibit when they're drunk, and it's cringingly embarrassing. You also become quite acutely aware how dependent people are on alcohol for all of the reasons I've listed above – as an escape from anxiety – which is fundamentally unhealthy.

Worse still, I've been able to approach and dissect my own behaviour as a drunk. For the most part this is tinged with nostalgia and resentment that I can no longer drink and partake in the fun with which it was once synonymous. There are also some far less memorable experiences of the sort of obnoxious behaviour that most drunks exhibit. These memories aren't missed.

Perhaps most importantly, and, indeed, most harmful for the life of the teetotaler, is the dawning realisation of the role that alcohol plays in Cambridge. It's just everywhere. Despite the nominal inclusivity that so much of Cambridge preaches, and claims to abide by, these acceptances and tolerations haven't really extended to creating an open and comfortable space for those who don't drink.

Particularly glaring and frustrating has been seeing societies who choose not only to host socials or squashes in pubs, but then articulate, in the event description, the necessity and appeal of alcohol. This wouldn't phase most people, but for those who do not drink, it is foreboding to be encountered with this type of attitude.

It's frustrating how prevalent this attitude and ignorance is across student activity. For non-drinkers, the extent to which the social spectrum at Cambridge is drowned in alcohol-associated events means that a considerable portion of life at Cambridge is inaccessible. The extent of feeling ostracised, excluded and unwelcome in alcohol-environments depends on the individual. For me, it's fairly extensive, including pubs, clubbing and May Balls.



▲ Illustration by Lisha Zhong for Varsity

## Commercial Feature

### All weather skating glides into Cambridge!

17 November 2018 - 6 January 2019

Tickets are now on sale for The North Pole Cambridge Festival which returns to Parker's Piece Park for the winter season, and this year it's better than ever.

Open weekdays from 12pm and from 11am on weekends, skaters can now glide across the glistening ice whatever the weather, with a new transparent roof.

Off the rink, there are even more places to chill out. The cosy Alpine Cabin Bar serves up a tempting range of seasonal food and drink, from a warming cup of Glühwein to German sweet treats to add to the authentic Christmas experience.

The event is also home to a funfair and entertainment to keep the whole family occupied and the relaxed ambience is the ideal setting for meeting up with friends and family, hosting a unique office party or even enjoying a romantic date under the stars.

The North Pole Cambridge is working in partnership with Heart and Cambridge BID to kickstart the yuletide season with this unmissable winter wonderland event. Now's the time to rediscover your festive cheer at Cambridge's most enchanting attraction yet.

Book your tickets to avoid disappointment at  
[www.thenorthpolecambridge.co.uk](http://www.thenorthpolecambridge.co.uk).



#### Ice Rink Opening Times

Monday - Friday: 12pm - 8pm (last skate) - Closes at 9pm

Saturday & Sunday: 11am - 8pm (last skate) - Closes at 9pm

Christmas Day - Closed

From Monday 17th December, ice rink opens at 11am every day



## Features

# Rethinking the canon: literary underdogs

Columnist

**Jonathan Chan**  
discusses the  
limitations of the  
English tripos  
with Nusrath  
Tapadar

It is not difficult to spot Nusrath Tapadar at an English lecture on any given day. She is one of two students in her cohort who have chosen to wear a hijab as an outward sign of her Muslim faith. Having grown up in East London surrounded by South Asian British students, having also received a prior education in an Islamic school, perhaps it's inevitable that she found the English Tripos to be insular.

For Nusrath, the absence of people of Bengali origin in the literature she's studied has been difficult to digest. Though Bengalis constitute one of the biggest ethnic groups in the world, very few texts in English reflect their lived experiences with nuance. "It often feels like the university believes that brown writers only exist in the postcolonial section," argues Nusrath. She contends that it's statistically unlikely that so few stories would exist about such a humungous ethnic group, but this absence has made it difficult for her to relate to the Tripos.

The faculty's overwhelming focus on white writers, Nusrath believes, stems from the assumption that accepting works by the underdogs of literature will detract from the 'existing greats'. The underdogs in question pertain to voices not commonly championed within the confines of the academy – writers of minority ethnicity, religious affiliation, or less privileged socioeconomic status. "This is not really about distancing one writer or the other, but providing equal opportunity for different writers to be read," she posits. Expanding the range of prescribed texts on the curriculum will enrich an understanding of what great literature is and allow students and faculty to draw on a broader range of intellectual traditions.

The rich tapestry of Islamic thought, history, and theology is rarely reflected in the texts on the Tripos. Across various texts on the English curriculum, particularly in medieval literature, Muslims are often portrayed in a hostile manner, either as ornate and aristocratic sultans or combative, bloodthirsty 'savages'. When tackling an essay about Geoffrey Chaucer's *Man-of-Law's Tale*, Nusrath was quick to identify portions of the text where the Sultan of Syria and his court convert en masse from Islam to Christianity, teasing out the accom-



panying tensions between obeying a political leader and retaining a sense of religious autonomy. Her supervisor later said that she had never considered such a viewpoint before. By addressing often-overlooked aspects of canonical texts, it provides the basis of innovative analysis that can serve to address the misconceptions on which entire schools of thought are built.

In addition, Nusrath's sensitivity to issues surrounding race, religion, and class has allowed her to approach supervisions and texts with what she describes as a 'non-generic perspective'. For example, in critical theory supervisions on poetry, she recalls reading passages such as 'Even the Indians who are base and savage can appreciate poetry'. While acknowledging that such discussions do not hinge on race, Nusrath argues that it is difficult to discount such racial undertones. "It's not enough to uncritically accept a text just because everyone was obviously racist in 1700," she remarks. The glossing over of such concerns often functions as an invalidation of individual personhood, as if to pretend that such processes of dehumanisation are not consonant with the lived experiences of people today.

Nusrath notes the need to understand the sociocultural context in which pieces of literature and criticism are produced, particularly when considering their intellectual and ideological foundations. In many instances in the Tripos, this often means the necessity of confronting colonial and imperial paradigms across history. In the 17th century novella *Oroonoko*, Nusrath notes that its writer

Aphra Behn leads readers to empathising with the African Oroonoko because he has European facial features. It's in light of such explicit displays of racism that Nusrath notes, "It was sort of inevitable that I would be unapologetically banging on about race," she says. Yet, the questions she brings up surrounding race have often been treated as tangential and irrelevant to discussions. This has led to her feeling resigned to not being taken seriously academically.

It's with some relief that Nusrath has been able to focus on urban fiction set in London for her dissertation on modern literature. In urban fiction, the urban setting figures prominently in the narrative, as is the case with contemporary London novels that heavily feature council estates. While reading articles focused on the relationship between architecture and literature for her dissertation, Nusrath noted ways in which contemporary literature has begun to reflect the strategic economic policies that have led to the concentration of migrant communities in ghetto areas. This urban fiction gives a voice to working-class minority communities ordinarily absent in the literary sphere.

Nusrath's fascination with this genre stems from its historical transformations: as opposed to 18th century accounts of the working class written by observers such as Charles Dickens and Thomas Hardy, the proliferation of education has resulted in such accounts written by the working class. Such stories reveal the inextricability of class and race, particularly in the way that structural racism is often perpetuated along class lines

▲ Nusrath Tapadar is a second year English student at St Catharine's (ROSIE BRADBURY)

in the British context. Having grown up in a part of London deeply affected by this, these concerns continue to resonate with Nusrath.

Specifically, Nusrath has decided to work on Monica Ali's novel *Brick Lane*, which is set in the heart of London's Bangladeshi community, not unlike the one she grew up in. "When you read or interact with the world, you look for bits of yourself in it," Nusrath remarks. The small details in the novel have most resonated with Nusrath. She recalls the dedication written to Ali's *appa* at the beginning of the novel, the same word Nusrath uses to address her own father. She recalls the use of the word *moyna*, a term of endearment, in dialogue between a mother and daughter. The Bengali word, which refers to a type of bird, also translates to 'sweetheart'. "Before I read that, I never heard it used anywhere other than in my family," she mentions with a measure of tenderness.

For the unacquainted, she remarks that the novel will be mind-blowing, an exposure to a new kind of story that can only serve to expand the possibilities of what a novel should look like. The things that made her feel alienated since arriving in Cambridge – her religious background, her physical appearance, her decision to wear her hijab – are momentarily eclipsed by a glimpse of her every day in Monica Ali's writing. By incorporating *Brick Lane* into her academic journey, Nusrath is staking her claim, as well as that of many others. In a place where they rarely seem to exist, Nusrath is helping the underdogs of literature to receive the attention they deserve.

“The questions she brings up surrounding race have often been treated as tangential and irrelevant”

“The rich tapestry of Islamic thought, history, and theology is rarely reflected in the texts on the Tripos”



# A litany for Home Kong

**Ning Sang Jessica Tan** describes her nostalgia and grief over the changing nature of her birthplace

I wake up in darkness, nervousness clutching my chest. I look at my phone - 3AM - and around at the barren walls, the eerie quietness of this sleepy town disturbing my slumber. Where am I? How did I get here? Why am I here?

The pieces start to fall back in place - I am in Cambridge, in England. This is my second year of living and studying here. I just swapped from Law to Theology. I recently moved out of college and into a large room in a beautiful townhouse with three other Christians; we have committed ourselves to creating a space to welcome adults with learning disabilities because we believe that God cares deeply for the marginalized. They are all wonderful housemates, but also all white Europeans, all older and at different life stages than myself, and to a large extent, still all strangers.

I close my eyes, wrapping my arms tightly around my knees on the comparatively massive double bed. I hear the rain against the opened window. I feel so small, so alone.

I want to go back to a time when I did not feel like I had to explain or justify how and why my views and habits are different because I am not of European heritage. I want to go back to a time when I did not feel like I had to constantly think about translating my thoughts into language that used social, cultural, political, intellectual references that I anticipate my interlocutors to understand, for which I always apologize when I anticipate incorrectly. I want to go back to a time when bilingualism was the norm, when I codeswitched without thinking; where I can and am forced to express myself using contradictory phrases in terms of my contradictory birthplace, where the externally contradictory nature of the city itself explained, justified, and normalized my inner contradictions because people and things are understood relationally rather than discreetly.

I want to go back to a time when I saw rice cookers and hot water dispensers on every kitchen counter, where 'cutlery' consists of two sticks and a ceramic spoon, where bowls are picked up and slurped out of, where ovens and dishwashers are a mystery. I want to go back to a time when we ate hot soup noodles and drank hot tea even when it was 35C outside, because to do otherwise was even more blasphemous. I want to go back to a time when it was bizarre to eat cake regularly, where it is disgraceful to not finish every scrap of food in front of you rather than respectful to stop eating when you are content.

