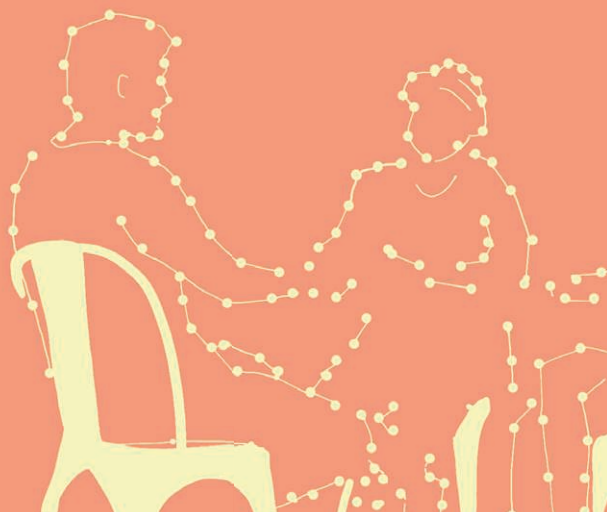


# A place of peace

Creating a space just for myself

Lifestyle 22



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**Features 12**

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Friday 8th November 2019  
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# VARSITY

## Reporting racism 'After not being taken seriously, I gave up trying to pursue the complaint'

Amy Batley, Inez Daltrop & Sophie Zhang  
Investigations Editors

*Content Note: This article contains discussion of racism and racist discrimination*

"I will always look to report racism", said one student, but "if you go in with low expectations you can avoid the disappointment of feeling as if the institution is not handling the harassment seriously".

"Being questioned to prove that an incident was based on our appearance and [how we] sound means that we never report microaggressions", said another student.

Varsity spoke to students about their personal experiences of reporting racism to Cambridge's colleges after an investigation by *The Guardian* earlier this year found that, with 72 recorded complaints between October 2014 and April 2019, Cambridge received the highest number of formal complaints relating to racism of 131 UK universities.

Despite this figure, testimonies from BME students indicate that the processes of reporting racism, and the attitudes expressed by certain members of staff across colleges, can deter indi-

viduals from ever submitting formal complaints.

Earlier this month, a national report, published by the Equality and Human Rights Commission [EHRC], found that as many as two thirds of students who had experienced racial harassment do not report the incidents to their university.

Seth Daoood, a second year Natural Sciences student, formerly a student at Wolfson College, was subjected to a racist slur from another student during a college bop.

Upon reporting the incident to the College, Seth was invited to attend an informal meeting with Wolfson's Senior Tutor. In this meeting, he was told that the most likely course of action from the College, were he to file a formal complaint, would be for the College to encourage an apology letter from the student in question. He was also told that he would be offered the opportunity of a mediated discussion with the student, in which he would be able to explain how he felt about the experience to the perpetrator.

Seth was disappointed with both suggestions. "It is not up to minorities to explain to the privileged majority why

Full story page 10 ►



▲ Sidney Sussex College (DANIEL GAYNE)

## New report investigates LGBTQ+ experiences across Cambridge

Ellie Arden  
News Correspondent

*Content Note: This article contains discussion of homophobia*

A report has been published revealing the experiences of people identifying as LGBTQ+ at Cambridge University.

The report is one of the first outputs from Q+@cam - a programme that promotes research, outreach and network-building related to queer, trans and sexuality studies at the University of Cambridge.

Last year's Stonewall report showed two in five LGBT students (42 per cent) have hidden their identity at university for fear of discrimination, and that seven per cent of trans students have been physically attacked by another student or member of university staff in the last year.

The Q+@cam report was created to understand what Cambridge feels like from an LGBTQ+ perspective, and where improvements are needed.

Researcher and PhD candidate Elisabeth Sandler conducted 55 qualitative interviews with members of the University community between February and April this year. Those interviewed included 31 staff members and 24 students from 23 academic disciplines across all six Cambridge Schools.

The report highlighted the importance of being able to comfortably disclose sexual

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# EDITORIAL

## Unity, not division, in the strikes to come

Spring 2018 saw unprecedented numbers of academic staff engage in 14 days of escalating industrial action, which, according to the University and College Union (UCU), affected an estimated one million students.

When these strikes, provoked by proposed changes to staff pensions, came to an end, the general consensus was far from clear among the student body at large. Although student-staff solidarity, at least visibly, seemed to be at its height – with mass demonstrations, occupations and great amounts of support at picket lines – many students nevertheless felt that this industrial action was detrimental to their educational experience, choosing to cross picket lines to attend classes which had not been cancelled as a result of the strikes.

Now, staff have once again voted to take industrial action over pensions and working and living conditions, with UCU members set to strike for eight days from 25th November. For the students who will be affected by this latest industrial action, this situation may undoubtedly be serious cause for concern. Perhaps even more so for finalists, for whom these strikes may represent the second large-scale round of industrial action to affect them during their time at the University.

But recognising student concerns and supporting academic staff need not be contradictory actions, and we shouldn't allow this situation to be framed as a conflict between staff and students.

We are all members of this University, and all have the right to stability and security, which is exactly what UCU members are demanding.

This is an opportunity to critically examine how we think about our University community, and to recognise, and vocally declare, that even beyond being a basic right, stability is essential to ensuring that our academic communities continue to thrive.

*Maia Wyn Davies & Stephanie Stacey*

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## Interviews

# In Taking Up Space, Chelsea Kwakye and Ore Ogunbiyi bring stories by Black women to the centre stage

*Victoria Ayodeji speaks to the authors and Cambridge graduates about access, platforming Black voices, and the legacies they want to leave*

Being born in East London to Nigerian parents, I often found it difficult to see my life experiences — many of which have been shaped by my cultural hybridity — appearing in the literature that I read growing up. So reading Chelsea Kwakye and Ore Ogunbiyi's new book, *Taking Up Space: The Black Girl's Manifesto to Change*, in the summer before entering my second year at Cambridge was great preparation. The book, published by Merky Books, a new publishing partnership between grime artist Stormzy and Penguin Random House, could not have come at a better time for me, and for hundreds of Black girls across the country. Both of the women, so well accomplished, warm, and humble, are inspirations of mine.

I begin my conversation with them by asking about how the idea of the book came about, as not many 22-year olds can say that they have published a book after graduating from university just one year prior. They both giggle, and say that writing the book was pure serendipity, as MerkyBooks approached them. From tweeting about the #BlackMenofCambridge Campaign that Ogunbiyi and Kwakye organised in their second year, attending the first Cambridge ACS Motherland Conference, and of course, setting up the Stormzy Scholarship, Stormzy's involvement with the Cambridge ACS has helped to contribute to discussions of representation at elite universities.

For Kwakye, the writing process helped to deconstruct her notion of what it means to be an author to something less narrow. "I thought an author was just someone who read lots of books and has been working on something for years and years and for us, two girls who had just been plucked out of university to write this book, the self-doubt began to creep in". Ogunbiyi chimes in, "we thought, 'are we really the ones to be writing this book?'"

With the air of confidence that radiates from both of the women, I was shocked to find out that they had imposter syn-

drome during the writing process initially, though it faded over time. Ogunbiyi explained: "Our editors were impressed with the things we were writing about and I felt proud at the end".

"We have been given this opportunity to write the book and in the end it was a really positive experience... everyone who has read the book has been like, wow this is exactly what I needed," added Kwakye. The book explores topics ranging from the Decolonise movement to University access, from relationships to mental health, to the lack of diversity within higher education institutions. It's "a book not just for black girls" as Ogunbiyi puts it, but a book "for everyone to read and learn from," Kwakye adds.

Ogunbiyi and Kwakye graduated from Cambridge University in 2018, and were president and vice-president respectively of the Cambridge University African-Caribbean Society (ACS). Kwakye, of Ghanaian heritage, graduated with a first class degree in History from Homerton, having attended a state school in Chingford, North East London. She is now studying at the University of Law in preparation for her training contract with a City law firm. Ogunbiyi was born in Croydon, South London, she moved to Nigeria aged seven, and then moved back to England aged thirteen, attending a boarding school before she began her studies in Human Social and Political Sciences at Jesus. This summer she graduated with a Masters in Journalism from Columbia University in New York, and is one of the youngest people to take up her current position as a Special Assistant to the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

We spoke, too, about the importance of diversity of thought especially when portraying the experiences of Black people in the media and in literature. "Black people are not a monolith...we are all so very different and the book really highlights that". Kwakye complimented a sentiment that is often disregarded with how the varied voices within the book helps to "move the

“Black people are not a monolith... we are all so very different and the book really highlights that”

▲ Chelsea Kwakye, left, and Ore Ogunbiyi, right (NIK YAZIKOV)



# Interviews



conversation beyond Oxbridge and shows that we need to talk about the whole system when discussing access and the lack of diversity, it is not just a problem with the universities at the top”.

Citing a huge quantity of statistics to back up personal testimonies, the book has been made indisputable, despite the worries they had about the burden of needing to always offer some kind of proof to validate their experiences at university. *Taking Up Space* features 14 other Black and Mixed Race female university students from across the country.

It includes words from entrepreneur and Cambridge graduate Courtney Daniella and Renée Kapuku, a first class graduate from the University of Oxford. A video on Daniella’s YouTube channel in 2016, ‘How we got into Oxford & Cambridge: our experiences & tips’ has now amassed nearly half a million views, and has helped to demystify the Oxbridge application process for hundreds if not thousands of young people, including 17-year old me. It was a catalyst for my decision to apply to Cambridge, as I’m sure it was for many other young Black girls. Daniella and Kapuku were funny and relatable, while also being motivational.

Ogunbiyi explains the need for “prospective students to identify with current Cambridge students is essential in getting them to apply”, which is, of course, one of the successes of *Taking Up Space*. Social media plays a huge role in

“Utilise the communal spaces of cultural societies, take advantage and treasure them”

giving young Black girls permission and validation to ‘take up space’, to contribute to spaces that need their voices and experiences shaped by their positionality within society. “We can often take for granted what it is like to feel seen...when you see yourself represented you’ve got the confidence of knowing that someone who looks like you, shares the same jokes as you and talks like you, is visible in the university or sector that you aspire to succeed in”, Kwakye adds.

It was nearly two years ago that Ogunbiyi wrote a *Varsity* article entitled ‘A letter to my fresher self: surviving Cambridge as a black girl’. The article received an unprecedented amount of online traction. It was picked up by the *i* newspaper and was described as one of “the most beautiful, powerful and defiant pieces of writing” that Labour MP David Lammy had read in a long time. I ask Kwakye and Ogunbiyi what advice they’d give now to the freshers who matriculated to Cambridge last month. “Utilise the communal spaces of cultural societies, take advantage and treasure these spaces... but also don’t be afraid to branch out as your closest friends may not always come from exactly the same background as you”, Ogunbiyi says. This advice strongly resonated with me, as it was a defining lesson learned during my first year.

We later laughed about the stark contrast in music played at different Cambridge club nights, and on how the

Cambridge club night ‘Fleeky Fridays’ at Cindies was Ogunbiyi and Kwakye’s saving grace as it always guaranteed them great vibes and even better tunes.

I ask them what their favourite Afrobeats songs are currently, a question that even I as a lifelong lover of music would struggle to answer. Ogunbiyi’s is ‘Online’ by Nigerian Musician Teni, which samples the Hip Hop and R&B classic ‘Always on Time’ by Rapper Ja Rule and Singer Ashanti. Kwakye took a while to answer, eventually settling on ‘Anybody’ by the Nigerian Musician Burna Boy, who was announced this year as Apple Music’s Up Next artist. We all had agreed that ‘Ojuelegba’ by Nigerian Musician WizKid definitely featured in our list of honourable mentions.

We close the interview on the topic of what they would like their legacy to be. They both pause for a moment. Ogunbiyi begins, “Oh, that’s a good question. I want to invite more people into the conversations the book highlights especially those that are non-Black.

“With the skills that I have learnt in the UK, I am passionate and excited about young Africans in the diaspora going back to Africa to do amazing things and I want to inspire others to do the same to”. With *Taking Up Space* launching in Nigeria this December, this movement of Black internationalism is something that excites me too. Kwakye’s idea of her legacy is deeply rooted in institutional memory. She wants to “give people the confidence to want to continue to carry on the conversation”. Cambridge is a defining time in the lives of most students who study here. For Kwakye and Ogunbiyi, it was the space that has allowed that friendship to flourish, where a sisterly bond was built between them that has impact hundreds along the way. Watch this space as these women are going to continue to take the world by storm.

## NEWS

### City Council approves ‘micro homes’ for city’s homeless

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## FEATURES

### Our standards of beauty have been slowly corrupted

Page 11 ►



▲ Illustration by Yuxin Li for Varsity

## VIOLET

### When life imitates Brexit

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# Could you be the next Editor of Varsity?

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# News



## Cambridge celebrates bonfire night

Cambridge's sky lit up this week as Bonfire Night celebrations took place across the city. The evening of the 5th November was itself marked by a fireworks display on Midsummer Common.

► Around 20,000 people gathered to watch the display (JOHANNES HAATAJA)



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## DIPPING OUT

### Hummus recalled from Sainsbury's

Hummus products were recalled from multiple supermarket chains this week amid fears they may contain salmonella. 17 products with use-by dates between 31st October and 17th November were recalled from supermarkets such as Asda, Lidl, and Sainsbury's. A spokesperson for Zorba Delicacies said salmonella had been found in a "limited volume" of their hummus. According to the BBC, around 12,000 tonnes of hummus are consumed by Britons each year.

## ELON PUT THE KETTLE ON

### Cambridge electric car rivals the Tesla

Cambridge University Eco Racing team have built a solar-powered electric car with a battery that is more powerful than that used in a Tesla. The car can travel from London to the Scottish Highlands using the same power it takes to boil a kettle. The vehicle tests the limits of automotive battery technology, efficient tyres and aerodynamics, weighing only 550kg due to specialist ultra-lightweight carbon-fibre chassis and body panels tooled by Portsmouth based Formaplex.

## WORD ON THE STREET

### Cambridge's Word of the Year 2019

Cambridge Dictionary has named 'upcycling', the activity of making new items out of old or used things, as its Word of the Year for 2019. The number of times the noun, which may be familiar to students, has been looked up on the Cambridge Dictionary website has risen by 181% since December of 2011, and searches doubled in the last year. The Publishing Manager stated that it reflects "the momentum around individual actions to combat climate change".

## STUDENT STRIKE SUPPORT

### 'Strikebridge' page to support students

Student organisers have set up a Facebook page to provide information on the upcoming strikes, which are due to begin on 25 November. 'Strikebridge' is for "mutual educational support, book-sharing and info-sharing on strike support" but it is, they emphasise, "not for debates!" The group is open to all Cambridge students and is intended to help them organize and assist each other, while avoiding crossing picket lines. Beyond the strike period, set to last until 4th December, Strikebridge is intended to exist as a year-round resource for academic discussion and support.

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## Interviews

# The lack of diversity in journalism is a crisis, says *HuffPost* Executive Editor Jess Brammar

**Juliet Martin** speaks to Jess Brammar about the future of UK digital media

In such singularly volatile times of post-truth and fake news, it's never been more imperative to consider carefully the way we consume our information. We have more news at our fingertips now than ever before, but while headlines clamour and clash on our Twitter feeds, the sheer amount of noise can threaten to distract audiences from what's most pressing. So how can news channels go about building strong reputations for honest reporting that will ensure their followers keep coming back for more? What does the future hold for digital newsrooms, given that a brief glance at social media is quickly becoming the primary source of information for everyone within sight of a screen or in reach of a smartphone? These are



questions which Jess Brammar, Executive Editor of HuffPost UK, says are being grappled with every single day by anyone who works in journalism.

Brammar has been at the forefront of the news industry since starting out on *BBC Question Time*; since then she's worked as News Editor for ITN, Deputy

◀ Jess Brammar started her career on *BBC Question Time* (EDELMAN/UK)

Editor for *Newsnight* and as Head of News for *HuffPost* UK before becoming Executive Editor in July this year. I begin our conversation by asking what's changed for journalists since she was Features Editor of her student newspaper at the London School of Economics. "We simply did not have digital journalism, so in that sense it's completely transformed," explains Brammar, adding with a laugh that the university paper's lack of online presence "now seems kind of crazy."

Today, she can't imagine doing anything else: "I'm still very close friends with the team that I worked with at university. It was great fun – working so hard for such long hours because you want to be around those people is definitely something that I've carried forwards into my career."

Although the Internet has brought huge, and often problematic, changes to patterns of news distribution and consumption, it's too easy to simply "rue the downsides about what's happened there", in Brammar's opinion. Yes, she acknowledges, "skimming through news stories by headline alone has obvious implications for people's contextual understandings of stories." But there comes a point when we have to accept that this is what today's media landscape looks like.

"There is no such thing as journalism that isn't digital anymore," Brammar continues. "Even the big blue-blooded print organisations are using social media to contact sources, to get ahead of stories. Nobody is sealed off from the digital world, so I think you sort of have to look for opportunity in it. And you absolutely have to keep old-fashioned journalistic news gathering methods at the heart of what you do."

This has been central to Brammar's approach to inspiring trust among readers in a crowded news market. "Building up really solid on-the-ground reporting, getting out into communities, making an effort to talk about the kind of stories they would like to see covered..."

In June last year, *HuffPost* made an extraordinary move in celebration of these journalistic conventions by temporarily relocating their entire newsroom to Birmingham's Bull Ring shopping centre. When I ask about Birmingham, Brammar says the biggest lesson for her was "seeing what getting out of the newsroom did to our team". In the familiar hustle and bustle of a shopping centre, "we'd actually come into a place in people's lives where they weren't expecting to consume news. That was really useful for us because it came at a time when people were saying that they're losing interest in news." Here, Brammar pauses. "But I believe they're just as interested in stories as they ever were. It's our job to pop up in their lives, whether it's on their mobile phone or in that extreme example, in a shopping centre, and make a point that stories and

news are just a part of discourse, they're part of everyday life."

And yet I'm curious to ask more about this risk of news fatigue amongst audiences. Full-time social media coverage means that we're constantly awash in a deluge of digital content which stresses the "unprecedented", the "first in history". While I in no way wish to suggest that today's events aren't urgent enough to merit this kind of language, its ubiquity on so many different platforms has left many feeling detached.

How can digital news channels address this? "It's a really tricky line to tread," says Brammar.

"But it's important that we maintain a completely reasonable level of outrage. If we stop reminding people that some of the events that are happening with the British government or with Donald Trump in the US are unprecedented, then I don't think we're doing our jobs properly as journalists. I do think the industry as a whole has moved away from clickbait; as an editor, I am always careful to remind my team that just because we're covering this stuff all the time, we shouldn't lose sight of the fact that a lot of what we're covering is, frankly, outrageous."

I ask if Brammar has any advice for young journalists, particularly in relation to social media. Is there a danger that increased pressure on journalists to cultivate personalities in the public eye and to build up followings on social media will open them up to online abuse? "First of all," says Brammar, "it's important to say that social media is a fantastic platform when you're starting out. I advise every young person to have a profile and to make it look engaged. You'd be mad not to; it's like a shop window. Having said that, I and many of my colleagues have experienced a lot of abuse on Twitter. It's often very gender-based and can be incredibly unpleasant."

When it comes to students using these platforms to voice their opinions, Brammar recommends a degree of caution, while making it clear that she's not telling young people not to get involved with politics or campaigns. "Just remember that your career might move in different ways down the line."

Entering a newsroom for the first time, she says, is above all an opportunity to learn: "Young people can teach people of my age and older so much about how to consume and think about journalism. And on the flipside, if you're a young person in a newsroom, you'll learn from all the people around you."

And what about the future of *HuffPost* UK and Brammar's goals for the platform going forward? Increasing diversity is absolutely a priority, she tells me. "The lack of diversity in journalism is a crisis. Diversifying is about enriching newsrooms and making them better, producing better content."

"Journalism will only survive if we make newsrooms look like the rest of the population", she says.

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“There is no such thing as journalism that isn't digital anymore”

‘Out at Cambridge’ New report documents experiences of the LGBTQ+ community

► Continued from front page

*Content Note: This article contains discussion of homophobia*

identities at university, and many members of the University said that if they were unable to do this, their response would be to leave the University.

Knowing whether to disclose identities was particularly problematic for younger students, the report found, as they often felt unsure about whether it was “relevant” in spaces where disclosure might be considered “out of place or intrusive.” The interviewees suggested that the inclusion of LGBTQ+ material on the curriculum would help create an encouraging and safe atmosphere for disclosure.

A postgraduate student was concerned that disclosing themselves might alter colleagues' perceptions: "I would not want them to see me as anything other than a professional person ...the department is very competitive."

Others noted the “emotional labour” involved in outing themselves in different contexts, feeling obliged to explain terminology, or being seen as the “token queer.”

"I don't know whether I want to do the work of educating people," explained one student.

A key factor increasing comfort with disclosure was whether other people, such as co-workers, students, staff

and especially powerful people, such as heads of departments or college masters, were openly out. The benefit of others disclosing was mentioned across all participant groups, including undergraduate and graduate students, academic and academic-related staff, as well as administrators.

One academic staff member pointed out that "the very fact that ... we have an out-gay woman as head of the department makes a huge difference to everyone in the department, especially to people who also don't identify as straight."

The report also detailed the importance of outward support for the community, including rainbow flags or welcoming behaviour from the Chaplain.

Many commented on the fact that Cambridge was a safe space to be 'out', and provided an opportunity to experiment with one's identity. They placed importance on the use of gender pronouns, although found it difficult when they had to correct people.

"I applied for the job at Cambridge and I realised that this was such a good opportunity to start presenting as female, as myself all the time because it was a clean break. So my first day at Cambridge was what I would consider to be my first day of presenting as myself full-time .if I wanted to be gendered correctly, I had to tell people," commented a staff member.

Alumni noted that the University

has become a much safer space for the LGBTQ+ community in recent years: A retired staff member said, “when I came up to Cambridge in the ‘60s, I wasn’t out as gay. In fact, I had terrible times as an undergraduate because the college was very homophobic in those days.”

The report suggested that changes could be made to increase LGBTQ+ inclusivity, such as using examples in lectures of LGBTQ+ topics, adding pronouns to email signatures, posting LGBTQ+ friendly announcements and posters, and simply acknowledging the existence of LGBTQ+ people' perspectives and experiences.

Q+@cam recognises that more research is needed in underrepresented participant groups, particularly BME students and staff, as only 11 of the participants were from non-white backgrounds.

The Vice Chancellor of the University, Professor Stephen Toope, said that the report "confirms that, although Cambridge has made progress in creating a more welcoming and supportive community for LGBTQ+ students and staff, there are still significant barriers to full

“The very fact that we have an out, gay woman as head of the department makes a huge difference

participation for too many LGBTQ+ people in our community.”

LGBTQ+@Cam, launched in January 2018 by the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, is a new programme aiming to promote research, outreach and network building related to queer, trans and sexuality studies at Cambridge.

Thus far, their work has included the development of seminars and workshops, along with a new series on Youtube interviewing researchers about how we can begin to 'queer(y)' the curriculum.

The programme is based principally in the sociology department, but has worked with at least 15 departments across the University, as well as several colleges.

In an interview with *Varsity* in November 2018, Dr Caroline Gonda, a fellow in English at St Catharine's College and subject of one of the recent Queer(y)ing the Curriculum videos, explained that the initiative is "not just about queer content, it's about queer ways of thinking and bringing queer perspectives to bear."



▲ A pride flag flies above the University Library (UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE)

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## News

# Cambridgeshire politics: ‘Unite to Remain’ and the potential loss of the student vote

Chloe Bayliss  
Senior News Editor

Constituents from South Cambridgeshire will not have the option to vote for a Green Party candidate, as the Green candidate withdrew as part of the Unite to Remain alliance.

The alliance is a pact between three anti-Brexit parties, the Liberal Democrat Party, the Green party, and Plaid Cymru. It was formed with the sole purpose of winning seats for pro-Remain parties.

As part of the pact, the parties will give voters “one remain choice” in seats across England and Wales meaning that in some seats candidates from each will stand aside.

Instrumental in brokering the deal was Heidi Allen, MP for South Cambridgeshire and chairwoman of Unite to Remain. Allen, whose constituency includes Homerton and Girton, plans to stand down at the election.

Her seat will be part of the pact and consequently there will be no Green candidate running on 12th December, giving way to the Lib Dem candidate, Ian Sollom.

“We are putting party politics aside in the interest of our country and have cemented a cross-party arrangement whereby Remain-voting parties in England and Wales are working together to back one Remain candidate,” Allen commented.

Paying tribute to the alliance, Sollom commented on the “enormous” sacrifice



▲ MP for Cambridge, Daniel Zeichner, with Jeremy Corbyn  
(LOUIS ASHWORTH)

made by the Green Party, saying that it was “an unprecedented agreement between parties and is just the sort of action that is needed to improve politics at this critical time.”

However, in response to the news, the Conservative candidate Anthony

Browne said, “They are depriving voters of choice and showing their contempt for democracy. I think it’s a pity that their voters are being denied the choice of voting for who they want to vote for.”

“I’m confident we will win, but

there’s no room for complacency and we have to fight.”

The Unite to Remain agreement also covers the South East Cambridgeshire constituency, which will see the Liberal Democrat candidate fight for the seat.

The seat in South Cambridgeshire has been considered a Conservative safe seat, with voters consistently voting in Conservative MPs since its creation in 1997.

The Cambridge seat representing the central colleges has been held by Labour since 2015, with Daniel Zeichner as the current MP. It is considered a Labour-Lib Dem swing seat.

Before 1992, it was held predominantly by the Conservatives. The Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) in a recent blog post attributed this change to the student vote.

Under the 1969 Representation of the People Act, the voting age was reduced from 21 to 18, and, as a result, undergraduates were given the ability to vote at their term-time address at university shortly after.

Since this move, the share of Conservative votes declined consistently from 1979-2005.

In the 2017 General Election Labour won 51.9% of the vote, giving them a 22.6% majority. The party with the second biggest vote were the Lib Dems with 29.3%.

With the upcoming election on 12th December falling outside of term time, the question remains as to whether the potential loss of the student vote will impact Labour’s hold on the seat.

# City Council approves plans to build 6 ‘micro homes’ for homeless people

Molly Killeen  
Senior News Editor

Cambridge City Council has approved plans to build a row of “micro-homes” in what developers describe as an effort to “break the cycle of homelessness.”

The six units are to be built as part of a project jointly led by the homelessness charity Jimmy’s and the development firm Allia. One of the six homes will house a support worker, and they are intended to be designed with a “hygge feel,” referring to the Danish concept of a cosy and comfortable living space which is beneficial for the inhabitants’ wellbeing.

Each home is set to measure 25 square meters. This means, however, that the size of the dwellings will fall below the Council’s minimum recommendation of 37 square meters for a studio built to house one bedspace.

The structures will be temporary, with planning permission granted for three years. If, after this period, the land is needed for other uses, the units will be relocated, with residents will be given

► The homes will be built next to Christ the Redeemer Church on Newmarket Road

(CHRIST THE REDEEMER CHURCH)



the choice to move with them.

According to *Cambridgeshire Live* acting chief executive of Allia, Martin Clark, suggested that more of these types of homes could be built in the future, saying, “In terms of the future - this is only the first parcel, we want to make sure we have got a really good pipeline of sites for moving onto in the future.”