I want to go back to a time when I

believed that reconciliation with family and politics were possible if I just worked hard enough to reason out the relationships; to a time when my parents and I had heated arguments over WhatsApp, exchanging Chinese and English articles and reflections over a 15-hour time difference about the pros and cons of democracy, citing sources from conservative and liberal activists, politicians, religious ministers, and intellectuals, from blatantly pro-Beijing propaganda to ignorant pro-democracy Western media. I want to go back to a time when I still trusted local journalism, to a time when my Benedict Andersonian imagined community could have never fathomed the refusal of British human rights activist Benedict Roger's visitor entry, let alone the expulsion of *Financial Times Asia* editor Victor Mallet.

I want to go back to a time when there was great enthusiasm among my generation, when I saw a space, a place, a hope for my person to thrive and achieve my full potential within the legal-political sphere of activism amidst the sea of yellow umbrellas. I want to go back to a time when there was no physical, temporal, or linguistic distance between myself and the political ruptures of the city, when I could count on myself to be in the courtroom during the handing down of landmark judgments and then, rain or shine, turn up at Victoria Park on Sunday at 3PM to protest the injustice. I want to go back to a time when I was still inspired by law-in-action, when it felt like the work that I did with human rights solicitors and public law barristers would meaningfully ameliorate the real living and political conditions for people in the city, a time when I still had faith in our independent judiciary and rule of law.

I want to go back to a time when October signaled the end of horrendous humidity and typhoons - the beginning of hiking season, when I could share my love for the city's natural landscape with friends and family, but also safely explore new terrain on my own. I want to go back to a time when, whenever I felt stressed or anxious, I would grab my phone, wallet, some water, and disappear under a veil of anonymity among the city lights, out in the Pacific Ocean, or into the misty mountains, knowing that there would always be phone signal closeby, no matter how far I strayed.

I want to go back to a time when I would stare out of the windows of minibuses, palpably feeling the slowing of my heartbeat and thoughts while watching the sun flirt with sand and sea. I want to go back to a time when my eyes were accustomed to looking up each time the train door opened to see if there was an elderly person or pregnant lady who needed a seat, to a time when the specific tone and duration of the Octopus 'doot' was more ingrained in my psyche than my 7:15 morning alarm.

I want to go back to a time when the term 'weaving' was understood more in relation to crowds, traffic and aircon rain rather than elderly women in fiber arts clubs. I want to go back to a time when it was a precarious task to discern whether to address shopkeepers, stewards and strangers by the term 'sister', 'auntie' or



▲ I do not yet possess the words to articulate this grief (SHAMMAH KOH)

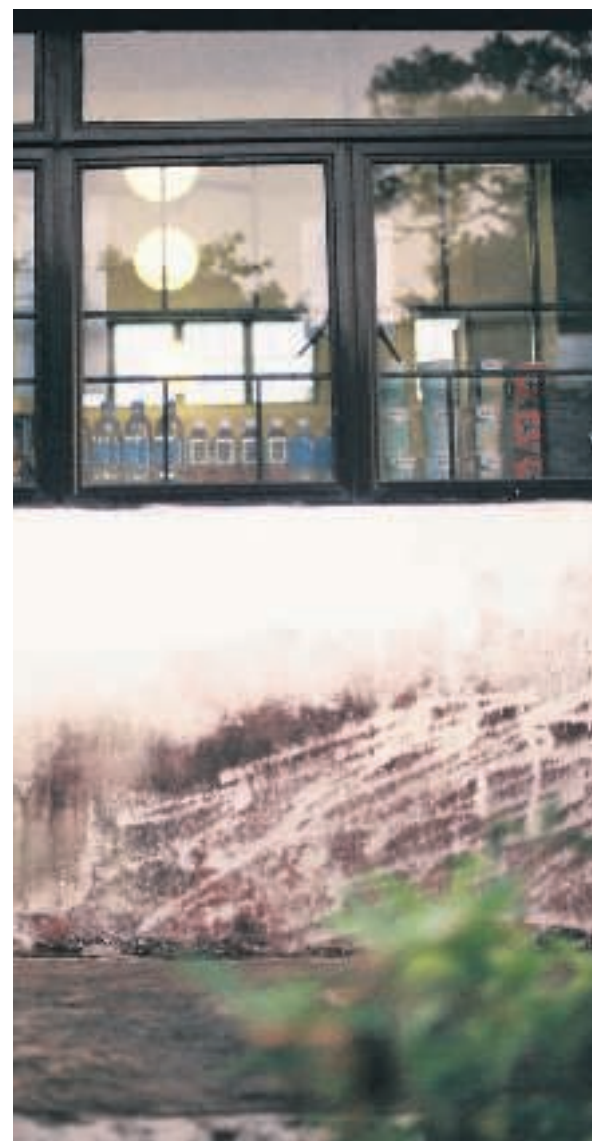
“I want to go back to a time when I would stare out the windows of minibuses”

'grandma', relative to the whiteness and style of their hair. I particularly want to go back to a time when everyone had Tempo tissue packs in their bag, to the satisfactory sight of dust sprinkling at the rupture of the heavy-ply napkin torn perfectly in half - never along the industrial creases - handed over to whoever was headed to the public washrooms that never reliably had toilet paper.

But these habits, ways of being, ways of associating - they belong to a time that no longer exists, that is certainly not my present, and that I can no longer pretend to be a possibility for my future. My inner reality suddenly demands explanations as lived contradictions rather than as a natural outcome of an upbringing in an absurd and fantastical city, that land which forever holds the secrets of my tender, adolescent heart. This expectation to understand and explain such contradictions from others and to myself is at least one of the reasons for my constant anxiety and increasing depression.

For who am I without bearing resemblance to my city, my birthplace, my motherland? How do I exist without this orientation, gravity eastward? Where can I physically go to find peace and rest in this flat greenery, land of my colonisers, my (old) masters? Will they - will I - ever come to see myself as anything more than lesser, than Other?

What am I losing, who am I becoming as I buy blocks of lactose-free cheddar



“Who am I without bearing resemblance to my city, my birthplace, my motherland?”

and put portioned vegan stew into the freezer, when I have whole wheat pasta or bread rather than jasmine rice as my starch, when I cook with chickpeas and Quorn rather than soybeans and tofu, with curry powder and olive oil as often as with soy sauce and sesame oil, when I put a load into the dryer or clear a load from the dishwasher, when I crave earl grey over the Iron Goddess of Mercy, and sometimes even desire sachets of brazenly colored fruit infusions that people here curiously call tea?

What choice did I have, what control over my own body, my own agency, my own becoming do I have, as a pseudo immigrant who has felt very fortunate, but also semi-forced and semi-predestined to follow this 'privileged' migratory pattern of simultaneous self-discovery and self-alienation at elite foreign universities? Is the new certainty of my increasing commitment to Cambridge more or less enabling of meeting my emotional needs for safety and security than holding onto that dying flame of the Lion Rock Spirit? Am I a coward for increasingly choosing emigration over the fight?

I do not know, indeed I am not sure that I can know. I do not yet possess the words to articulate this grief that I do not yet know how to process. All that I do know is that it really, really hurts - and that to sit with this pain is all I can do to comfort myself in remembering and legitimizing my love for this place that I feel increasingly unable to call home.



# Opinion



## The barriers to access that no one's talking about

'Wealth qualifications' and self-selection are issues that must be tackled head on

Cecily Bateman

Each year, as the October 15th deadline approaches, thousands will be nervously checking their UCAS applications to apply to Cambridge. Only 30% of them will be from a state-maintained, non-selective school attended by 89% of the population. That's a problem.

Though Cambridge admission statistics receive considerable media attention, access is primarily talked about as a binary: to apply to Cambridge or not to apply to Cambridge. This overlooks a key nuance; access to all degrees is not equal and there are considerable structural barriers, running through higher education and wider society, which make some degrees enclaves of the wealthy rather than representative of the population.

These can take the forms of entry requirements that make it almost impossible for any comprehensive-educated person to apply. Take Classics, the subject with the highest acceptance rate (48.8% in 2017), the most popular form of which requires Latin A level. Even assuming that private and grammar school pupils all have the option to take Latin (which is not always the case) along with

a small minority of comprehensive students (less than 12,500 of whom even take the GCSE), it can be deduced that less than 25% of each year group even have the opportunity to take a subject compulsory for the course. Ironically, the 4 year course that does not require Latin has a lower acceptance rate and a lower number of places. This is a case that could be solved at the University level; the Oxford Classics course does not require Latin and consequently has far more competitive application figures.

Other subjects have more structural problems which are difficult for the University to solve on its own. Music is a subject often cut from state schools' curricula. If a student doesn't have access to Music A level - a subject in which it is incredibly difficult to do well without private music lessons - the University accepts Grade 8 Music theory, which is again inaccessible without the money to pay for tutoring. Obviously there are some exceptions: the self-taught music enthusiast, the student who reached grammar school without tutoring. But essentially, there are a minority of Cambridge degrees that by their very nature have a wealth qualification.

A large and unacknowledged factor in why comprehensive-educated students are a rarity in some degrees is because they simply are not applying. Sometimes this is due to simple lack of awareness, as with History of Art or Theology, which could be improved by increased subject-specific outreach to comprehensive schools. However, a large factor in this is self-selection: the knowledge that certain groups will come in with advantages which put comprehensive-educated people off from applying, not wanting to be in an environment where they come in already at a disadvantage.

In these cases, there is also an expectation that the comprehensive-educated person will be more socially isolated. That Cambridge culture is dominated by certain wealthy social classes is no secret; inside the 64.1% 'state school' acceptance statistic hides the 23.26% that were actually from grammar schools, notoriously and increasingly only accessible to those able to afford private tuition. Even state school representation is dominated by elite London state schools in areas where the average income is high and which, though state-maintained, are very different culturally

▲ A Cambridge graduation ceremony last year  
(LOUIS ASHWORTH)

to the average state school. Now imagine this culture difference concentrated and distilled into a degree.

Comprehensive-educated students often rightly suspect that these applicants will have extra qualifications and advantages. Perhaps tutoring for outside exams such as STEP, participation in arts classes or events that improve their skills base, or exposure to experiences and literature: all of these things enable a much greater knowledge of their degree area in subjects that are generally not offered in state schools. Due to these differences in the background and base level which applicants set out from, comprehensive students are likely to ask themselves how their coursemates could support them and understand the different struggles they will encounter.

We need to start thinking about access differently, looking at the problem with a more nuanced view rather than seeing applying as a binary. Some degrees have wealth qualifications that could be removed, some are made inaccessible by a complex web of social factors largely outside of the University's control, but neither of these problems can be solved unless they are acknowledged.