Speaking after the decision to grant planning permission had been made, Clark said the aim of the project was to provide an alternative to the hostel system, which he described as sometimes being somewhat of a “revolving door” for people.

“So this is to give a bit more stability, maybe a year or two years... put down

“We want to make sure we have got a really good pipeline of sites for moving onto in the future”

some roots, get some intensive support provided by [Jimmy’s], and hopefully stabilise their lives and then get really proper long-term accommodation from there.”

The units will be located next to Christ the Redeemer Church on Newmarket Road and each will be an “efficiently designed space that creates a separate bedroom, bathroom and utility room, with a shower and washing machine, and an open plan living [and] kitchen area.”

Data released by the Office for National Statistics earlier this year revealed that the rate of deaths among homeless people in Cambridge was double the national figure between 2013 and 2017.

During this period an estimated 18 homeless people died in Cambridge, equating to a rate of 2.7 per 100,000 people. This was more than twice the average rate in England and Wales, which was 1.2 per 100,000.

A count of rough sleepers in the city conducted in November 2018 and published in February of this year also revealed that there was a marginal rise of those sleeping on the streets from the previous year.

# Students protest arms manufacturing and fossil fuels companies at careers fair

**Victor Jack**  
News Correspondent

On Wednesday afternoon, 30 students from Cambridge Defend Education, Demilitarise Cambridge and Cambridge Zero Carbon launched a coordinated disruption of the BAE systems and Schlumberger stalls at the Engineering, Science & Technology careers fair.

The students, who held banners in front of the stalls, informed *Varsity* they aimed to disrupt “recruitment attempts of the specific companies throughout the event.”

BAE systems is the largest defence contractor in Europe. Its clients include the Saudi Arabian government which stands accused of a civilian bombing campaign in Yemen - now the world’s worst humanitarian crisis, according to the UN.

Schlumberger is an international oil extraction and exploration technology contractor.

The protest follows a report released by Zero Carbon last week detailing the University’s close relationship with fossil fuel industry, condemning its coordinated graduate recruitment strate-

“We will not allow our University to be complicit in climate catastrophe”



▲ Activists at a previous Zero Carbon protest (LOUIS ASHWORTH)

gies.

The disruption comes amid a week of actions by the group including a march and blockade. CUSU Ethical Affairs also hosted a Divestment Conference featuring the Vice-Chancellor, Stephen Toope, and Chief Financial Officer Anthony Odgers.

Proctors arrived half an hour after the protest and took pictures of the activists. Zero Carbon have branded this an “intimidation attempt”, and also said that the BAE representative “addressed the protestors in a heated manner.”

Passing students at the fair, on the other hand, seemed to be generally “show[ing] support” for the disruption.

A Zero Carbon spokesperson told *Varsity*, “We will not allow our University to be complicit in climate catastrophe, war and genocide.”

“We see through the deliberate misleading of the oil and arms industry.”

“Their offer is not that of fantasy technological progress, they only offer the perpetuation of 500 years of imperialist exploitation and oppression through war and environmental destruction.”

*Varsity* has reached out to BAE Systems and Schlumberger for comment.



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## Investigations

# Reporting racism in Cambridge

## The realities behind the numbers

► Continued from front page

slurs are offensive through mediation, and apology letters are laughable in my opinion. They rarely mean much and have very little substance in terms of actually being regarded as an apology.” Reflecting on the incident, Seth said: “It almost seemed as if one could use racial slurs and then get off lightly, a slap on the wrist if you may, in the form of an apology letter.”

Ultimately, he chose not to submit a formal report relating to the racist incident, explaining: “I did not think it worth my time to report this since all I was going to get was an apology letter and then have to explain to a white man why racial slurs are offensive.”

Seth now vlogs about his time at Cambridge, including his experiences of racism at the University.

While Seth insists that he would “always look to report racism” should further cases arise in the future, he recommends doing so “with low expectations” in order to “avoid the disappointment of feeling as if the institution is not handling the harassment seriously”.

Offering advice to other students looking to report such incidents, he said: “Find out the likely results that your college will put in place, and if dissatisfied, speak up about it. There is power in speech, and the more individuals who feel as if they can speak about racism, the more seriously reports will be taken.”

Wolfson declined to comment on Seth’s complaint specifically, but said that the “College takes any instance of racial harassment very seriously” and that any formal complaint of racial harassment made to the College “would have been handled in accord with the procedures outlined in the College’s policy on Harassment and Sexual Misconduct”.

Wolfson emphasised that “racial harassment of any kind is contrary to the values and ideals that sustain our community”.

Tiwa Adebayo, former JCR BME officer at Sidney Sussex College, was similarly left frustrated by the outcome of discussions with College staff surrounding racism experienced by students.

In a meeting with several college officers, Tiwa proposed introducing unconscious bias training for porters. This came after students raised concerns about experiencing microaggressions from certain college porters on a Facebook group chat for BME students at Sidney Sussex.

Tiwa claimed that during the meeting, members of college staff suggested that Cambridge students are of a higher social status than the porters and argued that porters should not be asked to undergo such training.

Tiwa feels that the responses of certain College staff members were inappropriate. Although Tiwa was supported by a few staff members, she was also told, by others, that she was being “dramatic” about the whole situation.

A spokesperson for Sidney Sussex said that the College is committed “to being

“After this back-and-forth and not being taken seriously, I gave up trying to pursue the official complaint”

“It almost seemed as if one could use racial slurs and then get off lightly”



a place where there is no place for any form of racial harassment”.

Although some students who spoke to *Varsity* were able to find support within their colleges during complaint procedures, these students tended to be in the minority.

One student explained that “being well-supported by my tutor throughout the complaints process really made a big difference”.

However, the student expressed concerns that the process ended up being too much like a “lucky draw”, one which depends largely on whether you happen to have access to supportive members of staff.

Data gathered by *Varsity* indicates disparities between colleges in the training provided to staff.

Most colleges provided some form of training, such as dedicated anti-racism training, unconscious bias training, equality and diversity training, harassment and bullying training, institutional racism training and dignity of work training.

However, such training has not always been mandatory for college staff and is hugely varied in its breadth of coverage.

For example, Trinity provides some forms of non-mandatory online training for certain groups of staff, whereas at Emmanuel all staff receive induction training covering dignity at work, anti-racism and equality and diversity issues. Several colleges claim that anti-racism training is “partly covered” in equality and diversity training.

Fitzwilliam, Girton, Gonville and Caius, Lucy Cavendish, Magdalene, Robinson are the only colleges which do not provide their staff with anti-racism training, explaining that while the training does not take place within their college, such training is instead “provided by the

▲ A student at King’s was told that they may have misinterpreted a racist comment by a supervisor

(LOUIS ASHWORTH)

University”.

Another student, who wished to remain anonymous, expressed dissatisfaction with their college’s response to their complaint of racist remarks made by their supervisor. The student, who is mixed-race, was told by their supervisor that they were a “hybrid” and “find it difficult to form an identity”.

When the student approached a staff member at their college, King’s, about this incident, they say that they were told that they could have misinterpreted the initial comment.

“After this back-and-forth and not being taken seriously, I gave up trying to pursue the official complaint”.

King’s College did not respond to *Varsity*’s request for comment regarding this issue.

One first-year PhD student told *Varsity* that he considers reporting racist incidents to college to be “pointless”.

He said that he does not perceive “anything being done about the few racist incidents which are reported”, and also expressed concerns relating to the structure of the reporting process.

He explained that there is a lack of a “a feeling of proper representation”. “I don’t think I know many black people will report a racism case to a panel or group made up mainly of people who share the same race with the people who attacked them.”

Other students spoke of a perception that certain incidents of racism may not be deemed to be significant enough by college authorities.

Several students told *Varsity* that they worry that racist microaggressions, although significant and upsetting experiences to them, would not be deemed ‘significant enough’ incidences by colleges.

“Being questioned to prove that an incident was based on our appearance

and sound means that we never report microaggressions such as these” said one student.

CUSU’s Big Cambridge Survey 2017-2018 found that 52% of BME students in Cambridge had experienced “racially prejudiced attitudes”, and 26% had directly experienced racist harassment.

Seth said that in his experience, microaggressions – including “people asking where you are really from, only having white lecturers, porters asking BME students to prove they are members of college, not tourists, while their white counterparts walk through with ease” – are common in Cambridge.

However, he explained that he personally would not report such incidences, worrying that complainants would “just be told that the microaggression ‘isn’t that bad’, by individuals who have no experience of microaggressions”.

Despite these concerns, many students remain hopeful that reporting procedures will improve in the future. “Cambridge is working towards solutions but there is so much need for improvement and improvement should be quick”, said one PhD student, who asked to remain anonymous.

A University of Cambridge spokesperson said: “there is no place for racism or racial harassment of any kind at collegiate Cambridge, and while we have renewed our focus on tackling racism robustly and normalising conversations about race to support this, we know we need to do more, and will continue to work closely with students and staff on how we can enhance these efforts to make Cambridge a truly inclusive place.”

The spokesperson cited the University’s anonymous reporting tool, suggesting that this can provide information which “is vital to enable Cambridge to understand the scale and nature of race-related incidents”.

# Features

## “If you’re from Kashmir, why aren’t you whiter?”

*Our standards of beauty are corrupted and I’m not sure I see them recovering from the history of colonialism, writes Inaya Mohmood*

The experiences of people of colour are often homogenised by the media. This isn’t to say that it’s always malicious; but the world of print and broadcast media isn’t the most diverse.

And so, more often than not, a singular narrative of the ‘BME experience’ is pushed without any acknowledgements made about the nuances of our experiences and how there is no single issue that affects us all in the same way. Colourism, and the difference in experience between light- and dark-skinned people of colour, is an example of this.

To speak broadly, if you’re light skinned, you’re physically more palatable as a person of colour to white society. You conform more to Eurocentric standards of beauty and, as a result, face less racism than darker-skinned people of colour do. On the other hand, there’s also the issue of fetishisation, and the unhealthy cultural obsession with ‘mixed babies’ that social media has helped to perpetuate.

Being a dark-skinned person of colour brings further challenges, since colourism is an issue that takes place within communities of colour as well. Among the more longer-lasting impacts of colonialism has been the fundamental change in ideas about beauty within the Global South.

I’m from Kashmir, a region in Pakistan known for its light-skinned and green-eyed people. A lot of my family have these features: my own sisters, for example, have skin that is a lot lighter than mine. But this isn’t something I’d have thought twice about, if it wasn’t for comments by others within the Pakistani community. Where I grew up, the idea of me being different simply because I was ‘brown’ was far more pertinent than me being different because I was ‘dark brown.’

I remember when I was asked, ‘If you’re from Kashmir, why aren’t you whiter?’ Again, the question wasn’t asked with malicious intent, but it made me think about people from my own community lacked an understanding of just how their words fed into the cycle of colourism and the insecurities that it gave rise to among darker-skinned girls like myself. After all, there’s more to being Kashmiri than having light skin. My dark skin didn’t make me any less Kashmiri than my sisters.

“I was busy applying foundations that were two shades lighter than my skin tone”



◀ Illustration by Yuxin Li for Varsity

“There’s more to being Kashmiri than having light skin”

Growing up, I knew that being dark skinned wasn’t going to work in my favour. While my sisters were complimented on their lighter eyes and fairer skin, I was busy applying foundations that were two shades lighter than my skin tone.

I remember protesting that ‘they don’t make foundation for my skin colour!’ whenever my school friends asked me why my face and neck didn’t match. This shattered the illusion I had created for myself — up until then, I really did think I was fooling everyone. In hindsight, it was also a key turning point in how I saw myself. It pushed me to start learning to embrace my skin tone.

At university, I’ve seen the same problem of colourism in the BME community,

despite it being so much more diverse and varied than the one I grew up with back home. Once, I announced that I thought I’d caught a tan and my friend replied with, “no, you’re beautiful.” She meant well, but it made me start to think again about our standards of beauty, about how corrupted they’ve become, and how I don’t see them ever recovering from the histories of colonialism and imperialism that have shaped how people of colour measure themselves against Western ideals.

Sadly, I don’t think we’ll be the generation that solves colourism. Even though I, and others like myself, know that the preference for lighter skin is rooted in colonialism, we all still grew up in communities that have internalised it and

passed on this message to generations after generations.

I am learning to embrace myself, but until we reach a stage where normative beauty standards become flexible enough to allow people of colour and all of our features into the fold, I know I’ll always be hyper aware of my dark skin.

If I could go back and speak to the younger me who would always check to see if she was the darkest person in the room, who bought foundations lighter than her skin tone, and who spent so long feeling insecure in the skin she was in, I would tell her that she’s beautiful. Then I would tell her that she is kind, intelligent, sweet, and funny, and that these qualities mean so much more.

## Features

# Among strangers, finding familiar faces

**Maryam Mahmood** reflects on how she found a community with Cambridge's Islamic Society

Cambridge is an overwhelming place for some, and totally normal for others. For me, it was the former. Having grown up in the diverse streets of London, surrounded by people like myself, coming to Cambridge felt like a wakeup call. The kind of call you get in the middle of the night, waking you up from your dream just as you were about to reach the best part. A call to reality, perhaps.

Walking the streets of Cambridge was a great contrast to walking the streets at home. Seeing unfamiliar faces wherever I turned created a sense of discomfort, and the conversations I had made me realise how far I was from the familiar.

For the first time, I realised that not everyone shares or even understands my views. Being a Muslim is an integral part of my identity. At home, this was never disputed and an explanation was never demanded from me. But here, within the walls of Cambridge, I found myself having to explain why I don't drink, or why I need to spare ten minutes as the sun is setting to go pray; things that I had never had to do before.

My identity is further complicated as I don't wear a hijab, a common identifier of Muslim women. Not having my faith



“There was no judgement, just the unspoken promise of solidarity”

apparent has been difficult, as I have too often felt the need to announce that I am a Muslim whenever I am in a new group: to explain who I am, what I believe, and why I can't go to Wednesday Cindies or Friday Fez with them.

Whenever I reveal that I'm Muslim, the response I'm met with is 'but you don't look Muslim,' because I don't fit into common stereotypes about what Muslim women are supposed to look like. With the hijab, I would be immediately marked out as Muslim, but without it, I am invisible.

Once my identity is revealed, it becomes open to judgement from people

▲ **The Islamic Society celebrating the success of its charity week**

(MARYAM MAHMOOD)

who don't fully grasp what Islam is. I hold my faith close to me, but once it is revealed, it is no longer my own. Instead, it becomes an abstract concept to be discussed using complex academic jargon. The type of Muslim I am becomes the subject of intense political debate.

Being a Muslim woman in a new environment, regardless of whether you wear the hijab or 'look' Muslim, is not easy. It's not easy to have your identity continuously challenged and questioned. University is typically seen as a place where you have the freedom to figure out who you are and what defines you, but unlike everyone else, I came to university already knowing who I was, and what was important to me. I am, first and foremost, a Muslim.

I also came with the high expectations held by many students that I would find a community I could belong to in my college. When this expectation wasn't met, I was left with the deep ache of loneliness and the fear that there was no community for me here. It wasn't until I looked outside of college that I found a community which understood me.

I joined the Cambridge University Islamic Society (ISoc) as soon as I arrived here, and being among people who understood and embraced my identity was a relief from what was slowly becoming the everyday routine of explaining the origins of my name or the reasons why I choose to follow Islam. There was no judgement, just the unspoken promise of solidarity. This was more than a student society; it was a community and sanctuary where I could be myself and not have to explain to others what that

meant. Here I was comfortable. Here I was welcomed. Here felt like peace.

In the third week of term, ISoc took part in 'charity week.' I found the act of giving back rejuvenating. Charity is an important aspect of Islam, so much so that one of the five pillars of the faith is dedicated to it — *zakat*. From hiking up Snowdon to hosting bake sales, my contributions (however small) alongside the amazing work of the committee made me feel like I was making a difference. It made me feel like I was part of a community which not only understood who I was as a person, but also helped me strengthen and solidify my sense of self. It was here that I finally owned myself and my identity. It was the sense of community that I felt at ISoc events, the instant friendships I made there, and the feeling of ease that came along with it that fundamentally shaped my time here as a fresher and helped me to adjust to a new environment, rather than the collegiate system which Cambridge emphasises. Everyone around me sought refuge in their colleges, college families, and coursemates, but I found mine at ISoc. The importance of finding a community which will accept you for you who are with no questions asked is understated.

I now feel comfortable in what first felt like such an uncomfortable place. I used to walk through the streets and feel my stomach turning at the sight of faces that were all different to mine. But now, I walk with a newfound sense of courage. I know that among those unfamiliar faces, I'll see the occasional ISoc member and, with a smile, we'll reaffirm our promise of solidarity.

# 'New year new me' doesn't happen overnight

**Self-improvement is hard, and some days, it'll feel next to impossible, writes Teresa Barucci**

I have moved to three different cities in the past four years. I have matriculated in three different universities, and graduated from two. At the start of every academic year, and especially those in which I found myself in a new city surrounded by new people, I thought the time had come to completely reinvent myself. New year, new me.

I'd be cooking real food (not just heating up canned soup) and going running three times a week. I'd be keeping a healthy work-life balance – eight hours of sleep, eight hours of work, and eight hours of free time. I'd be less shy and less concerned about what others thought of me. This was my year, I told myself. But then, somehow, two or three weeks into the term, I'd still find myself in the library at 11pm, eating a meal deal from Tesco, trying to finish that essay that I should have started way earlier, worried that my newfound friends would think me boring for not joining them at the pub that night. New academic year, but

old me, and old habits. At that point, I'd basically just scrap the first few pages of my brand new journal, which I had filled with good resolutions for the new year. I would give up even trying, postponing the transformation into the 'new me' until the beginning of the next academic year.

It took me four years to realize that there is no 'new me' because there is no 'old me'. There is only the present me. Life isn't one instantaneous make-over, and no 'new me' can magically materialise herself on the 1st October. It is just a change of date. The fact of the matter is that most of my personal resolutions for the new academic year usually concerned the external, most obvious aspects of my personal development.

These were then doomed to fail from the start, as I tried to treat the symptoms – such as changing my routines and rebranding myself in front of others – rather than the underlying problems. I am aware this may sound obvious and trite, but I also really believe that to change our behaviour and attitudes we need to first start believing in ourselves and in our power to change. Now, this is not to say this is easy.

We have to actively (and earnestly) recognise which habits and attitudes we would not want to find in our future selves – in one, five, ten years time. We have to wake up, day after day, ready to work towards getting rid of them, to bet-

ter ourselves. A new day, a new chance to improve.

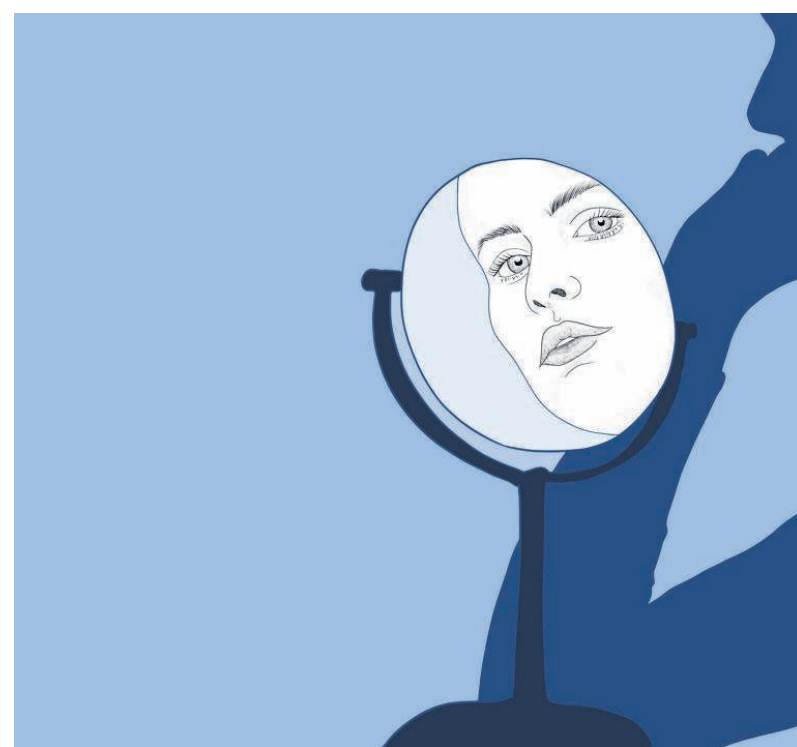
This doesn't mean that we will never slip up. We can change, sure – but we cannot magically evolve into better people. Self-change is gradual, and little efforts every day add up. Studies show that it takes anywhere between eighteen and two hundred and fifty-four days for people to form a new habit.

Waking up at midday after two weeks of productive working days doesn't mean that we are back to our old selves – which, in fact, do not exist. 'I just can't change, this is who I am!' is an excuse. We are not machines, and it is normal to have 'bad' days – indeed, they are a necessary part of the process.

Instead, we have to learn to recognise and appreciate our successes. During these past four years, I have learned a lot about myself: I know how I work best, and I am far more confident. Can I pinpoint a specific day when this happened? Of course not. Does it mean that I don't waste entire days on Youtube anymore? I wish. It is all a work in progress.

Once we realise this, it seems foolish, counter-productive, and even counter-intuitive to give ourselves a time limit to change – the beginning of the academic year, or the beginning of the week, or the beginning of the Cambridge week (who even starts anything on Thursday anyway?).

It piles on pressure to be our perfect




“Don't set a time limit to change”

new selves right away, and to make drastic and unrealistic changes which are doomed to fail.

So, I'm taking change slowly. I still buy my morning coffee from Pret instead of making it at home. That can be a task for next year.

▲ **Illustration by Alisa Santikarn for Varsity**



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## Features

# What next? The winding road through my early 20s

*Don't hesitate to ask yourself what you want to do with your life, writes **an anonymous student***

**W**hat do I want out of life, and how will I get there? That's a question we're given little time to ask ourselves at Cambridge. We spend so much of it driving in a particular direction without knowing precisely where we're going – and often it's the golden lights of the City that draw us in.

So I applied to a handful of commercial law internships over the winter. I knew others who were applying to dozens of them without much luck, but trying out the corporate world felt like the thing to do. It's the next rung on the ladder. I'm also a privately-educated white man, so I thought, at the very least, I'd look the part.

Yet how often do we get to witness the day-to-day realities of the City life?

So I seized the opportunity and made some notes during my time there.

Day 1

Enter boardroom. Clusters of fresh faces making small-talk. After making tea, I join the nearest circle. Try to cut tension by picking up breakfast item from across the room – bacon brioche. The rest is lying there, beckoning me. I'll never understand why food in corporate spaces is always left so unsatisfyingly uneaten.

The rest of the day spent in health and safety talks. Get a load of free stash, which is superb. Timetable for scheme is busy. Talks by different departments, workshops, and office-time shadowing with our own solicitors.

Later, I meet my solicitor. An Oxford Historian. Like I was reconstituted in papier-mâché form, with my bucket CV for plaster-caste. Minor existential crisis on the Tube home as I contemplate how conventional I have become. Sleep.

Day 2

After one year at the firm no one can tell the difference between Law and non-Law undergraduates, according to my solicitor. I smile to myself in macabre satisfaction, having prudently avoided the labours of undergraduate Law. Then a keen fellow intern brings up 'Due Diligence' and I feel lost again.

Day 3

Workshop on 'responsible business' – one of those corporate euphemisms of which I tend to be sceptical. Usual buzzwords come up.

Day 4

Taken to a local theatre for workshop on body language. Summary: manspreading really is the route to success! In addition to: direct eye contact; and firm handshakes. Boys school really worked wonders.

*“I've delighted in the liberty of keeping my options in life until now”*



Spend the rest of the day performing my best Justin Trudeau impression, speaking deliberately and directly in an effort to project benign authority.

It's early days with my fellow interns but I'm feeling less intimidated by them. In between discussing scraps of the FT, one asks me which other firms I'm considering.

I name the other few that I applied to (which all rejected me at the online test stage). Got to wing it to win it. I'm sure this professional façade will fade soon enough, and we can all return to acting like confused, overwhelmed students. Because we all are.

Day 7

We've had presentations from just about every department in the firm and now the timetable is looking empty. Just me and my solicitor in a shared office for the next few days.

Long stint in the office gets me restless, so I take a walk around the block a few times before returning to my desk. Continue work preparing notes for my solicitor's report, but doubtful about how useful I am. Suspicion my work will be torched when I leave.

Day 9

Workshop on interviews was cancelled and now I'm sitting in my office with my associate. Other interns are making habit of long 'coffee breaks' downstairs. Starting to join those. My guy doesn't seem that bothered. He may be secretly reporting on me.

Day 11

The partner in charge of recruitment walks into the boardroom where we've gathered for another talk in preparation for final day interviews. "At the end of the day, commercial law is the highly-paid application of common sense," he tells us. We laugh, but most of us are absolutely intent on proving it. He's a robust handshake of a man, with hawk-eyes staring, Justin Trudeau-like, at each of us in turn.

Day 12

Final day – the interview. One hour written exercise, then an interview with partners from the firm. Feeling pressed for time during the written trial but interview flew by like a good conversation.

Coach home to Edinburgh. Leaving London, the bus turns into the M1 and I'm informed that I've just entered 'The North,' otherwise known as Watford.

So, I was still doubt-ridden about my future. Admiring myself in a crisp suit in the bathroom mirrors (which I may or may not have frequented too often) didn't seem to help much either. Don't be mistaken – I looked great. I just needed more time to see myself there.

I've delighted in the liberty of keeping my options open in life until now. My future, however, seemed a lot more real as I passed through those glass doors every morning into an office chair. Suddenly those stray thoughts scribbled on scrap pieces of paper, those ideas about where I wanted to go and what I wanted

▲ **The London skyline**

(BRUNEL JOHNSON/  
UNSPLASH)

*“Cambridge offers us a highway”*

to do, had to become reality.

Cambridge offers us a highway. We can get anywhere we want at cruising speed. We can view from an elevated position the winding off-roads and turn-offs which others have taken. We can even turn onto them at the next junction, if we so choose.

I know others who've done so already. Take the lawyers and doctors, for example, who took their turns in sixth-form; the dreamers who sent themselves off packing to drama school or music conservatoire; and those who didn't bother to take a road at all, choosing to go their own, meandering way, perhaps in a foreign country.

While our LinkedIn accounts may present a colourful itinerary from success to success, let's just remind ourselves, now and again, that we're not all powering along the highway of dreams. In fact, most of the time, we're meandering on side-roads, doing roundabouts one time too many, and sometimes even taking wrong turns.

Perhaps, though, that's better than cruising along toward a destination we haven't yet fully considered. The lights of the City will continue to burn brightly, I'm sure of that. But it's not the only destination on offer.

So spend some more time asking yourself that overwhelming question while you're at Cambridge, because sometimes there isn't the option to turn back.

# I let go of my desire to be British

**Siyang Wei**  
reflects on their  
childhood in the  
diaspora

I will start from the outset by tracing the limits of my experience. My parents moved here from China to study over thirty years ago, and since then have become British citizens; I am from Manchester, and I always have been. In almost every way, then, I speak with the space of a certain privilege granted by security: through my class position, and particularly through my assumption of British citizenship as birthright. I speak also as someone who, having lived my formative years ensnared in the psyche of this country, bear all the marks of its epistemic violence.