“There are structural barriers that make some degrees enclaves of the wealthy”



# Varsity Editorial

## Writing to break the narrative

I first met Jonathan Chan, an English student at Wolfson, when we spoke in Easter last year about whether he was interested in writing a *Varsity* long read about homesickness and the unique experience of grappling with the idea of what home is, and whether Cambridge can come to be a type of home, as an international student.

In March last year, he wrote about his experience coming to Cambridge to study English after growing up in Singapore, and his changing relationship with the language as he grappled with it in the Tripos.

“The first thing I wrote for *Varsity* came out of a very disorientating, alienating experience during my first term here reading Medieval literature,” he tells me.

Every week this term he’s been talking to students – friends – about what ongoing efforts to decolonise the English curriculum have meant to them. “My column now, in some ways, is about how people are trying to situate themselves within a subject in which, historically, their stories and experiences have not been reflected or presented.

“My hope is people who read it will be able to see beyond all the anger and politicking.”

My time as editor of *Varsity* has been marked by working with people like Jonathan, who are using words, pictures, whichever mediums suit them best, to form a bridge to the rest of Cambridge.

A network exists here, of students who can help empower those with the inkling that there’s something they’d like to say.

Jonathan, too, has been shaped by the student writers around him. He read a piece by Jess Tan at the time, another by Ian Wang, and one by Shameera Lin. “That was a bit closer to home,” he says about Shameera’s, given she lives in Malaysia, just by Singapore where both he and I live.

“Knowing and seeing that those kinds of stories were out there made me think about how I could position myself here, and the fact that a lot of those stories gained traction gave me the confidence that the kinds of things I was interested in would gain traction as well.”

Earlier this term I wrote about how the Cambridge narrative manifests itself too in how we photograph the city, that Cambridge in the popular perception and through history is a fiction — simple, homogenous and picture perfect.

I’ve been reflecting more on the web of experiences I see here, wrapping my head around how much the national narrative misses the mark about Cambridge. It’s got me thinking about how we can take the first steps to dismantle it. People here are already at work.

When I first arrived in Cambridge I didn’t think for a second that I’d be able to write candidly about my experiences, or that people would want to read about them. Two weeks ago, I opened up about something that has consumed me for most of my life, and received an outpouring of love. I’m still getting used to the idea that people here want to hear what I have to say.

These past few weeks I’ve met so many people interested in student writing, who have shared ideas and frag-

ments of their perspectives with me. It’s got me thinking about what it really means to tell someone: “You should write about that.” That there’s a gap here that you can fill.

A lot of the time, efforts to break Cambridge narratives feel hopeless. People are so, immensely determined to see Cambridge as something it isn’t; to lurch between the fairytale and wickedness they see in it. For decades this has been wrought against generations of Cambridge students. It feels like we’ll never get anywhere trying to fight that. But why not try?

Just this week, members of the *Varsity* team and I wrote about how the national media misconstrued a CUSU Council amendment to broaden the commemoration of British war veterans to include all those affected by war. We condemned the fact that they “placed narrative above fact, prioritised sensationalism over student safety, and violated students’ personal privacy”. As people begin to question Cambridge more, the stakes and dangers are growing. So, too, is the urgency to write back against this narrative.

Write back against the hallowed halls, the glitz of candlelit formals, and the weight, and easy beauty, of tradition

## How a university impacts a city’s social and political landscape

Why do Cambridge and Peterborough vote so differently?

Lucy Fairweather

Geographically speaking, Cambridge and Peterborough should be fairly similar. Both are cities with comparable populations in East Anglia, about 30 miles apart. However, that’s where the similarities end. Despite being the two major population centres in the recently-formed Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, the two cities vote very differently.

Look at a map for the 2017 mayoral election for the Authority, and it’s easy to spot the yellow island of the Cambridge City council ward in a sea of blue. In the 2017 general election, Daniel Zeichner increased his vote share with an overall majority for Labour in Cambridge, decisively defeating his main rivals, the Lib Dems. In Peterborough, Fiona Onasanya of the Labour party also won the seat from the Conservatives - but only by the skin of her teeth with a majority of 607. While Cambridge voted 73.8% to remain in the EU, in Peterborough it was 60.9% to leave.

The one big difference between the two cities? A university. After Loughborough University closed its Peterborough campus in 2003, Peterborough became

the second largest UK population centre not to have one. Cambridge, on the other hand, is synonymous with its university in the public imagination. Since 1209, the University has been a major force in shaping the city, so that what would otherwise be a medium-sized market town is now considered a world leader in research and new technologies. With the coming Varsity line, the silicon fen, and the UK’s fastest growing city economy, Cambridge is booming. The University plays a considerable role in this.

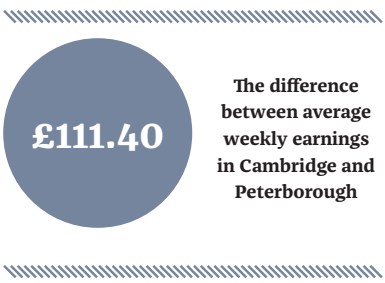
Peterborough is also growing, with more business start-ups than Cambridge in 2016. Its churn rate, however, is five times higher. Cambridge still by far outstrips Peterborough in terms of wages: Cambridge’s average weekly earnings



enormously, and will hopefully continue to do so for another 800 years. However, we need to be mindful of how the effects of this growth can be spread more evenly, both within the city and across the wider region. The disparities between Cambridge and Peterborough demonstrate the advantages and disadvantages of having a high-skilled, research-intensive economy, but equally show how geographically-concentrated its effects can be.

A university education is one of the strongest predictors of voting behaviour, and there is an increasingly noticeable divide between our university towns, which tend to be wealthier and have a higher percentage of graduates, and their surrounding areas. However, the socio-economic impact of having a university so central to a city’s economic health must also be considered.

It may feel like we have become a more politically polarised country over recent years, but it is no coincidence that socio-economic inequalities have also been growing. Until this gap starts to narrow again, it seems unlikely that Cambridge and Peterborough will be voting similarly any time soon.





## Opinion

# The Gender Recognition Act consultation closes today. What would the reforms mean for me?

The president of CUSU LGBT+ reflects upon his experiences as a trans man in Cambridge and explains the necessity of a reformed GRA.



**T**oday, the Gender Recognition Act consultation closes. Under the consultation, the government is considering reforming the GRA to allow the legal self-identification of one's gender. This is one of the most significant ways in which anyone and everyone can make a positive difference to LGBT+ rights, both on a legal and an everyday level.

Back in 2004, the UK's Gender Recognition Act was a truly revolutionary piece of legislation that allowed trans people to apply for a Gender Recognition Certificate that would change the legal gender on their birth certificate. This process involves a diagnosis of gender dysphoria, 'living as' one's 'acquired gender' for two years with the intention of living as that gender for the rest of one's life, paying a fee of around £150, and a panel decision on whether you really are of that gender.

Most trans people I know - including myself - are not intending to apply for a GRC. This is not only because of the length of the process, but because of the humiliating notion of having to 'prove' one's gender. There is also the fact that there exists no option to change one's legal gender to non-binary. Compared to other countries such as Denmark, Argentina, Malta, and Portugal which all allow legal self-identification — without requiring medical intervention — the UK's legislation is now outdated.

It is essential to remember that such a legislation reform would positively impact the lives of trans people on a day-to-day basis. Take how a reformed GRA would de-medicalise being transgender: as a transgender person myself, I have sat through countless humiliating doctor's appointments where I have had to signal my desire to live as my 'acquired gender' for the rest of my life and talk

▲ Some Cambridge colleges and buildings fly the pride flag annually (LOUIS ASHWORTH)

about my goals for transition at length.

Being a bloke, I'm lucky in that I fit relatively neatly into the gender binary. I can only imagine how horrible and isolating it is for non-binary transgender people who go through these same processes in order to have their name changed or their gender marker changed without any hope of legal recognition at the end of it. Through legal self-identification, such degrading processes would be eradicated and trans people would be given the same autonomy over their own gender possessed by cisgender people.

But this doesn't really apply in Cambridge, being such a liberal place, right? To a certain degree, Cambridge is a decent place to be a trans person. Before I arrived back in 2016, I remember reading that it was said that to be an LGBT+ person in Cambridge was easier than being a Tory here.

Despite the prominence of derogatory

debate around trans identities and of vocal trans exclusionary radical feminists (TERFs) that continually rail against trans identities and efforts to make the lives of non-binary people easier and less socially marginal — I have come across TERF ideology perhaps only three times in Cambridge. Once from someone genuinely trying to understand the trans perspective. Another from a Cambridge academic who, after a panel discussion on the importance of self-identification, confessed that she had been given more to think about than she had been in a very long time. And now from the leaflets and stickers that have been distributed across the city in the run up to the closing of the GRA consultation calling for 'the protection of women's rights'.

Only once have I been made to feel unwelcome in a certain space simply for being trans. This was in the sacred male space of the barber's shop. Assumed to be a woman, I was refused service. They were evidently uncomfortable with the idea of serving a transgender man.

These instances have been few and far between. This is really good going. But, still, not ideal.

With legal self-identification, my hope is that further legal protection of trans identities will give trans people a greater ability to stand up to transphobia in all its forms.

I know that, for me, government recognition of my identity, without state barriers and the imposition of medical processes will mean that I will have further confidence to go forward in the world and live my life as a trans person, but also as myself, without gender being a barrier to my self-determination.

Ali Hyde

# What the University chooses to legitimise

The first of a two-part column on the University's function as an ideological apparatus examines Cambridge's power to legitimise those with whom it associates.

**B**eneath the bluster about Cambridge's illustrious history and prestige is the banal reality that this institution has (like Oxford) long served as a seat of ruling class power. Britain's rulers and colonial bureaucrats were trained here: Lord Balfour, before installing a century of colonialism in Palestine, was educated at Trinity College. Jan Smuts, contemporary and one-time supporter of Cecil Rhodes, studied at Christ's as an undergraduate before bouncing between overseeing European settler-colonialism in Southern Africa and occupying the upper echelons of British society, eventually becoming Cambridge's Chancellor.

The dark shadows cast by these colonial legacies are long: the process of settler-colonisation begun by Balfour in Palestine continues, while apartheid besmirched South Africa until 1991. Crucially, though, these are not matters of mere historical interest. Cambridge continues to serve as a site for the legitimisation and reproduction of dominant power structures — this part of the column will focus on the former aspect.

The most obvious contemporary manifestation of this is Cambridge's investment in the fossil fuel and arms industries. Zero Carbon have consistently mobilised hundreds of students,

alongside mass support from academics, to pressure the University to divest its multi-billion-pound endowment from fossil fuels, while historic data suggests that investments are held in arms companies across collegiate Cambridge. The reality of these financial ties is visceral and direct; a supposedly socially responsible educational institution fuels industries responsible for the acceleration of climate catastrophe and the mass murder of civilians in war.