I first came to think about race and whiteness through a long-burning heat of desire. To follow the logic of citizenship to its end: why, if I belong to the nation, does it not belong to me? It was on the face of my slightly-older sister that I saw this desire manifest in its most explicit forms: in skin-lightening cream, hair-lightening dye, and an ill-fated foray into creative use of makeup to modify the shape of her eyes. Her mouth opening, saying how fortunate we were to have more 'Western' body types; commanding me to reassure her that she looked just a little bit 'European,' and less Chinese than me.

This was an unhappy experience, but at least I felt a little more liberated by comparison. I knew that the problem of racialised belonging did not originate in my body, and had long ago given up on being white, of the clear advantages and subtle dignities it afforded; I was unavoidably Chinese. Lucky for me, then, that talking about the diaspora is all the rage these days; that a flavour of the exotic can be transmuted into another form of cultural purchase; that a social, cultural, political space has opened up for the conditional possibility of being both 'British' and 'Chinese.' I turned towards a progressive politics of belonging, motivated by collective justice and still by secret desire: I envisioned a Britain that anyone could call home.

When I speak of bearing epistemic violence, however, I mean it in every sense — in pain, yes, but as a propagator too. Looking back on my insatiable desire for whiteness, then Britishness, then some shadowy form of belonging, I'm reminded of this excerpt from Said's *Orientalism*: "In a quite constant way, Orientalism depends for its strategy on this flexible positional superiority, which puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand."

I will illustrate what I mean with three stories; the first is about migration. On one hand, we have Britain's cruel border regime and the anti-immigrant sentiment behind it. On the other, there is the progressive case that people should be allowed to come here for the opportunity of a better life — the UK and the West, of course, are the best places in the world to live. Living in the diaspora is hard



because you're caught at once between two places: a new place of settlement to which you desperately wish to belong, and a romanticised 'homeland' to which of course you bear no meaningful allegiance any more. And growing up, your liberty-loving, Westernised personhood struggles against your parents' misplaced cultural strictures. It makes unfortunate sense; if migration is a trajectory from despotism to modernity, my parents were its primitive but hopeful beginnings. I am its first British fruit.

The second story may be less easily recognisable; it's so familiar to me that I've only recently begun to think of it. In primary school, we were taught about China only once. When I was seven, every class from every year had a 20-minute lesson where we all sat on the carpet and, apropos of nothing, the teacher read an extract of Jung Chang's *Wild Swans*. China was, is, and increasingly becomes the bogeyman; the stories you can tell about yourself once again come in pairs. There are the British Chinese, who experience racism but have by and large pulled up their bootstraps to bring new flavours to the British mainstream. There are also the strange, frightening Chinese, who are perversely not revolted by China itself, who somehow believe it isn't by all truly important measures inferior to Britain, who must be at some level indoctrinated or under a spectral duress or else essentially dehumanised by the

“I'm not leaving this country. I have no other 'home' to go to”

despotism of the Orient. Otherwise they would covet Britishness.

The third goes back to my family, and the sense of shame I've often felt but rarely been willing to acknowledge. Most obviously, it's been the typical kind of embarrassment at being 'different' - but the diaspora cultural cachet helped with that somewhat. Most deeply, it has been a sort of ideological derision: my mum who wants someday to move back to China, my grandma who talks about 1949 like a project in which she still invests the deepest hope for humanity. I, in the rest of my life, prompted constantly to repudiate China, raised in the habit of automatic disavowal, unwilling to consider why any of that might be except for a deficiency of their upbringing as compared with mine. I could be Chinese, yes, but British too. I cook Chinese food, can speak some Mandarin, wish I could read more so I could explore my culture in its native tongue; I am invested in anti-racism and decolonising the metropole, for all the misery wreaked on racialised minorities here. But it is a modern, British form of Chineseness, which at any point puts me in a whole series of possible relationships with China (and so with my family) without ever losing me the relative upper hand.

This doesn't characterise every claim to Britishness. Especially for those confronted by the hostile environment in an immediate sense, for those who bear

▲ “Having lived my formative years ensnared in the psyche of this country, [I] bear all the marks of its epistemic violence”

(SIYANG WEI)

“I knew that the problem of racialised belonging did not originate in my body”

the violence of belonging in a literal as well as epistemic sense, there may be a necessity to it. For those whose heritage is also of the Commonwealth, who have been at the disposal of Britain by force, the resonance of belonging may strike a different chord. For me, however, letting go of my desire to be British has been the recognition of a pernicious superiority complex that has shaped my subconscious, and the beginning of a process of unrooting it.

I'm not leaving this country. I have no other 'home' to go to — but if we're talking about the solace of mutual recognition, nor do I think it can ever really be found except in small and dislocated pockets. I care about the injustices that happen here, about the injustices around the world of which we are at the centre — and this is perhaps where anything I do might have the greatest efficacy. But I only want collective justice for everyone — which would necessarily involve transforming this country and its sense of national identity beyond recognition — and no longer really at all to belong here; it was always an impossible identity project, and subtly poisonous to myself and what I enacted on the world around me. And on a very basic level, when I'm asked if I'm a tourist, when I shock by speaking English, when I'm assumed to be foreign — it doesn't bother me so much. What would be so bad about that?

# Opinion



## Trinity Hall's lengthy silence was unacceptably detrimental to students

Hutchinson's resignation cannot undo the severe damage done by Trinity Hall

Anonymous student

*Content Note: This article contains detailed discussion of sexual violence and sexual harassment; detailed discussion of recovery from sexual violence, including disassociation.*

I am a survivor of repeated sexual violence over a 10-year period. I am also a student at Trinity Hall. On the evening of Saturday 19th October, scrolling through BBC News, I came across Rianna Croxford's article revealing my college's decision to readmit Peter Hutchinson as an Emeritus Fellow.

This was the first I – and most students at Trinity Hall – had heard of this decision. We received no communication from college on the matter until the Thursday, five full days after national news had exposed the scandal. In this time, the story was picked up and covered by several other national news services, in addition to the student newspapers in Cambridge, and an open letter condemning the decision was produced, garnering over 1,300 signatures. And – still – we had no communication from college, not even an acknowledgement of the situation.

Meanwhile, things were going rapidly downhill for me. What I was reading and hearing about Hutchinson – the sexual

assault trial in 2006 and his sexual harassment of 10 students in 2015 – was badly affecting my mental state. An intense feeling of being unsafe in my own college – my home – had set in. I couldn't bring myself to leave my room for the first few days, for fear that Hutchinson might be outside, wandering around college at his leisure. (Supposedly, he was not allowed to attend 'events primarily aimed at students or alumni', but no one knew exactly what was meant by this, and it felt like college deliberately avoided being clear about it.)

Even within my room, I wasn't safe. My brain was in overdrive: hypervigilant, anxious, dissociated. Flooding back came the memories and flashbacks of my own abuse. I'd lost all sense of when and where I was. I was back there – it was happening again. I was in crisis. In the space of a few hours, I'd gone from being flashback-free and thriving to being completely submerged in excruciating and humiliating memory. The important healing work I'd been doing was, in a single moment, undone.

So when, on the Thursday, the Master finally released his statement on the

▲ Illustration by Kate Towsey for Varsity

“They somehow seem to be completely unaware of the effect their attitude is having”

situation, his dismissal of the effect the news was having on students as minor 'upset' seemed laughably blinkered to the intensity of feeling that was growing within college. And again, from reports of the open meeting held with the JCR on Friday, the Master seemed unable to recognise that – yes, in fact – just seeing Hutchinson on college grounds could be enough to seriously affect student well-being. What has become very clear in these past few weeks is that college is increasingly disillusioning students, yet they somehow seem to be completely unaware of the effect their attitude is having.

The lack of communication from college on the situation is truly astonishing, especially given the damage that negative publicity did to their reputation just over a year ago with the scandal over its male drinking society, the Trinity Hall Crescents. Being proactive in the current situation was really the only hope Trinity Hall had at somewhat safeguarding their reputation. Communication and transparency should have been big priorities for Trinity Hall. Instead, it seems, despite an apparent 18 months of extensive inter-

nal discussion on Hutchinson's position (none of which, I might add, was ever communicated to students until the recent JCR open meeting), Trinity Hall has been 'caught out' once again, scorned by national news before they'd managed to announce the decision themselves.

Apparently, Trinity Hall thought it appropriate to slip the news of his re-appointment into the November edition of the alumni magazine (as they stated at the open meeting), five months after his profile reappeared on the college website, in the hope, we can guess, that the announcement would go unnoticed. How many times must the Master 'hold his hands up' – as he repeatedly did at Friday's open meeting – for failure to communicate properly before we get transparency?

Since the news broke, we have had the initial (misjudged) statement from the Master, albeit five days too late, and an open meeting at which the Master, according to reports, seemed as defensive and dismissive as in his statement. The Senior Tutor, to her credit, released a letter of her own immediately following the Master's statement, in which she sincerely apologised in a personal capacity for the "distress and anxiety" caused to students, recognising the dwindling trust we have in our college to protect our safety and welfare. We are, however, still yet to receive any form of official apology from college for their handling of the situation. Given the Master's dismissive approach, it seems unlikely that we will ever get this apology.

On Wednesday, we were informed that the Governing Body had accepted Hutchinson's resignation. This – according to the Master – is the end of the matter. But, while the urgent situation might have been resolved (by Hutchinson himself, it must be noted, not by any action on college's part), Trinity Hall's underlying issues with transparency and communication remain. We, the student body, are left no more informed now than we were after reading Rianna Croxford's original BBC article.

In their refusal to speak, Trinity Hall is re-enacting a power dynamic I know all too well from my own abuse: they – the Governing Body and senior fellows – hold all the information; we – the students – have none. The echoes of secrecy and forced powerlessness resound uncomfortably in Trinity Hall's behaviour.

But there is one key difference: this time, I have a voice. We have a voice. I may have been powerless in my own abuse, but I will not let our power be taken from us this time. If denying us information is college's attempt to cripple us and prevent us fighting their decisions, they must know this: we will not stop until we get transparency.

If you are affected by any of the issues raised in this article, the following organisations provide support and resources:

Sexual Assault and Harassment Adviser: specialist University support worker who provides emotional and practical support; Cambridge for Consent; Cambridge Rape Crisis Centre: a charity for female victims of sexual violence; Cambridge Nightline: a confidential night-time listening service; Students' Unions' Advice Service: the University's confidential, independent and impartial advice service.

# Jewish concerns about a Corbyn-led government should be taken seriously

I agree with Labour's policies, but can't countenance their record on addressing antisemitism

Samuel Rubinstein

A few years ago, it would have been considered strange that antisemitism could be of any major political relevance. Stranger still is the fact that allegations have dogged the Labour Party, which prides itself on a history of tackling racism and prejudice, and has historically enjoyed close ties with the Jewish community. But the modern Labour Party, which positions itself as a champion of the oppressed, is perceived by many within the Jewish community as having failed to tackle antisemitic prejudice. All too often these Jewish voices from within the party are dismissed, but for Labour's claims of promoting equality to be credible, more must be done to make Jews feel welcome.

The most frustrating thing for Jews in the Labour Party is that their voices are seldom taken seriously. Len McCluskey dismisses complaints of antisemitism within the party as being 'created by people who are trying to undermine Jeremy Corbyn'. Ken Loach finds it "funny that these stories suddenly appeared when Corbyn became leader". Legitimate Jewish concern becomes subsumed into broader conspiratorial narratives: Jews are, on this account, part of a sinister cabal, intent on undermining Corbyn and on maintaining the capitalist status quo.

All of this derives from a sense that

“No surprise, then, that I feel uncomfortable in left-wing spaces”

Jews are different from other ethnic minorities, which are, from a left-wing perspective, characterised by their misfortunes under capitalism. Jews, meanwhile, appear to benefit from this system: we are stereotyped as rich, white, and Tory. We should be rightly suspicious when we see white people denying racism, or men doubting the existence of misogyny: in these matters, the voices of ethnic minorities or of women have primacy.

In much the same way, Jewish voices must be listened to on the issue of antisemitism. So why, in a supposedly anti-racist party, do people like Loach and McCluskey get away with denying antisemitism? On a certain level they, and many others on the left, find it difficult to believe that Jews are just as capable of being victims of oppression as are members of any other groups.

What I find most striking in left-wing circles is the expectation that I, as a Jew, must constantly explain and justify why I feel unwelcome. There are a few concrete cases which I have therefore committed to memory, lest I be accused of being a fantasist set upon Corbyn's downfall.

Vicki Kirby, the Labour Party councillor, described Adolf Hitler in 2014 as a 'Zionist God', an ahistorical absurdity which was parroted by Ken Livingstone when he stated that Hitler 'supported

Zionism before he went mad'. The party was almost comically reluctant to accept the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's working definition of antisemitism.

And, of course, we find a cornucopia of missteps and blunders – is he really an antisemite, I sometimes wonder, or is he just a dunderhead? – in the person of Jeremy Corbyn.

He protested the removal of a mural which included blatantly antisemitic imagery. He notoriously described Hamas, a terror organisation which includes in its founding charter a hadith calling for the murder of Jews, as "friends". He defended the mayor of Umm al-Fahm in Israel, Raed Salah Abu Shakrah – a rabid conspiracy theorist who denies the Holocaust, thinks Jews were complicit in 9/11, and promotes the Blood Libel – as a 'very honoured citizen' who 'represents his people extremely well'. Raed Salah Abu Shakrah's voice, which has continually incited hatred and violence against Jews, is one which, according to the leader of the opposition, "must be heard".

No surprise, then, that I feel uncomfortable in left-wing spaces, and no surprise that a lot of other Jews feel the same way. Sadly, I doubt that we will be made to feel more welcome any time soon.

The Jewish vote, once a reliable

source of left-wing support, has been dwindling in significance for decades. There is little evidence that voters outside the negligible Jewish community are dissuaded from supporting Labour by allegations of antisemitism, which understandably are not at the forefront of the average voter's mind.

There is no pressing electoral need for Labour to be expunged of antisemitism, nor is there a widespread sense within the party that change is necessary. None of this is helped by the influential views of figures like McCluskey and Loach, who think that it is likelier that Jews are conspiring with 'the establishment' to bring down Corbyn than it is that Jews really do feel bullied and abused.

This has the depressing consequence of pushing Jews who are ideologically aligned with Labour – Jews who would have proudly voted Labour in every general election prior to 2015 – towards less stomach-churning alternatives.

I joined the Liberal Democrats when Corbyn was elected, and I intend to vote for them on the 12th of December. However, like many Jews, I am fearful that, through whatever might happen in Westminster this winter, my vote will inadvertently help to install Jeremy Corbyn in Downing Street. Jewish fears at such a prospect are often trivialised, but they are real, and ought to be taken seriously.

# With its ban on part-time work, Cambridge must better support its 'squeezed-middle' students

The structuring of Cambridge's courses places extra burden on students struggling to make ends meet

Gabrielle Brucciani

In 2018, CUSU's Big Cambridge Survey found that almost half of students from families in receipt of low-income benefits found the extra costs and charges from their college to be problematic. One student said that "The ridiculously high fees and costs of living for Cambridge are extremely limiting when you do not have any or a very limited parental financial support, and when you do not have any funding help from the University either."

Higher-earning parents are expected to contribute more to students' living costs, but this fails to consider how many people are living off a household income, or whether families can afford this extra contribution, leaving many students in difficulty. In 2018, *The Mirror* also highlighted the implicit expectation that parents plug the gap between maintenance loans and living costs, and how many are unaware, unwilling or unable to do so. This is a national crisis that the University of Cambridge, despite its many claims about being equal and accessible, systematically fails to address.

Before arriving at university, I was sent numerous forms, one of which was titled 'Financial Undertaking'. It outlined how much maintenance costs would be over the year and asked for confirmation that my family could afford the eye-watering costs of me living in Cambridge. Panicked, and having read and re-read

the form, we signed it. If there was an option to not sign it or get extra funding, this was unclear – ultimately, we all thought that no signature meant no Cambridge. Besides, with my maintenance loan, a bit of help from my grandparents and my holiday job, we thought that it would be just about OK.

This is a familiar scenario for many students: according to Endsleigh, in 2015, 77% of UK students partook in part-time work to afford living costs. I knew that Cambridge didn't allow their students to work, but I thought this was only during term time. However, according to my tutor, I'm also expected to devote my entire holidays to my academic work. When I told him that I couldn't afford my living costs if I didn't work, I was told to apply for a college grant. When I did, it was refused on the grounds that, with my job, I broke even and that I had signed the Financial Undertaking before arriving.

I was being told not to work because it would impact my studies but also that I couldn't receive any financial aid because I was working. I applied again the following year when my sister started university (meaning more outgoings for my family), but was refused again. Whilst all of this was going on, my grades and mental health were suffering, and I felt powerless to do anything about it.

Unfortunately, this is all too familiar: it is normal for students to be on a

“The University is out of touch with what student life is really like”

budget and to have limited funds. What is not normal is the stress and pressure that the University places on its students because of this. The Natwest Student Living Index revealed that Cambridge was found to be the most stressful university in the UK, with 60% of its students rating its stressfulness as 8-10 out of 10.

Of course, a lot of this is academic pressure, but finances add to the burden: term time either becomes more full-on as the vacation is spent earning, or it's a case of constantly watching the purse strings so as to avoid having to work. The Cambridge culture of regular formals, expensive coffee shops, swaps, or simple things like buying gowns, is hardly helpful for students on a budget and risks leaving them isolated.

Well-meaning as some tutors or staff can be, the University is out of touch with what student life is really like for its average student. My tutor, for example, suggested that I try and get a vacation job that would "look better on my CV". I needed something that I could count on being there when I went back, not an unguaranteed, one-off week here and there, regardless of the points on my CV.

Some subjects suffer more than others. Languages students who have to live abroad full-time often receive limited or delayed financial support, especially outside of the EU.

Medics and Vet-Meds have to under-

take long vacation placements. Not to mention the high costs associated with studying Architecture at university. But this is just the tip of the iceberg.

The fact that the University tailors its courses and their content with the assumption that students will have free vacations to dedicate to their course is simply wrong. The availability of grants and bursaries in addition to government support is undeniably praiseworthy.

However, the University shouldn't rely on these to justify a workload or an attitude to education that is unsustainable for the average student. Cambridge is slowly making efforts to expand the bursary scheme to better support those in the 'squeezed middle', to eliminate disparities in financial provision across colleges to cover students' maintenance costs such as rent and food. But any changes go through a lengthy decision-making process and several committees, while students are left to fend for themselves. *Varsity* also reported several cases of students facing significant delays in receiving their college hardship funds last year.

If Cambridge is pretentious enough to forbid its students from working, then they should ensure that this is possible for every student and not just when it suits them. To do otherwise is to perpetuate elitist and restrictive access to education.



# May Balls should provide food for all dietary requirements – including kosher

Ellesheva Kissin recounts her difficulties getting kosher food at Trinity May Ball, and argues that Balls should do more to accommodate all their guests

Ellesheva Kissin

I spent two years in Cambridge keeping my head down. I never assumed that Cambridge life could be elastic enough to fit the needs of its Jewish students. I didn't speak up when matriculation clashed with Yom Kippur, something that all freshers seem to go through (Yom Kippur is the most sacred day in the Jewish calendar, and involves a 25-hour fast).

I never complained when I couldn't move up the ranks in my rowing club because of my inability to row on Saturdays. I did not argue when a college fellow joked that, with the influx of Jewish students, our college would become known as 'that Jewish' college.

Students hold a certain amount of power in shaping the norms of university life. By standing on JCRs, committees and organising events, we decide whether we uphold or challenge norms.

In my third year, feeling cocky, I decided to see what could change: I petitioned for the inclusion of kosher food options at Trinity May Ball. But the experience was jarring, and I realised that not all students are as supportive as I had expected them to be.

The reality of a May Ball for many Jews is a desperate attempt to feel normal: to fit in with our friends who bang on about the fun of getting drunk, eating doughnuts, and dancing for the entire night.

In reality, May Balls are mostly spent

shaking our heads politely when anyone asks us if we're hungry. We're famished, thanks, because none of the food is kosher.

Granted, I recognise my immense privilege in being a student who can afford to attend Trinity May Ball, despite the exorbitant prices. Nonetheless, May Balls should cater for all the different types of people in attendance.

Indeed, when I attended Trinity May Ball in 2019, there were a bunch of vegan food stalls, a Halal food cart, and a host of gluten-free options. But Kosher was nowhere to be found. May Balls are not just for the old school gang — Jewish students should be catered for, too.

Of course, to the uninitiated, kosher food isn't easy to track. The food has to be prepared according to rules, detailing preparation, ingredients and utensils. Then again, in the age of the internet, this isn't difficult to learn. Kosher food could even be ordered in.

Months before the ball, I got in touch with the ball's presidents to ask if they could provide some kosher food for the Jewish students attending, as there were a fair few, and got a very kind "feel free to bring a sandwich with you" — I'm paraphrasing but not exaggerating.

Unsatisfied, I replied, pointing out that I was paying the same price as everyone else and was surely entitled

“One of the appeals of May Balls is the incredible food. As a Jewish student, I'm not allowed to experience this”

▲ A May Ball catering truck (LOUIS ASHWORTH)

to some food.

After a back-and-forth that took two months and 10 days, 18 emails and two arranged meetings, it was confirmed that I would be supplied with provisions.

With a designated food officer, it isn't out-of-line to expect some kosher food options to be offered.

Instead, I was asked to spend hours of my time researching kosher options and counting up how many Jewish students planned on attending the ball, and was reprimanded by the ball's presidents for not responding immediately to their emails on the finer points of a kosher diet.

I wasn't in an official role on the May Ball committee — I complained and the task was lumped on me rather than the committee making an active effort to cater to all of their guests.

They did have some fair points: no one besides me had requested kosher food. However, this was probably because kosher wasn't even an option on their very long list of dietary requirements on the ticket purchase form.

As a Jewish student who follows a kosher diet, I often don't like to stick out. Had it been standard practice for kosher to be offered, I would have been only one of many happily ticking the 'kosher' box.

I was, in the end, provided with kosher food (terrible, and from the long-life kosher aisle at Sainsbury's, but at least

it was food).

This was for some bizarre reason kept outside of the ball, meaning that I had to leave all my friends and the ball itself to snack on some cherry tomatoes and granola bars. A sorry experience.

One of the appeals of May Balls is the incredible food. As a Jewish student, I'm not allowed to experience this. And after three years of dealing with a university refusing to make meaningful concessions to religious requirements, it gets frustrating having to respond to every microaggression with a pleasant smile and willingness to explain everything from scratch, in humiliating detail, yet again.

I expect that from the old fuddy-duddies, but not from the students who claim to want change. We can do better.

● In a written statement, Wen Tong, Co-President of the ball for 2020 commented that "The First and Third Trinity May Ball 2019 provided Kosher food and wine from an approved source after consultation about what would be appropriate in meeting religious needs - and is feasible at a large-scale outside event - to the one guest who requested such and a Cambridge-based Rabbi."

They went on to add that "The May Ball Committee is committed to accommodating guests' dietary requirements (related to religion or allergies, for example) where feasible and when given timely notice."

# Science

## Demystifying the migraine

**Camille Knight** reflects on her experiences with migraines, and the lack of effective treatments on offer

“**S**orry I won’t be able to make it, I have a migraine.” What does this actually mean? In my case it will generally involve a day spent in bed in the dark, waiting for the searing pain in the side of my head to dissolve while being unable to properly use my mental faculties.

On particularly bad days it can also mean extreme nausea and vomiting, as well as the pervading fear that it will never go away. These are the typical symptoms of a migraine without aura, caused by an inflammation of nerves and dilation of blood vessels in the head area - although nobody is yet truly able to explain the reasons why.

The term migraine originates from the Greek *hemikrania*, literally meaning ‘half of the skull’, which refers to the typical presentation, where pain affects just one side of the head.

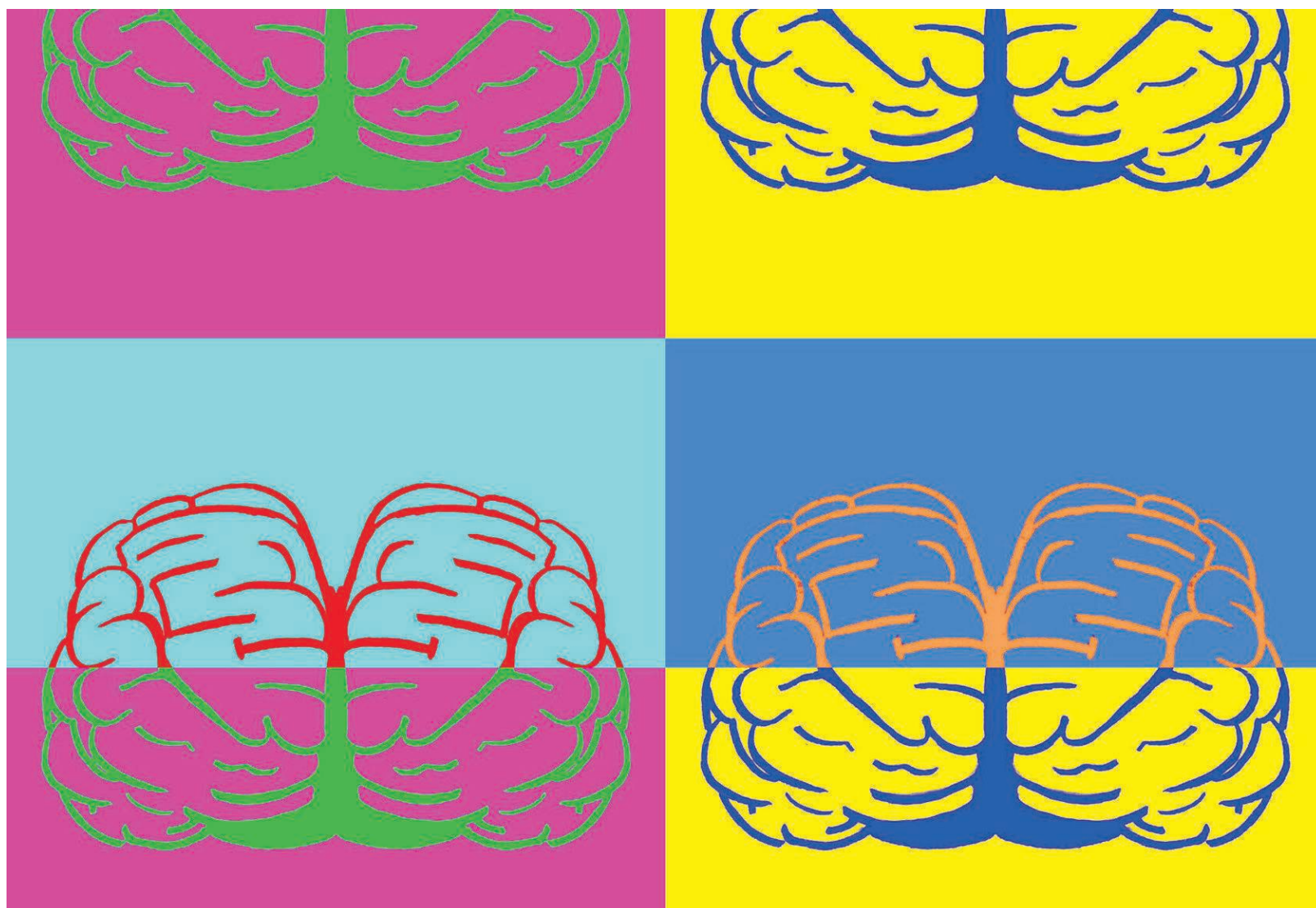
They can last from 4 hours to 3 days depending on the severity of the attack and can be a hereditary condition. In the UK, it is estimated that 1 in 7 people suffer from migraines, with women being 3 times more affected than men.