But perhaps more dangerous—and more central to Cambridge's social function—are non-financial links with these entities.

Campaigns for boycotts and divestment are not intended principally to inflict economic harm on their targets but to isolate and delegitimise them as political actors. Not only do Cambridge's governing authorities refuse to take the step of divesting from the fossil fuels and arms industries; they actively frustrate the desired end of these demands by legitimising the industries.

BAE Systems provided the bulk of the £2.94 billion spent on arms exports that the British government licensed to Saudi Arabia last year. Their Typhoon and Tornado jets have been used prominently in the Saudi-led coalition's three-year long onslaught against Yemen. This has

seen hospitals bombed, thousands of civilians killed and the country—already the poorest in the region—left on the brink of the worst famine in a century, with some 13 million said to be at risk of starvation. When Palestinian homes, and entire villages, are destroyed by the Israeli state and the settlers they protect, the weaponised bulldozers used for the crime are often provided by Caterpillar Inc.

Cambridge, which loudly claims to be a 'social leader', counts BAE and Caterpillar not as accomplices to war crimes, but as major partners in the Cambridge Service Alliance, "a unique global alliance between leading businesses and universities", running out of the Judge Business School and the Engineering Department. Andy Neely, a Cambridge Pro-Vice-Chancellor and the CSA's founding director, formerly worked for BAE's predecessor company, British Aerospace.

When defending the CSA, by pointing out that the BAE link does not pertain directly to the production of military equipment, Stephen Toope unknowingly hit the nail on the head. For arms and fossil fuel companies alike, this is precisely the point. Maintaining partnerships with prestigious institutions like Cambridge unrelated to their central destructive functions helps to culti-

vate an air of legitimacy and normality. While BAE and Caterpillar innocently work with the University, their profits are underwritten by the terrorising and dispossession of millions of civilians. And as Cambridge's British Petroleum (BP) Institute supposedly advances renewable energy solutions, its sponsor burns the planet.

While Cambridge's alumni department could be readily converted into an institute for the study of colonial history, significant elements of the institution are already doing PR work for arms and fossil fuel companies, helping to legitimise actors deeply implicated in imperial plunder and extraction today.

Student campaigning is already beginning to focus on this network of non-financial links the University maintains, as Zero Carbon have highlighted the depths of fossil capital's penetration in Cambridge. Over 40 student groups called in May for an end to the Cambridge Service Alliance, resulting in the birth of the Demilitarise Cambridge group.

Working to deny arms and fossil fuel companies even an inch of legitimacy is crucial if they are ultimately to be brought down. As Cambridge students, our first target must surely be our own University's role in furnishing this facade for BAE, BP and others.

“ Cambridge counts BAE and Caterpillar as major partners in the Cambridge Service Alliance ”

Ed McNally



# CUCA must be held to account

Since CUSU Council met on 8th October, a hostile media narrative has compromised the safety of students. Why won't CUCA acknowledge the part it played in this?

Anonymous

Following the targeted abuse of students named in previous coverage of these events, we have anonymised the identity of this article's author for the sake of their safety.

Three months ago, dozens of 'Free Tommy' fascists took to the streets of Cambridge to demand the release of the then-jailed founder of the far-right English Defence League (EDL). With their chants of "Whose streets? Our streets", the demonstrators brought their extremist views out from the fringes of society and directly into the public view - which is where they have been ever since.

On numerous occasions following the march, far-right symbols and slogans, including flyers and stickers from the militant white supremacist group Generation Identity, have been sighted on walls and lamp posts across the city. It is now clear that the burst of nationwide mobilisation in support of Robinson was not an isolated turn of events: the racist right is here to stay in Cambridge.

We now also know that the next *cause célèbre* they are likely to be organising around is the controversy over events that took place at CUSU Council on 8th October. A debate over whether the commemoration of war veterans should be broadened to include all victims of war both in Britain and overseas - in recog-

nition of the University of Cambridge's status as a global institution - was distorted and sensationalised by the tabloid press into the absurd accusation that CUSU had voted to "scrap" (*The Sun*) and "REJECT" (*The Mirror*) Remembrance Day altogether.

The ensuing media firestorm set off a campaign of vicious online abuse and hatred against the student around whom the news story was centred, and has become a mobilising force for fascists.

At their most recent rally in London, speakers from the far-right Democratic Football Lads Alliance (DFLA) announced to a crowd of Sieg-Heiling white supremacists that they would soon be marching in Cambridge to protest the "banning" of Remembrance Day here.

The far right and its programme of violent white supremacy are an established problem both nationwide and in Cambridge. Their sudden interest in the minutiae of student politics belies the wider significance of the recent media frenzy: it is part of a broader 'culture war' that has been concocted by fascists to "develop a racist street movement and give it a political form". Only now, it is Remembrance Day rather than Tommy Robinson at the centre of the mobilisation.

This is a problem that must be tack-

led with great urgency, but the task of doing so will be impossible without a forceful confrontation of the complicity of students themselves in bringing us to this moment.

The Chairman of the Conservative Association recently went on *Good Morning Britain* and declared to viewers nationwide that they were "completely against" students being targeted with death threats and that, moreover, they had no clue that their motion could have resulted in this happening. This is a position they have since repeated when pressed by *Varsity* about the DFLA's recent call to action. The Chairman insisted that "it's not a CUCA matter", and that this has "nothing to do with CUCA".

They are professing a level of naivety and ignorance that strains credulity. During the meeting of Council their members referred to Asian civilians as "savages", and afterwards they posted an incendiary statement falsely accusing CUSU of "literally want[ing] to erase our memory" of the war dead alongside copies of the original and amended motions without censoring the names of students.

Their provocative conduct at CUSU council followed by a misrepresentation of their fellow students in order to manufacture controversy signalled a willing-

ness to court whatever attention they could without care for the consequences of their actions.

In the wake of the disturbing news that card-carrying neo-nazis may be coming to Cambridge over the Remembrance Day controversy and endangering the physical and emotional safety of students, CUCA's steadfast refusal to accept even the smallest morsel of responsibility or remorse - either by apologising or by issuing corrections - suggests a detachment from any sense of a duty of care to their fellow students. It is beneath contempt.

*Varsity* have recently published an editorial acknowledging that they have a duty of care to the students they report on, a duty we believe they breached with their initial coverage of the events that unfolded at Council. They have committed themselves to active reflection on how they can better place this ethic of social responsibility at the forefront of their reporting. CUCA, meanwhile, continue to add fuel to the fire for the mere sake of scoring cheap points in a fake 'culture war'. This is at the expense of the student they singled out for mass abuse, as well as anyone who will find themselves caught up in the planned mobilisation of the far right. When will they be held to account?

“  
Their actions suggest a detachment from any sense of a duty of care to their fellow students  
”



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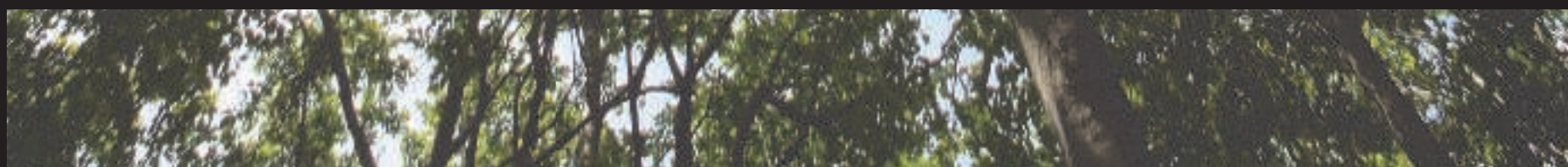
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# vulture

► **FILM & TV** TWILIGHT  
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▲ What could be more romantic than overcoming insatiable bloodlust (NEFLIX/SUMMIT ENTERTAINMENT)

# The *Twilight* saga returns to screens, but never left our hearts

Stephanie Stacey

On the tenth anniversary of the cinematic release of, arguably, one of the most iconic sagas of our generation, *Twilight* continues to divide audiences and critics.

To celebrate its anniversary, *Twilight* will once again grace film screens, though sadly only in the US. The entire saga is back on Netflix, so my preferred form of procrastination (replaying the vampire baseball scene for several hours) is now easily accessible.

In the case of *Twilight*, it seems that it is derision rather than simple dislike which dominates public opinion. Or, should I say, that dominates loudly broadcast opinion, particularly among those trying to appear intelligent, since it is indisputable that *Twilight* is well-loved – over 120 million copies were sold, and the films saw huge international success. It's just that lots of people aren't keen

to admit their love for it.

Perhaps due to the fact that the saga was aimed unabashedly at teenage girls, it's been repeatedly dismissed in ways that other popular series targeted at young people rarely have been. Like the rom-com, and a whole host of other genres typically enjoyed by women, *Twilight* is often considered unintelligent and unoriginal. My 12th birthday party was *Twilight* themed, so you can probably guess I'm quite a big fan of the series, but even I spent a few of my teenage years disavowing the entire saga, shortly after I also decided not to like pink for a while for fear that it was too 'girly'.

It is, however, incontestable that *Twilight* made an enormous impact on bookshelves and film screens worldwide. The 5-part film series grossed more than \$3.3 billion worldwide, and the second instalment, *New Moon*,

(the worst film as far as I'm concerned) broke box office records as the biggest midnight screening and opening day in history.

The 'vegetarian' vampires of *Twilight* certainly charmed plenty of people. The histories of the characters are as rich as the Cullens themselves, who did some shady stuff on the stock market using their supernatural powers. This means that, even if the main human characters aren't to your taste, there really is a vampire or werewolf out there for everyone. The majority of *Twilight* fans always seemed, to me, overly wrapped up in debating whether Edward or Jacob made a better match for Bella, while the most iconic couple of all time – Alice Cullen and Jasper Hale – were right there.

And of course, there are some less brilliant aspects of the series: I can't say that it isn't at least a little bit uncomfortable that, at 109, Ed-

ward has likely been alive longer than Bella's great-grandparents. Nor are the pro-life overtones of *Breaking Dawn*, the final instalment of the saga, entirely appropriate, in my opinion, but if you can overlook those, there's no better saga to curl up in bed with.

The fact that *Twilight*'s vampires, rather than burning, sparkle in sunlight, never ceases to fill me with joy, no matter how bad my mood or my period pains. I disagree completely with the concept of 'guilty pleasures': honestly I think maybe we should all scream our love for *Twilight* from the rooftops. (Meet you all on top of King's chapel?) Falling in love with the one person whose thoughts he is unable to hear seems a sensible choice on Edward's part, and what could be more romantic than overcoming insatiable bloodlust for Bella's sake? (Answer: probably a lot of things, though younger me would disagree.)