Surely the scale of this chronic disease should alert governments and researchers to the challenge of producing effective treatments? In reality, very little has been done towards the discovery of a potential preventative. This lack of research comes hand in hand with a lack of awareness surrounding the disease. Misconceptions surrounding migraines are endless and accentuate the problem by invalidating the people suffering.

The “sorry honey, not tonight I have a migraine” cliché has certainly not helped in legitimising the suffering of people regardless of gender, and the invisibility of migraines means they remain mostly misunderstood. The medical term “migraine” has indeed also taken on a generic meaning to replace the headache, minimising its true significance.

A migraine is not “just a headache”, it is a neurological disease with a specific set of symptoms and varying degrees of severity.

Extremely debilitating, it is made worse by its lack of legitimacy within society. The impact can be felt in relationships, families and friendships, with the occasional comment such as, “Are you sure this isn’t just an excuse?”, “Is it not just in your head?” (the irony is almost comical)



or “this is starting to become irritating”. The crippling feeling of being a burden compounds the original physical pain.

Patients are often able to identify triggers such as certain foods or drinks, shifts in routine - as insignificant as a change in meal time - and varying emotions, such as stress or even excitement. Myths have even spread because of speculation on potential triggers.

For example, my GP once described chocolate as a trigger, although this completely lacks any scientific backing. Impossible to pin down, the triggers and their unreliability make it easy to fall into a trap of obsessiveness, with constant feelings of anxiety about when the next migraine will hit. The prospects of a full-time job, a big event or large responsibilities become nerve-racking because of the fear of an ever-looming migraine attack.

Despite a desperate need for a new outlook and treatment for migraines, progress throughout the last decade should not go unnoticed, and I have no doubt that perceptions will continue to evolve in a positive way in the next few years.

Anti-emetics and painkillers such as ibuprofen and aspirin help to control the nausea associated with migraines.

▲ Illustration by  
**Lois Wright for  
Varsity**

“It is estimated that 1 in 7 people suffer from migraines”

Triptan tablets, a more recent development introduced twenty years ago, have been relieving many patients ever since.

Though they do nothing to prevent attacks, they can be effective in fighting the pain of a migraine episode for some people, often making it disappear in a couple of hours. They work by stimulating serotonin, popularly described as the ‘happy chemical’, which acts to reduce inflammation and constrict blood vessels to stop the migraine.

Unfortunately, prevention of severe migraines in the UK is currently only possible through some medication developed for other diseases. Most of these drugs, however, are accompanied by severe side effects, to the point at which patients are sometimes unable to even take them.

But preventative drugs specifically developed and licensed for migraines may, at last, be on their way.

These work by binding to Calcitonin Gene-Related Peptide (CGRP) molecules, which research suggests are released during a migraine attack, or to their receptors. This stops a migraine developing, by preventing this signal being transmitted. Importantly, these drugs also seem to be associated with few side

“Impossible to pin down, its unreliability make it easy to fall into a trap of obsessiveness”

effects.

These drugs are already approved in the United States, and may reach Europe in the next year if new funding agreements are negotiated.

Currently, these drugs have been ruled ‘not cost-effective’ by NICE, the departmental body which evaluates drugs in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. However, these drugs have been approved by the NHS in Scotland. This has produced another unequal health-care situation, similar to the disparity in access to Orkambi, a life-extending drug for cystic fibrosis, across the UK until last month.

It would be a significant benefit to any economy to find a cure for these migraines. It is estimated that in the UK alone, migraines cost the NHS £150 million per year, and absenteeism through migraine costs the UK £2.25 billion.

In a study of resource allocation to brain research areas the ratio of funding to cost for migraine was the lowest of all conditions considered, at just 0.025%.

If not for the quality of life of 1 in 7 people, maybe the billions of pounds lost at the hands of the migraine will encourage governments, industries and charities to invest in the necessary research for a viable solution.

## Science

# Curing cancer in the 21st century

**Vianca Shah** asks why it's taking so long to find a cure

Cancer is one of the leading causes of death worldwide. According to the WHO, about 1 in 6 deaths are caused by cancer. Researchers around the world are racing to find a cure for the deadly disease – but why is it taking so long? And are we any closer to a cure than we were when Nixon declared a 'War on Cancer' in the 70s?

Despite there being no cure, if the disease is diagnosed at an early stage and then adequately treated, survival rates have risen substantially for many types of cancers. Average five-year survival rates for both breast and prostate cancers in the UK stand at over 80%, not to mention the far higher survival rates for tumours that are detected early on. Notable exceptions include cancers of the pancreas, liver, and lung. Nevertheless, all-cancer five-year survival has dramatically increased, for example in the US, from 50.3% in the 70s to 67% in the early 2000s. In this way, current treatments and managing relapse has allowed many people to lead long, successful lives and "beat cancer."

We group cancer into one big category, but, in reality, the symptoms and clinical manifestations of different can-

cers are very unique. Particularly in the cases of metastases (cancers that spread from one part of the body to another), scientists are looking into how to restrict or stop that process. The initial localised tumour itself often does not cause quite as much damage. Therefore tumours that do not invade surrounding tissues are called 'benign', while those that do are referred to as 'malignant'. It is metastasis that largely contributes to cancer deaths: as the tumour invades vital tissues, their functions are impaired, such as the liver, kidneys, or lungs. What is curious about all these metastatic mechanisms is that many of them seem to mimic the very ones that are vital in the formation of human tissue in an embryo. A major process underlying this is the epithelial to mesenchymal transition (EMT), that allows stationary cells to become motile and invasive, similar to the process that happens inside the early embryo.

This is one of the many 'hallmarks' of cancer, formulated in a seminal Cell paper by Douglas Hanahan and Robert Weinberg. These 'hallmarks' include cancer cells evading being killed by the body, being self-sufficient in growing and responding to growth signals, evading growth suppressors, activating metastasis, dividing uncontrollably and making new blood vessels. Scientists are targeting every one of these mechanisms

“Targeting one 'hallmark' of tumours does not guarantee success as these evolve new evasion strategies”

to try and figure out a way to restrain the disease and keep it in its localised target area.

Another 'hallmark' currently being researched is the role of angiogenesis, the growth of new blood vessels. For the tumour to spread, it needs oxygen and nutrients to survive. Therefore, the growth of a blood vessel network is very important. As solid tumours grow, the existing blood circulation is insufficient to supply it, thus creating a low oxygen area within its core, releasing pro-angiogenic signals. Several blockers of receptors involved in angiogenesis have been developed, with quite varying success rates. A major issue is cancers developing quite ingenious ways of gaining access to blood in the body.

A further 'hallmark' of cancers is their ability to evade immune system surveillance and produce growth promoting inflammation. Usually, the immune system is very effective at killing tumours. So-called 'natural killer cells' are able to recognise tumour cells and destroy these. An early example of immunotherapy for cancer is the drug rituximab, an antibody which specifically targets white blood cells, and is thus used in lymphomas (and autoimmune diseases), by targeting damaged B cells. Recently, CRISPR-Cas9 gene editing has allowed us to engineer T cells, part

of the adaptive immune system which can recognise cells that are infected by pathogens and kill these. Usually, T cells rely on other immune cells to 'present' them with antigens of pathogens, so that these can identify what cells are infected and destroy them.

Now, with gene editing, these recognition receptors can synthetically be inserted into T cells, so they can recognise tumours expressing these and kill them. There are currently over 300 clinical trials taking place attempting to develop this form of therapy for several types of cancer. A major issue here is the potential immune response of the body to this treatment, as well as cancer evolving and no longer expressing the antigen the therapy is developed against.

Each and every stage in the oncogenic and metastatic process needs to be studied to find out if there are potential treatments. It is this very complexity in the formation and spread of cancer that makes it so challenging for scientists. Targeting one 'hallmark' of tumours does not guarantee success as these evolve new evasion strategies. Further, it is difficult to do so without affecting healthy bodily cells.

Now, the struggle against cancer continues, from the laboratory bench to the hospital bedside. Hopefully it will be a struggle of the past very soon.

“It is metastasis that largely contributes to cancer deaths”

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Illustration by Amber Li

# Vulture

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# Lifestyle

## A Room of One's Own a place of peace

What makes a room special? **Anna Stephenson** talks to PhD student Maria Khan, who describes her room as a place to be herself among a community



“  
In my room, I am  
allowed to cry,  
be angry, feel  
inadequate or  
great, dance and  
sing  
”

Lifestyle's new series, *A Room of One's Own*, looks at Cambridge rooms and the students who inhabit them. For better or worse, we make the places we live in our own; and in their turn, these spaces – however small, and however temporary – transform us.

The view from your room transforms the space of the room itself; quite literally, it puts things in a different light. I'm visiting Maria Khan, a fourth-year PhD student in eighteenth-century German literature and theatre studies, at St Edmund's College.

Maria's bedroom window has a view of grass, trees, and a chapel. More than some other rooms I've seen, it lets the sunlight in. "Every morning, I wake up to see the silent gardener working outside," says Maria.

As a Muslim woman in a Roman Catholic space, Maria finds both her room and the community at the Margaret Beaufort Institute helpful for the practice of her faith.

"Being here felt right. I feel like I'm surrounded by people who really care about their inner life, whatever their beliefs. The other day I wasn't feeling so good, and someone told me they would pray for me. That touched me. In a place so far from my family and my original home, that kind of support and community means a lot."

The youngest of five siblings, Maria dedicates the pinboard above her bed to pictures of her family. They all live far away – two of them in Pakistan, where Maria is from, and two live in New Zealand. A black and white photograph of Bertolt Brecht in a cap is the only departure from this familial focus; Maria is quick to assure me that he is no relation.

One of the only other images of people she doesn't know personally is a picture from Prince Harry's 2018 wedding to Meghan Markle. Not a particular royalist, she admires the way Meghan has crossed borders and divides while remaining true to her own style and personality.

At home with her family, Maria has been used to sharing everything, including her bedroom. Having a space just for herself has enabled her to grow into the person she wants to be, and acknowledge the person she is. "In my room, I am allowed to cry, be angry, feel inadequate or great, dance and sing. The Persian carpet in my room allows me to take

naps on the floor when the sun shines through the window".

She dots her room with little inspirations – by her bed, fridge magnets on a radiator tell us to be true to ourselves. A hand-written sticky note affirms, in indisputable block capitals, that we are enough.

No experience of living in Cambridge is the same. We all have different points of reference, and as a student body have lived all over the world. Having completed her undergraduate degree in Berlin, Maria notes that she found it to be a more relaxed place than Cambridge.

"You wouldn't think it was a capital city. People just go around barefoot! Here, peo-

ple wear suits and gowns riding around on bicycles."

Cambridge, for her, is a more intense place. The grounds of the Margaret Beaufort Institute and her own room provide a space within but apart from the rest of the city.

"I think some people have the attitude that, well, they might only be in that particular room for one year; it doesn't really matter how it looks or how you feel living in it. I completely disagree!"

While some people spend much less time in their room than others, being out a lot can make your own room even more important, argues Maria: "Wherever I've been, whatever has been going on in that day, I can come back to my room and instantly feel myself again".



For Maria, her room is a place where her academic and creative work overlap. Since being in Cambridge, she has got more in touch with her artistic side. Previously not thinking much of designing home-made cards, when people appreciated her work she started going to a painting society here. She shows us a piece of her art, a nude sketched out in confident, dark brushstrokes. It's impossible not to pick up some of the enthusiasm she feels for her relatively new-found talent.

Maria leads us out. We pause by the apple tree, take a couple more photos, and try to take with us a bit of the warm, crisp peace we leave behind.

What makes your room unique? Get in touch with our Lifestyle team with a hundred word pitch at [lifestyle@varsity.co.uk](mailto:lifestyle@varsity.co.uk)

◀ "Being here felt right" (ALL PHOTOS BY MING KIT WONG)





# Keeping the Week Five blues at bay

**Olivia Emily** offers some simple steps to help get you through the dreaded 'Week Five blues'

This time last year I had my first experience of the mythological (and, arguably, overhyped) Week Five blues. I was really starting to feel the weight of Cambridge. The clocks went back and the days were getting shorter, the essays were piling up, and freshers' flu was weighing me down. Staying in bed seemed a much nicer prospect than moving.

I say Week Five is 'overhyped' because the sadness so typical of it isn't just something I experienced in Week Five, nor was it something that was cured by special college welfare events dedicated to the phenomenon. And, whilst there's a definite argument to be made about the overworking, unsustainable, competitive Cambridge culture bogging students down, this year I'm making small, manageable changes to keep those blues at bay.

Dealing with Week Five starts with baby steps, like eating healthily, staying hydrated, and getting enough sleep. But here are a few more tips to help make your Week Five even just a tiny bit better:

## Keep your room bright

The nights are getting longer, but I'm trying to chase away the darkness by keeping my room as light and bright as possible. I do this with side lights, fairy lights, and even glow-in-the-dark stars. I keep my curtains open for as long as is socially acceptable every day, and I've found that having white bed sheets can even help keep a room from feeling too shadowy.

## Take mindful breaks

If I'm at a loose end with my work, it's time to take a mindful break. Sitting and struggling is both painful and unproductive, so instead

I take a walk. I personally like to make use of my college's 'nature walk', but also just walking around and soaking in the beautiful courts can be enough. As it's getting colder and wetter, this is getting more difficult, but even walking around the library or sitting in a comfier seat for a while can be useful. This is a great time to check in with yourself, scan yourself for stress, and generally just be kind to yourself – you deserve a break!