While I personally don't think it would be overly pleasant to kiss someone described as "hard as stone" and "ice cold", we must leave Bella to her choices. And, if you can resist the urge to murder your friends and family, there honestly seem few downsides to the vampire lifestyle: Cambridge would certainly be a whole lot easier if we didn't need to sleep.

▲ *Twilight* returns to the screen this October (NEFLIX/SUMMIT ENTERTAINMENT)



# Ciao Bella: *Twilight*, an unlikely source of style inspo

## Anna Clare explores fashion from the film

Like many of our generation, a significant part of my high school life centred around the beauty and intricacies of the characters in the *Twilight* Saga. In fact, this is a bit of an understatement for the obsession that dominated my teenage years - my best friend and I even named our hair bobbles after our favourite characters.

The style and aesthetic of these characters was surely a decisive factor for teenagers growing up all over the world when choosing where to pledge their loyalties: Team Edward or Jacob? Alice, Rosalie or Bella? The Volturi or the Cullens? With the original film being re-released in cinemas to celebrate a decade since the film first graced our screens, it's high time to take a look back on the style of a film that definitely had a role in shaping our generation.

It's undeniable that the style of the human characters (especially, I regret, Bella) is rather unassuming. The boy/girl next-door vibes works in contradistinction to the more lavish style of the vampires - unashamedly extravagant, the Cullen's clothes are reflective of their wildly differing personalities.

Yet this should not lead us to fall into the trap of thinking that the human characters are boring, one-dimensional alternatives to their vampire counterparts - they are, in fact, quite the opposite of this. Their generic 'jean and sweatshirt' kind of style speaks volumes about that teenage insecurity of being different from the rest of their school mates. The blur of this shared style allows small differences between the human characters to stand out.

Take Jessica, whose personality is notoriously gossipy and attention seeking, but who beneath this has a good soul and is deeply insecure. Her quirks come across in her slightly more colourful clothing, which brighten up the greys, blacks and browns of the rest of the school year. Her style finally comes to the fore in the finale of the first film at the student prom, mirroring her character development and the (limited) overcoming of her jealousy of protagonist Bella. Jessica's development is expressed through the wearing of a low-cut pink dress.

Fashion is also used to reflect the roles of other characters throughout the film. Angela has a more minimal vibe, with her pale glasses and pulled back hair reflecting her sincerity. Alternately, young Jacob displays his laid-back, easy going nature with long, loose locks - the loss of which in later films symbolises his character maturation.

The protagonist Bella Swan's style has more depth than a first glance might suggest. Her preferred colour, brown, blends well with rainy Forks and indicates her warmth and

modesty. The faded second hand Chevy truck she drives stands out from other students' smarter vehicles, suggesting a grounded quality and a uniqueness that reflects the attention she draws from the immortal characters in the film. The human clothes are archetypal of that moody American teenage vibe that was the rage for so long.

The vampires' style is ultimately the most exciting, though. Each Cullen has their own style that expertly communicates their vampire persona. For those vampires who possess special gifts - style is used by the costume designers of the film to suggest at these unique abilities. The vampires also celebrate their differences; most notably Alice's pixie-cut hair and Rosalie with her vivid red prom dress in the finale of the first film.

This becomes apparent the moment the Cullens walk into the cafeteria in an iconic scene of the first movie. Each wears one item of white - a visual signifier indicating to Bella (and the audience) their cool, superior status in the school. White also hints at their good nature - as 'vegetarian' vampires who abstain from human blood unlike other vampire clans such as the Volturi or the trio of James, Victoria and Laurent who wear darker colours. Clothes become a way to denote subtle messages to the audience, they aren't simply there for the aesthetic value.

Bella's transformation from human to vampire in the final film is most revealing of the journey of self-confidence Bella undergoes, suggesting that she fully becomes herself when in vampire form. Bella blossoms into vampirism, reflected by her choice of clothes that her human self would have instinctively shied away from. She dons a black leather jacket and a skin-tight loud-blue dress which mark a striking change from of her sense of style to that in the first movie where she opted for a discreet, navy-blue prom dress.

The style of the *Twilight* Saga characters reveals their unique personalities, insecurities and passions enormously - and this is why when naming our hair bobbles, my best friend and I made sure to identify each character with their most appropriate colour: red for Rosalie, purple for Alice, brown for Bella. It's amazing what we read about people and characters from the way they dress individual style. This shows the magic of film making and characterisation, especially in capturing the minds of young people.

The art of the stylist in film is clearly then, indicative of how much the way we dress says about our character. In the same way we read into a character from the way they present ourselves, outside of the world of cinema our style gives us the power to reveal and hide elements of our own character. *That* is a true superpower.



“Team Edward or Jacob? Alice, Rosalie or Bella? The Volturi or Cullens?”

## vulture tunes: Our guilty pleasure picks

Room on the third floor  
**McFly**

Britney  
**Busted**

Baby boy  
**Beyoncé**

Ridin' solo  
**Jason Derulo**

▲ Illustration by Ben Brown for Varsity



# Xu Zhimo

## 'Saying Goodbye to Cambridge Again'



Jonathan Chan reflects on the life of the beloved modern Chinese poet whose poetry sits in King's

“悄悄的我走了  
正如我悄悄的来  
我挥一挥衣袖  
不带走一片云”

"Very quietly I take my leave,  
As quietly as I came here;  
Gently I flick my sleeves,  
Not even a wisp of cloud will I bring away."

These lines have entranced generations of students of Chinese literature. Inscribed in a stone of white marble within King's College, the famous lines of Xu Zhimo have continued to enrapture the imaginations of droves of Chinese tourists. It is unsurprising to see such groups congregating around the stones, paying homage to Xu's powerful lyric by taking photos and admiring the college grounds. For many, a trip to Cambridge is a literary pilgrimage of sorts, albeit in a language familiar to few Cambridge students.

Born in Zhejiang province in China in 1931, Xu's death at the age of 34 in a plane crash has only served to elevate his sense of mystique. The juxtaposition of his picturesque verse and early demise has facilitated his mythologisation. Xu would go down as a cult figure in modern Chinese history, immortalised through his premature and tragic end, illicit love affairs and success in introducing western forms into Chinese literature. A seminal figure, Xu's poetry is often featured in the Chinese literature syllabus as an example of the modern poetry movement in the early 20th century in mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, or Singapore.

He is regarded as one of the first Chinese writers to successfully naturalise Western romantic forms to Chinese poetry. Moreover, Xu was also known for his use of vernacular varieties of Chinese, a departure from the

“  
Xu would go down as a cult figure in modern Chinese history  
”

literary establishment's insistence on using classical Chinese. This places Xu in the company of other writers and intellectuals from the May Fourth movement, an anti-imperialist, cultural, and political movement that emerged out of student protests in Beijing in 1919. Their efforts strove to engender a shift towards a populist base within the cultural and intellectual spheres. The combination of natural imagery, sentimental yearning, and prosodic elegance has continued to enchant the Sinophone world and draw them to see Cambridge as Xu once did. It is no wonder that Xu's life and poetry continue to inspire pop songs, gardens, and television dramas. More recently, cuttings from the “golden willows” in question will be presented by King's College to Xu's home town of Haining, his school in Hangzhou, and Peking University.

When I first read Xu's poetry as a curious first-year, I did not find myself as moved as I thought I would be, finding parts of his writing too saccharine and sentimental. Yet, as the year went on, I began to find myself slowing down on walks and cycles along the backs, eyes drawn to the ways in which daylight broke on the rippling water, or how the willows fluttered gracefully in contrast to the stoic King's Chapel. In learning to see Cambridge as Xu once did, I found a new depth of appreciation for each day that I've spent here and for the privilege of living in a place that is beautiful when we remember it to be.

▲ Illustration  
by Lisha  
Zhong for  
Varsity

“  
I began to find myself slowing down on walks and cycles along the backs  
”



# Every melody is a memory

Continuing her personal exploration into how music influences our Cambridge years, columnist **Anna Mochar** highlights the power of memory

Hearing a song we used to love at some point in our lives is always a bit strange. Perhaps we'd completely forgotten about a track for years and wouldn't be able to recognize it by its title; but as soon as it's played, we find ourselves singing along.

Lyrics that had been buried and long thought forgotten come to our lips without any difficulties. And with those lyrics comes a piece of who we were when we first (obsessively) listened to this particular song. Music can, thus, become a store for memories and feelings.

During my time in Cambridge, the hours I spent listening to music while walking around town or working in the library have led to many songs being infused with memories from different points of my first year. My past year can perhaps be best understood in terms of the playlists I made to fit the vibe of each month or feeling. Looking back through these playlists is interesting, in that I can so vividly recall the feelings that they're associated with.

Take, for example, a long weekend spent in Milan with my friends during the Easter vacation. For me, this trip is inextricably linked with Joan Baez. Any time I now listen to her song, 'Mary Call', I am taken back to hours spent on the night-train, and making coffee in the kitchen of our cosy Airbnb.

It's funny how music works like a scent when it comes to recalling memories. Very particular, inexpressible thoughts and emotions pass through our minds when we hear familiar songs. Music, perhaps more immediately than other art forms, becomes personal when we consume it. This happens in a way that transcends the artist and their intentions when creating a song: it becomes our own in a way. A personal soundtrack.

This is particularly true when we create and curate playlists for different moods and times in our lives.

Naturally, however, we must ask a difficult question. Seeing as the music we listen to is so closely tied to our feelings and memories in ways that can defy analysis, is there any



▲ ▼ For music columnist Anna Mochar, music is a form of memory (ANNA MOCHAR)

way of extricating music from memories? And is there even any point in doing so, or should we appreciate the fact that memories of a term or academic year can be stored in a three-minute song?

The music I listened to while going through rollercoaster moments of stress, excitement, happiness, or sadness interacted with and continues to interact with those feelings. It's like an apothecary's shelf of bottles: each playlist or song is a cure for (or enhancement of) certain emotions. Feelings of nostalgia and a sudden realisation of the fact that I'm moving further and further away from my childhood were echoed in songs like '0043' by Wanda or 'Boys in the Trees' by Carly Simon.

Listening to songs that are in this way connected to memories of my first year in Cambridge is a way of placing myself back into the context - the moment and place where they were important to me. I'm directly put back in touch with who I was and reminded about how I may have changed.

Sometimes the time comes to let go of songs, albums or even artists, as the memories can be too overwhelming.

Deleting an album from our Spotify library may seem pretty trivial, but when we think of the underlying feelings and issues associated with it, suddenly a seemingly insignificant action like this becomes impactful and powerful. We are giving ourselves the opportunity to symbolically cut ties with the past.

On the flipside, however, I have found that it is possible to rehabilitate music for myself. Due to the intense personal connections that we can form with a piece of music, we also have the ability to breathe new life into our enjoyment of a song by actively changing our associations with it.

If, for example, somebody who we're no longer on good terms with first introduced us to an artist or song, it can be easy to only view the music as it stands in relation to them. We can, however, forge new memories to associate with songs, finding something in the music that belongs to us alone, and which is independent from other people.

As time passes by quickly, it can be nice to revisit certain times from the past year by listening to songs that were, even if only for a short time, my favourite. "Komm schlaf bei mir" by Ton Steine Scherben, though I only intensively listened to it for a short time, reminds me of working in the window seat of my old college room.

This is an example of how music can almost be seen as a way of curating and organizing memories - and it's wonderful to think that an everyday action like listening to music gives us the power to do just this.





Despite being the strongest advocate for café-studying you could find in Cambridge - evidenced by my very scientific and methodological rating of café study spaces last term - I will admit that I can appreciate the silence and studious atmosphere of libraries sometimes as well.

While there's definitely a case to be made for working in your college library - proximity to your room and hall, welcome distractions in form of friends who can suffer with you and not having to worry about leaving your things at the desk over lunch - I've enjoyed trying out different faculty libraries and found each of them to have its own unique vibe.

So which library is the best for an intense day of essay cramming? And where should you go if you prefer not to constantly be subject to angry glares for closing a book too loudly?

### Haddon Library (Downing Site)

After our initial induction session in week one of first year, I didn't step foot into the Haddon Library for an entire term. However, a hard-to-find item on my Lent Sociology reading list led me back into the hallowed halls of archaeology and anthropology.

Huge tables, practically begging you to spread out all of your notes, a rather relaxed atmosphere for Cambridge standards and arguably the most aesthetic windows and architecture drew me in immediately. But, according to my favorite study partner at least, the Haddon's real advantage is its ability to make you feel like you're in Harry Potter even without having to throw on your gown.

### MML Library (Sidgwick Site)

Located on Sidgwick Site, the MML library is ideal for a quick hour of work in between lectures or picking up books for humanities students. For lack of a better (or less generic) word, I'd describe the MML as the most wholesome library in Cambridge.

Comfy armchairs, adult coloring books and knit material for a quick break - plus super friendly librarians immediately make you feel as at home as you can in a library! A personal favorite of mine: the window seats overlooking Sidgwick put you in a prime position to do some quality people watching in your study break.

So next time you're at Sidgwick after a lecture maybe think twice if you really want to put yourself through a work session filled with judgmental looks you'll inevitably receive for picking up a book too loudly in the Seeley and consider heading to the MML instead!

### Squire Law Library (Sidgwick)

Another lovely Sidgwick spot: the Squire Law Library, one of Cambridge's most modern libraries, offers a completely different atmosphere to some of the others on the list. It's where I go when I'm feeling a bit sleepy and unmotivated and need the pressure of others working around me to keep me focused.

The huge windows allow for some of the best lighting, preventing you from taking a quick nap at a dimly lit desk.

### SPS Library (New Museums Site)

Free ear plugs to block out any distractions, big tables and a separate study floor, the SPS was my go-to spot last exam term. For anyone who doesn't want to commit to a trek to Sidgwick but still wants to get out of college for a bit, the SPS is located centrally on New Museums Site.

I especially like the fact that the study spaces are tucked away on the second floor, meaning you're not distracted by students coming in and leaving again or walking around on the hunt for books. SPS is rather small compared



▲ There's definitely a case to be made for working in your college library (AURELIA LI)

# Finding your room of requirement in Cambridge's libraries

Navigating the vast array of study spaces Cambridge has to offer, Sophie Weinmann shares her favourite library locations

to a library like Seeley, so during an especially busy exam term week, you might feel a bit crowded, but usually it's still no problem to find a cozy spot!

With over 100 libraries within the university, most of us probably won't get around to trying out every study spot in Cambridge. However, after a year - or even a term - it can be nice to switch it up and move to a different environment.

For me, that's meant rediscovering some of my favourite libraries from last Michaelmas after spending the entirety of exam term working with friends of either Waterstones or the Locker Cafe.

► Huge windows allow for some of the best lighting (AURELIA LI)



▲ Most of us probably won't get around to trying out every study spot (AURELIA LI)

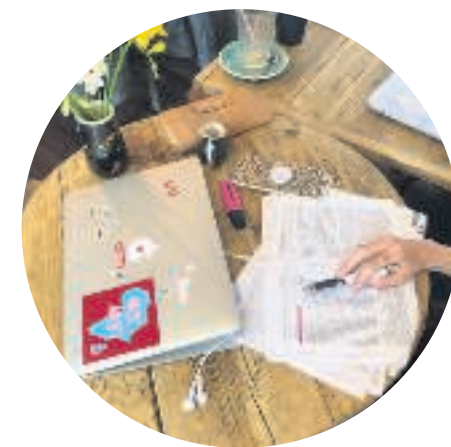
## vulture tunes: Study with me playlist

As beautiful as all of your new study spots may be, late-night library sessions can still be a drag. Our music editors' pick out some of their top songs to set the scene for long hours spent essay writing, reading or problem solving in the library this term.

Boy Child  
**Scott Walker**

Shadows  
**Red House Painters**

Pynk  
**Janelle Monae (feat. Grimes)**



Stratus  
**Billy Cobham**

Disco Yes  
**Tom Misch and Poppy Ajudha**

Weightless (Rival Consoles  
Remix)  
**Neil Cowley**

Another Lifetime  
**Nao**

Lights On  
**H.E.R**

For the Hungry Boy  
**Jonny Greenwood**



# Northern voices in the Cambridge theatre scene



▲ HOME is one of the main theatres in Manchester (BILLIE COLLINS)

Billie Collins discusses the difficulties of wanting to be a successful writer from the North and the compromises that might entail

I'm in one of the UK's leading Northern theatres, sat opposite a professional dramaturg (if you don't know what a dramaturg is, that's fine, nobody does, the point is, this woman is a *guru*.) I'm meeting her to chat about this 'being a playwright' thing and get advice on what I should do to keep it going. I look at her like she's an oracle, wide-eyed, nervous. She pauses. Takes a sip of her coffee. Looks at me. Sighs, and says:

"Move to London."

This is not what I wanted to hear.

When I leave Cambridge, I'll face a choice: stay up North, or move to London. I thought I'd already pledged my allegiance. I wore my badge with honour, and if I was going to make it as a playwright, *surely* I was going to do it, to quote Elbow's Guy Garvey, 'in the town where they know what I'm like and don't mind.' But here was someone who worked at a regional theatre *telling* me to move to London. What was going on?

I didn't know I was Northern until I got to Cambridge. I mean, I knew I was born in Manchester, raised in Merseyside. But you don't really realise that you're Northern until you're in the South, when people start mimicking the way you say, 'Hiya love'. And I suppose my awareness of my Northernness, and, with it, my pride in my Northernness, was heightened by my experience of the Cambridge Theatre Scene.

(I'd like to note that the word 'Northern' is a tricky thing and raises one of the problems I've found in Cambridge Theatre: the idea that 'the North' is a homogenous wilderness that materialises at some point on the M6. I can only write from my own experience. Of course, certain areas of the South face similar problems, so in this article I'll be focusing largely on London, acknowledging that 'the

South' is also not a homogenous wilderness. Nevertheless, it's ludicrous how many times I've heard people talk about doing a 'Northern' accent without specifying which bit of the North they mean. Scouse? Manc? Geordie? Anyway, as they say "up North" *let's get back t' point or summat.*)

Growing up, my experiences of theatre were largely going to the Royal Exchange Theatre, the Liverpool Everyman and fringy

venues like the Unity, and 3 Minute Theatre (based in Affleck's Palace - Manchester's haven for all the goths and the geeks). Coming to Cambridge, I felt a bit behind. I hadn't seen nearly as much as a lot Southern thespians, hadn't been going to the National since I was 8, and couldn't join in on how good *The Ferryman* was. My experience of what theatre was, or could be, was dramatically different. I was used to a Scouse audience, an audience unafraid to participate, to let you know what they thought. I was used to theatre that took pride in its regional identity and plays where people only did RP accents if they were taking the piss.

There's an implicit arrogance to the attitudes of some who grew up with the London theatre scene - an expectation that I'll know what's been on at the Donmar, whereas if I asked, I doubt many people in Cambridge could name three theatres north of Birmingham.

This isn't to slam the West End - yes, it's good, but it's not the only thing out there, and to ignore regional theatre is to diminish the range of beautiful and exciting stories we could be telling.

So why was I being told to move to the big smoke? Regional theatres tend to have more commitment to the individual development of artists from their area. The Royal Exchange had been encouraging me to write since I was in school, and the literary department at the Everyman was happy to meet me when I was just 16. The amount these places invest in their local communities is outstanding.

London, by contrast, has exposure. When Anna Jordan's *Yen* opened at the Royal Exchange in 2015, it had countless pull-factors - a Bruntwood winner, directed by bright-young-things Ned Bennett. But 'industry people' just weren't coming. It is *very hard* to get agents to leave London.

It was only a five-star review from the Guardian in the show's *final* week that had them coming in droves. This led to a run at the Royal Court, and suddenly it was a huge success. This is was the thing - you can have a play on at one of the UK's leading regional theatres and it won't be picked up by 'the industry', but you get a play on in a tiny pub theatre in Camden, and suddenly you're the big I am.

It's not ideal, and the lack of regional representation in Cambridge Theatre feels like a precursor to the London-centrism that pervades British theatre more broadly. I'd like to believe that if you're a good playwright, if you write good plays, you will be successful regardless of where you are.

I'm not a fan of treating the theatre world like a game, but suddenly 18 months in London, picking up as much experience as I can, and then moving back up North where the

rent is cheaper (and the Tube isn't a thing) seemed like an option.

I'm not sure what's going to happen when I leave University, but I hope at least in my final year I will get to see more regional representation here. It would be a gradual shift, but we can get the ball rolling. Next time you fancy seeing something, try looking further afield. Maybe try Leeds Playhouse, or Live Theatre Newcastle. It'll will be worth it. (The train journey isn't that bad. Pull your finger out.)

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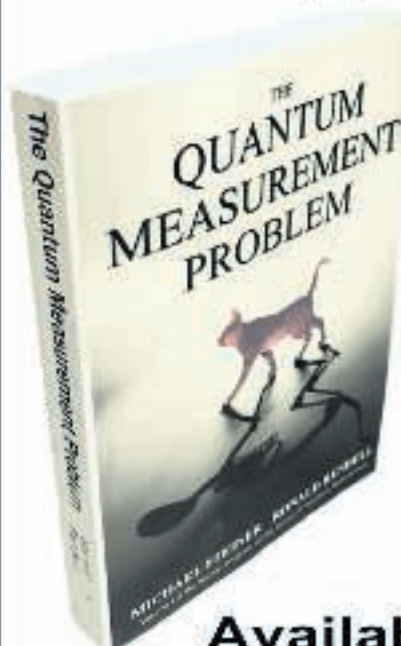
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# Science

## Progress, one woman at a time

Women scientists are doing pioneering research across Cambridge. **Rachael Barrett** speaks to four of them about their work

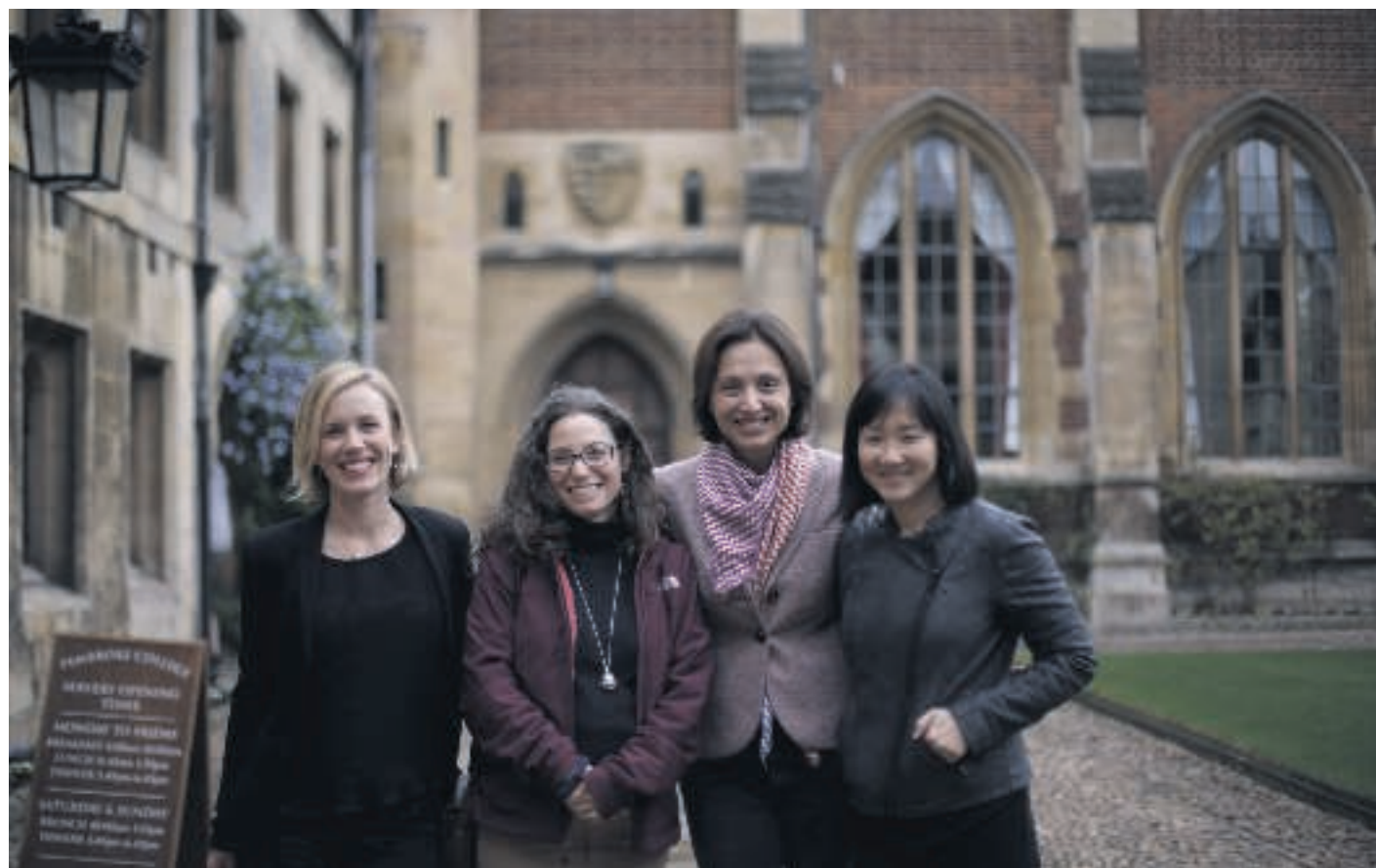
Dr Maria Ubiali stumbled upon her love of physics while babysitting a scientist's child, who told her that "the physicist is an artist who can't draw". Laughing, she reaffirms that she doesn't regret the choice at all. Studying theoretical physics in Milan, she was advised to go abroad to further her career, finally moving to Cambridge where she was recently awarded a lectureship. Her work involves "asking fundamental questions about the building blocks of matter" by investigating the structure of protons. The first scientist in her family, Ubiali owes her encouragement to two men, her supervisors, but admits that there were times in her life – particularly after career breaks when the environment coming back seemed "hostile" – when she felt she needed to talk to a woman. "Since then," she explains, "I took it as a sort of mission to talk to younger women myself because I think many people don't have the encouragement that I had".

She has watched many talented women fall victim to the leaky pipeline who "honestly would've been amazing professors at any university" – offering the lack of encouragement post-career break and childcare as explanations. Ubiali explains: "When I go to a conference [my daughters] feel very excited; they don't know anything about it, but they feel proud." Through them she tries to understand why fewer girls go into physics, suggesting discouragement from teachers as a factor. Ubiali urges women not to be intimidated. "You often meet people who are very sure of themselves; I think you've got to be confident and keep asking until you get an answer that you understand...you should be humble but persistent and passionate."

"My career path is not what is thought of as the classic science career path. It didn't work out that way for me." Dr Lovorka Stojic followed her science away from post-war Croatia to Zurich, Naples, and finally to Cambridge. Publishing 18 papers in top journals including Nature Communications and Science, she now hopes to establish her own lab in the Department of Biochemistry as early as April 2019. Stojic works on non-coding RNA; she tries to understand their role in important cellular processes like cell division, and through this their importance in cancer. Alongside this she is a mother of two, but rather than having the diminishing effect on her career, motherhood heightened her pangs for the lab: "Officially I was off but mentally I wanted to be in, I wanted to be involved" – resulting in anecdotes of breastfeeding while analysing data with her masters student. The determination required for such a balancing act shouldn't be under-

► **Dr Maria Ubiali, Dr Lovorka Stojic, Dr Diana Fusco and Dr Jenny Zhang (From left to right)**

(EVELINA POLYAKOV)



estimated. Best put by Stojic's old boss at Harvard after having his own child, "How did you get this done?"

In reply she avoids self-congratulation, explaining that it was necessary for the completion of her project, instead choosing to emphasise the wonderful support network of family, friends and colleagues who have helped her throughout, in particular naming Professor Adele Murrell (University of Bath) and Dr Fanni Gergely (Cancer Research UK) as people who believed in her throughout her time at Cambridge. Recalling Saturday coffee mornings with Adele where the two would discuss science, she adds "I will never forget that, and I am grateful to Adele for her support". Stojic wouldn't say she was treated differently as a woman in science, emphasising that regardless of gender "you have to have a hard skin, because it's not going to be an easy path". She says that the most important thing is to be passionate, because "at the end of the day it starts from you, and you should not be intimidated at all".

"Let's try physics and see what happens." Dr Diana Fusco describes her career as a "random walk around the different fields of science". Trained as a theoretical physicist in Milan, she went on to do a PhD in computational biology and finally, tired of computational work, said, "That's it, I'm going to learn how to do experiments", falling in love with molecular biology and the "magic that can be done with it". New to lecturing in Cambridge, with a child on the way and presently setting up her own lab, she continues her postdoctoral work on how bacteriophages evolve and adapt to a bacterial lawn spread in 3D space and

how interactions with each other have consequences in their evolution. When asked if she's a converted biologist now, she says that "I like to think so, but I still do think how I pose a problem is from a physics perspective". Physics is notorious for being a male-dominated space; Fusco, however, observes that "once you're there, there is nothing that makes you feel different because you're a woman". However, she recounts unpleasant experiences working with female role models, who "belong to another generation of women for whom the gender bias was greater; for them to make it to a particular career point they had to be really harsh and strong". Now she feels both "honoured and responsible" when acting as a mentor for students, especially girls.

Though she reports no unpleasant gender-based experiences in the lab, she mentions both male and female colleagues playing down her accomplishments, saying "of course you won, you're the only woman taking part in it" – an attitude that affected her at the beginning of her career. Today, she wants to reassure her students that "you win these things because you deserve it". Fusco remains positive that the gender gap is narrowing, citing the first female Nobel laureate in Physics in 55 years as a mark of progress and a role model for girls, so long as nobody is crediting that victory to the fact she's the 'token woman'.

Dr Jenny Zhang's research crosses boundaries between the sciences, "Chemistry is the glue holding all the different sciences together – everything involves atoms and molecules". Getting her own fellowship let Zhang diverge

from her anti-cancer drug roots into different fields, something she described as "liberating". She combines her PhD and postdoctoral work researching the bioenergetics and redox chemistry of photosynthesising cyanobacteria, harnessing a phenomenon where bacteria secrete electrons, effectively acting as a power cell. Zhang points out the more "insidious" forms of discrimination "that are undercover and less obvious but still effective", giving examples like the allocation of female scientists to administrative roles and constant interruption by men when talking at important meetings. All of Zhang's principal investigators have been male; she acknowledges that "without their support it wouldn't have been possible", explaining that it pushed her to become a PI herself.

She thinks that community among women scientists is important, saying that "it's really nice to be able to validate each other's struggles". Referencing the allocation of women to clerical roles, Zhang makes the important point that, probably because of culture, women are usually very agreeable when asked to work behind the scenes to further the progress of the team. However, she warns female scientists not to over-volunteer, advising them to "get really good at what you do, at one or two things, so you know that you have value to bring". Naming two-time Nobel Prize winner Marie Curie as one of her role models, Zhang thinks the two female Nobel laureates this year are marks of "excellent progress" but remains cautious: "It's important to know also that while we're making progress, there's still a long way to go."

“You’ve got to be confident and keep asking until you get an answer that you understand”

“The physicist is an artist who can’t draw”



# How scientists are trying to map brain functions

**Moataz Assem**

The patient, lying awake during brain surgery, starts counting “one, two, three, four...”, then paused before carrying on “five, six...”. He didn’t mean to pause - he was forced to, because the neurosurgeon had sent an electrical pulse to a part of his brain responsible for speech, leaving him, if only for a moment, mute.

Zapping brains, and thereby temporarily switching off certain areas, is standard procedure during awake neurosurgeries. Doctors usually opt for this approach when trying to remove a tumour that has grown close to, or is merged with, healthy tissue. If patients stop being able to do basic things such as counting while a certain brain area is silenced,

then the surgeon knows not to remove it in order to preserve its functions. But how can they avoid cutting out brain tissue involved in subtler cognitive functions, like the ability to switch attention from one task to another? One problem is that sending electrical pulses to brain areas involved in such functions wouldn't lead to an immediately clear impairment like losing the ability to speak. To this end, we have developed a novel approach whereby we place electrodes on the surface of patient's brains, allowing us to record neural activity in the operating theatre. We then make the brain multitask, for example by asking the patient to alternately count numbers and letters. An algorithm analyses the signals detected by the electrodes as the patient performs this, giving real-time feedback to the surgeon. This allows them to better predict the impact that the removal of a particular piece of brain tissue would have on the patient.

The recorded brain activity will also help neuroscientists construct a more detailed map of brain function, something hard to do with less invasive methods such like brain scans. In the long term, we are working on software which doctors can use in surgery, which integrates the data we are collecting with brain scans of patients obtained before surgery. This way, our research could transform brain surgeries by offering the patient a better understanding of the risks of the surgery and providing neurosurgeons a better map of the brain.

“Zapping brains is standard procedure during awake neurosurgeries”



## Varsity explains

# How do bikes stay upright?

Joseph Krol

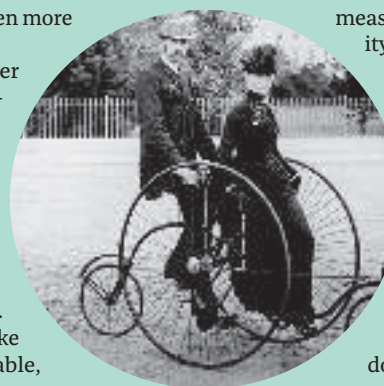
Science Editor

For a city so suffused with bikes, Cambridge is not known for them being ridden safely. Given how often people ride them with both hands on their phone, swerving erratically around tourists, it's really a wonder that there aren't more accidents. Looking at the science behind it all only serves to make this even more mysterious.

In a truly wonderful paper published in 1970, the Imperial chemist David Jones decided to try and work out the mechanism once and for all, which he elected to do by making a series experimental bikes, each with a new feature designed to somehow reduce the bicycle's stability. His end goal, to produce a bike that was completely unrideable,

▼ A smartly-dressed couple in 1886

(DARWINEK)



proved remarkably hard to reach. He first attached a flywheel to the bicycle's front wheel, intended to counteract the alleged gyroscopic effects at play by spinning in the opposite sense. Although initially a somewhat strange riding experience, it soon proved to be fairly easy to ride.

He played around a bit more – making the tyres extremely thin, reversing the tilt of the front fork – but neither had the desired effect (indeed, the latter change in fact made it even more stable). What finally provided the killer blow was a factor barely anyone had considered: the offset between the front wheel's centre and the extension of the fork. He showed that the sum of this distance (scaled by the wheel radius) and the angle of the front fork to the vertical gives a very good measure of a bike's natural stability, which turned out to fit the data for almost every bicycle ever made.

There's more to it than that, of course – the actions of the rider are naturally key to the bike's motion. It's interesting, though, that something which appears so simple, indeed so commonplace, is still not fully understood – sometimes we don't yet have all the answers.

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# It is high time for Varsity rugby to be moved away from Twickenham

**William Ross** discusses the implications of holding the annual Varsity rugby match at one of Britain's most celebrated grounds

The Varsity Rugby match, played annually at Twickenham, remains one of the highlights of the Oxbridge sporting calendar. Each year, the two blues rugby teams are given the privilege of battling it out at the home of English rugby, and the second-largest sports stadium in the United Kingdom. The only way for other British university rugby teams to play at Twickenham is for them to reach the final of the BUCS Super Rugby Championship, a tournament which the Oxbridge rugby blues do not even compete in. Why, then, are the Oxbridge rugby teams automatically afforded an annual trip to Twickenham?

The simple answer is tradition. The match, played annually since 1872 and held at Twickenham since 1921, is one of the world's longest-running sporting fixtures.

As the official Varsity Match website notes: "the importance of the contest is highlighted by the enormous contribution Oxbridge rugby and the Varsity Match have made to the development and refinement of the game of rugby over the last 135 years."

"Up until 1875, the Universities fielded 20 players a-side, as was the norm for Rugby football in those early years. In that year, the Universities and their respective Blues took the initiative and changed to 15-a side. This caught on quickly and was adopted as the international standard in 1877."

Oxbridge rugby was certainly a trendsetter, setting the standard for the rest of the rugby world to follow. Indeed, the game was historically played to a professional, even international standard, with more than 600 players from either

Oxford or Cambridge gaining international representative honours since its inception.

Indeed, according to the official Varsity match website, it remains "the pinnacle of amateur and student rugby". The results of the Oxbridge rugby teams against other British university rugby sides, however, reveal a sobering reality: since the 2012-13 season, the Cambridge University Rugby Blues have played 17 fixtures against other British Universities, losing 12 of them, drawing 1 and winning just 4. In other words, they failed to win over 76% of their matches against other British Universities. Put simply, Oxbridge rugby is no longer the dominant force in student rugby that it once was. If attendance at Twickenham was judged on a purely meritocratic basis, it would be hard to maintain the argument that Oxbridge should be there.

Norman Celliers, a former Varsity match winner at Oxford, said of the Varsity match a few years ago: "It's unique; it's about Britain and history and tradition". But playing conkers in the playground, Morris dancing and eating plover's eggs are also rooted in British tradition. Does that mean that they remain relevant in the 21st century? At any rate, do we really want a society fixated on history and tradition, at the expense of a meritocracy?

Members of the Oxbridge Rugby certainly work phenomenally hard over the course of the season in balancing their preparation for the Varsity match alongside their studies, but the fact remains that so do players at universities up and down the country.

Playing at Twickenham is a privilege which should be earned through excellence on the rugby pitch, not automatically bestowed. Special privileges for the Oxford and Cambridge rugby blues only serves to perpetuate the damaging myth that Oxbridge is in some sense better in all areas than other universities.

If we want to favour meritocracy over elitism and innovation over anachronistic traditions, we need to stop giving Oxbridge rugby a free pass to Twickenham. Ultimately, society has changed irrevocably since the early 20th century; the rugby world should do the same.



▲ The Varsity Match will be played at Twickenham (PHOTO BY DAVID ILIFF)

“Playing at Twickenham is a privilege which should be earned through excellence on the rugby pitch, not automatically bestowed”

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**The ball's in your court.** William Ross questions why we send Varsity rugby to Twickenham **31**



Oxford	1
CUAFC	0

# Familiar foes inflict late defeat on Light Blues

**Will Robinson**  
Sports Reporter

Cambridge University Association Football Club fell once again on Wednesday at the hands of their oldest rivals, losing 1-0 to Oxford – thanks to a late Leonardo Ackerman goal in a game not short of controversy.

The Blues' second successive BUCS defeat of the season leaves them bottom of the Midlands 1A division, and makes a defence of their 2017-18 title an improbability, even this early in the season.

Looking to bounce back from a 3-0 defeat at Nottingham last week, the Cambridge coaching staff called for quick, precise passing during the warm up, reminding their players that they gave the opposition too much respect the week before.

However, it was the Dark Blues who came out the strongest, beginning to dominate possession and looking more composed on the ball. Oxford's Varsity hero Dom Thelen's run-ins behind proved a constant threat for the Cambridge defence, and it was he who had their first chance, capitalising on a loose pass in the Light Blues' midfield only for his shot to be saved low to the goalkeepers left.

It was clear that he and Leo Ackerman remained Oxford's most influential players from last season's Varsity defeat, and a beautiful cross-field ball from the latter was brought down with ease by Thelen, who took on his man but found only the

▲ **The Light Blues faced off against the Dark Blues on the pitch** (NICHOLAS FOONG)



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goalkeeper with his low cross.

Cambridge, struggling to get out of their own half, were condemned to defending Oxford set-pieces. The Dark Blues, seemingly in homage to England's World Cup exploits, had implemented the so-called 'love-train' routine from corners, although without the same success in practise.

Oxford's clearest chance of the first half hour came in the wake of a Cambridge attack. Committing men forward for the first time, the Light Blues were left exposed at the back, and a loose touch in midfield allowed Thelen to advance at the Cambridge defence and flash a low shot past the goalkeeper's far post.

The first controversial call came in the 29th minute, as Henry Alexander, an isolated figure for much of the first half, was brought down in the area whilst through on goal; despite emphatic Cambridge protests, the referee was unmoved.

Just 10 minutes later Cambridge heads were in hands once again, as a handball appeal was turned down. The Light Blue winger's reaction warranted him a stern talking-to from the officials, and the scores remained level at the break.

At the start of the second half, Oxford almost capitalised on Cambridge sloppiness to go ahead. A Light Blue goal kick was given straight to Thelen, who advanced into the penalty area and, evading rash challenges from the Cambridge defence, chipped the goalkeeper, only for his shot to be cleared off the line. Had he gone down, Oxford would likely have been awarded the penalty.

“*Cambridge, struggling to get out of their own half, were condemned to defending Oxford set-pieces*”

The Light Blues responded, switching to a 3-5-2 formation, isolating Thelen up front and causing the game to become scrappier. They were almost immediately rewarded. A free-kick 30 yards out was met by a Cambridge head and guided into the bottom corner, but the offside flag had been raised.

Oxford was shaken into action, and began to attack with more persistence. Again acting as the Oxford talisman, Thelen beautifully brought down a long Ackerman ball and seemed to have added the finish, only for a goal-line clearance to keep the scores level.

The breakthrough came with just eight minutes to go, and it was no surprise at those involved. A Thelen run down the right-wing was pulled back for the Dark

Blue centre-forward, who laid it off for Leonardo Ackerman. The left-back's low shot was struck too sweetly for the Cambridge keeper, who got a hand to the ball but failed to keep the effort out.

With just minutes to find an equaliser, the Light Blues increased the pressure, but could not trouble the Oxford defence; indeed it was Oxford who went closest to adding a second, with Thelen twice denied by a fantastic save and the offside flag.

Holding on for a 1-0 win, Oxford sent out an early statement that they would be working to demonstrate that their Varsity dominance was not just a one-off. Walking off the pitch, goal-scorer and captain Ackerman barked out: “This is just the first of three, boys!” It will now be down to the Light Blues to prove him wrong.

► **After this defeat, Cambridge will struggle to keep last year's title** (NICHOLAS FOONG)