## Plants are a source of life

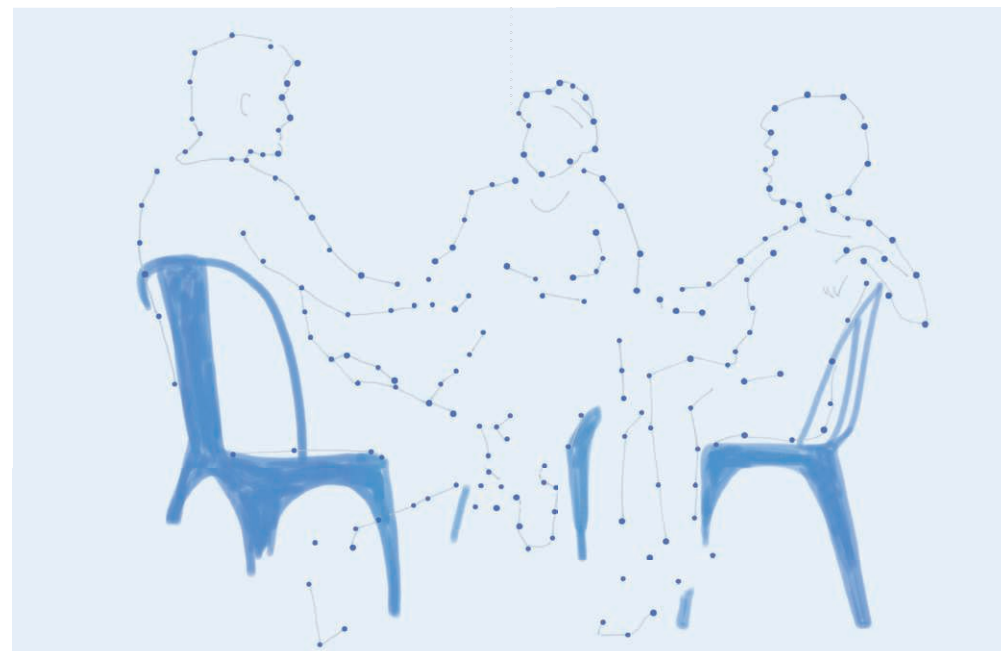
Another room-decor one, but – in my experience – having a plant to look after encourages me to look after myself. I made a deal with myself that, every time I water my plants, I wash my face or moisturize – but this could also be used as a reminder to have a big glass of water, or just to have a meditative moment to yourself. Plants are also really pretty and aesthetically pleasing, and, I think, stop a room looking so lifeless.

## Don't eat alone!

For every meal, anyway. Organising to cook with friends or to go to the cafeteria together can break up a day really nicely. It's also a good opportunity to check in with how friends are feeling, what's happening in people's lives, and feeling less like life is just an onwards trudge to your next essay deadline.

## Relax with art

Last year I discovered the incredibly niche hobby of completing dot-to-dots (preferably with lots of dots) – they're the perfect combination of satisfying puzzle and relaxing (and beautiful) art. The same goes for 'Sticker by Number' books, mindful colouring books, and other relaxing art projects aimed at adults



– even just ordinary drawing. This is the perfect thing to do if you're in need of a mindful break, and it doesn't have to be art-related. Oftentimes, the most relaxing things to do are the things you enjoyed most as a child – whether that's dot-to-dots like me, or sudoku, baking, building with Lego, or even just going for a run.

## Find a reason to get out of the house, everyday, without exception

Even if it's raining, even if I'm feeling down, getting out of the house (whether to see people, to go to the library, to grab some food, or just to go for a walk) is a literal life-saver.

I am personally also expanding this to getting out of college: having so many amenities at my fingertips means staying within college grounds for days on end is easy, but that doesn't mean it's good for me.

A lot of people talk about the 'Cambridge bubble,' and how amazing it feels to escape it. Week Five is the ideal time to get a break from Cambridge, but we can't all feasibly escape the bubble during term time. Instead, we can use methods like these to make the bubble better, even just a little bit.

▲ Illustration by Lois Wright for Varsity

## Stem and Glory is a pleasant surprise for a meat eater

Though falling a little short, this vegan restaurant is still worth a try, says **Callum Wainstein**

Stem and Glory is a vegan restaurant located on King Street. Decor wise it's nice enough, but I feel it's lacking a bit of polish considering its pricey menu. It's actually relatively expensive, but it doesn't really feel like you're eating at a twenty pound a head restaurant (which you could very easily spend). It's important to state right off the bat before discussing the food that I am not vegan. Obviously this is a restaurant which is specifically targeted at vegans who, some might say, have a more limited range of options when it comes to dining. But even so I still think there is a validity in myself, a meat eater, trying it and seeing how it stands up – would I eat there again with a non-vegan person?

To start with, I tried their selection of home-made pickles, something I was particularly excited for since I love a good pickle. You're served a selection of three pickles, all of which I enjoyed, and would definitely recommend. These pickles act as both a good palate cleanser between dishes and are also something I could eat with other dishes to add an extra acidity.

Next, I had the cauliflower 'buffalo wings'. The battered cauliflower was, on its own, relatively disappointing – the batter wasn't that crisp and the cauliflower was a bit flavourless and dry. However, this dish was saved by the absolutely delightful sauce – it had a soy base and lovely notes of heat and smokiness.

Third we have the VLT, Stem and Glory's version of a BLT, made with vegan tempeh. The texture of the tempeh was really excellent: it was tender and had the evocation of rendered fat when you bite into it. The bread was very dense and chewy, which made it the perfect vehicle for absorbing the sharp lemon dressing – which was a good balancing point to the 'fatty' tempeh. The tomato provided a good snap and freshness which would have been otherwise lacking in the dish. Overall this was a delightful sandwich, one I'd definitely have again.

Finally I had the tomato linguine. The pasta was topped with vegan parmesan cheese, which I felt of all the vegan substitutes was probably the most lacking – it didn't really

provide any umami or saltiness that parmesan normally does, and instead sort of just sat on the top like a limp white powder. More successful was the addition of rocket to the dish, which added both a peppery bite and a nice crunch. I thought that the linguine was overall very much a 'fine' dish – there was nothing really wrong with it, but for a dish which costs ten quid I feel like there should be something more going on: this felt like a solid pasta dish I could have cooked in my halls.

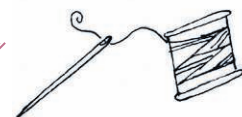
Overall, I was pleasantly surprised by Stem and Glory, particularly the VLT which was honestly excellent. If I was ever eating out with a vegetarian or vegan person, I'd be happy to go there instead of a more meat-centred restaurant. However, if I was to eat out with another person who also eats meat, I don't think I'd recommend going to Stem and Glory.

In summary – worth a try at least once as a way of demonstrating what vegan cooking can be, but not somewhere I'll be eating regularly.



▲ Stem & Glory (INSTAGRAM/@STEMANDGLORY)

# Fashion



## Fashion takes flight

*Isabella Martin explores the influence of the natural world in fashion, both past and present, and asks what it means for the representation of women in today's society*

Birds took centre stage at Simone Rocha's most recent SS20 show: Irish wren feathers were painted in the centre of models' forehead. The designer sourced her inspiration from the Irish Wren Boys – a group who, by tradition, dress up each year on 26th December in masks and straw suits to hunt a fake wren and parade through town. In honour of this, Rocha wanted the air of the show to be “a bit mystical, a bit spooky, a bit punk.”

“  
Pioneering female creatives  
like Burton and Rocha  
allow the modern woman  
to carve her own style  
”

Nature has provided an endless source of inspiration for artists; many of the most-renowned metaphors in poetry and painting are to the earth, sun, animals, or the beauty of the natural world.

Rocha herself is constantly surrounded by nature, even when sitting in her London office. Filled with dappled light, her windows look out onto the leaves, vines and the calm water of the Hackney Canals.

Nature manages to break through the metropolis and urbanity of London, and its abundance offers powerful stimulus for Rocha's collections.

Nature has always been traditionally personified as a woman, and Rocha's designs often riff on notions of femininity, while also often being simultaneously undercut with subtle tones of masculinity. This is for the women who don't want to limit or confine their identity: delicate white frills appear in oversized variations, often paired with studded black or metallic sandals.

Rocha's latest use of feathers in her SS20 show evokes the late Alexander McQueen's avid obsession with birds throughout his design career: specifically, the elegance of their silhouettes.

Having left school early to become a tailor's apprentice on Saville Row in Mayfair, structure and form were at the centre of McQueen's understanding of art and design. By taking inspiration from the natural phenomenon of the bird, he sought to transpose their elegance and sharply structured form to the clothes he created for women.

Just as Simone Rocha turned to natural phenomena to inform her designs, Alexander McQueen sought to fuse avian and feminine beauty. He featured bird feathers in many of his collections, including one inspired by



▲ "Nature has always been traditionally personified as a woman, and Rocha's designs often riff on notions of femininity" (INSTAGRAM/VOGUE)

the Highland Clearances, entitled 'Highland Rape' (AW95), and 'The Widows of Culloden' (AW06), both of which echoed the historic subjugation of Scotland at the hands of its English neighbours.

When you think of the Scottish Highlands, you probably think of mist and mystery – that's what these collections evoke. McQueen lauds and heralds the beauty of this naturally wild landscape, the traditions that honour it and the birds which inhabit it.

While Alexander McQueen's days soaring at the heights of high fashion may be in the past, the work of Sarah Burton, who is now creative director of Alexander McQueen's fashion brand, continues to honour this delicate balance of female beauty, grace and power.

Her approach echoes Simone Rocha's pairing of typically feminine draping with masculine tailoring and harsher leather textures and details.

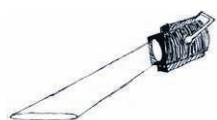
“  
Rocha's use of feathers  
evokes McQueen's avid  
obsession with birds  
”

Nowadays, the approach to womenswear has changed. Rather than an object of the designer's gaze, women have been able to

subvert the suffocating norm, with the growing reign of female designers such as Sarah Burton and Simone Rocha.

The model and the modern woman are now sufficiently liberated to take ownership of their own form, rather than being bound by the structural 'ideal' of a silhouette. The rejection of the male voyeuristic gaze marks a leap forward in the gendered fashion hierarchy.

The now-trademark incorporation of feminine tropes in harmony with supposedly masculine shapes, textures, or pieces are emblematic of today's woman, free to move within this less restrictive silhouette. At last, pioneering female creatives like Burton and Rocha allow the modern woman to carve her own style.



More reviews are available online at:  
[varsity.co.uk/theatre](http://varsity.co.uk/theatre)

# Theatre

## Exploring the male mental health crisis in *Big Boys Don't Cry*

*Tom Foreman discusses the motives behind writing his new play, Big Boys Don't Cry, and the importance of tackling issues of male mental health sensitively and accurately*

*Content Note: this article contains detailed discussion of mental health and mention of suicide*

I attended an all-boys school from the age of 10 until university. Coming to Cambridge was my first time removed from an almost entirely male environment in almost a decade. Going through adolescence in that atmosphere, I learnt a lot about the male mind and how we boys seem to cope when things aren't going to plan; leaving that environment, though, helped me put it all into perspective.

The motives behind my play *Big Boys Don't Cry* are numerous. I wanted to explore male adolescence on stage while also shedding light on the current crisis in male mental health. Suicide remains the leading cause of death in males under 30. When I stopped to think about this statistic, it really blew my mind. How is it that I am more likely, as a 20 year-old-male, to take my own life than to be killed by any accident, disease, or natural event? And why is this not being talked about more?

We see things in the press occasionally – recently the tragic passing of Love Island star Mike Thalassitis – and it sparks a discussion momentarily, but not for long. Within a few days other things fill the headlines, and male mental health becomes a smudge on our collective conscience; we know it's there, we know it needs to be discussed, but we just can't seem to find the words. The truth is that such issues are endemic, and the statistics only prove this.

With this in mind, I wanted to explore mental health in an accurate, sensitive and realistic way. I absolutely abhor the current trend of sensationalising mental health problems for dramatic effect (as seen in Netflix's *13 Reasons Why*, for example) and so striking that tone right was of the upmost importance to me. The script has been reworked and modified more times than I can even count to ensure that every draft is better than the one before, and I have consulted numerous sources, including the very kind people at Mind, a nationwide mental health charity who do a wonderful job day to day to support those in need.

*The characters represent every boy that has taken on the stiff upper lip*

But at its core, this play is still a simple story about the lives of two best friends growing up together. It's nostalgic, it's relatable, and at some points it's hopefully even quite funny. The characters of Ben and Oscar represent everyone I grew up with, every boy that has taken on the 'stiff upper lip'. Unavoidably they represent me at points, and maybe if you are sitting in the audience, you may feel they represent parts of you too.

The script had progressed to a point where it meant so much to me that I could imagine every scene exactly as I wanted it to be, and felt it needed to be, performed, so I decided to fill the role of Ben myself. It's been a rigorous, tiring process ensuring every scene is handled delicately and appropriately, whilst also trying to nail my own performance. Fortunately I've been lucky enough to work alongside a fantastic director, Emily Webster, who shares my vision completely, and my co-star Will Leckie has been smashing every bit of dialogue he gets his hands on, which has helped to settle my nerves a bit.

Sitting here writing this, I can't believe that *Big Boys Don't Cry* is on so soon. After months of overthinking and redrafting, it's about to be shared with the world (or, with Cambridge at least). It's been an incredible experience

translating *Big Boys Don't Cry* from paper to stage. It's been a privilege working alongside our small team, and I'm so grateful to everyone involved for handling the script as well as they

*I wanted to explore mental health in an accurate, sensitive and realistic way*

have. Please come along; I can't wait to share these boys' stories with you.

*Big Boys Don't Cry will be playing at the Corpus Playroom until Saturday 9th November.*



▲ "At its core, this play is still a simple story about the lives of two best friends" (*BIG BOYS DON'T CRY*)

### Towards a new media landscape?

Come along to our panel event, in collaboration with Clare Politics on 12th November 2019.

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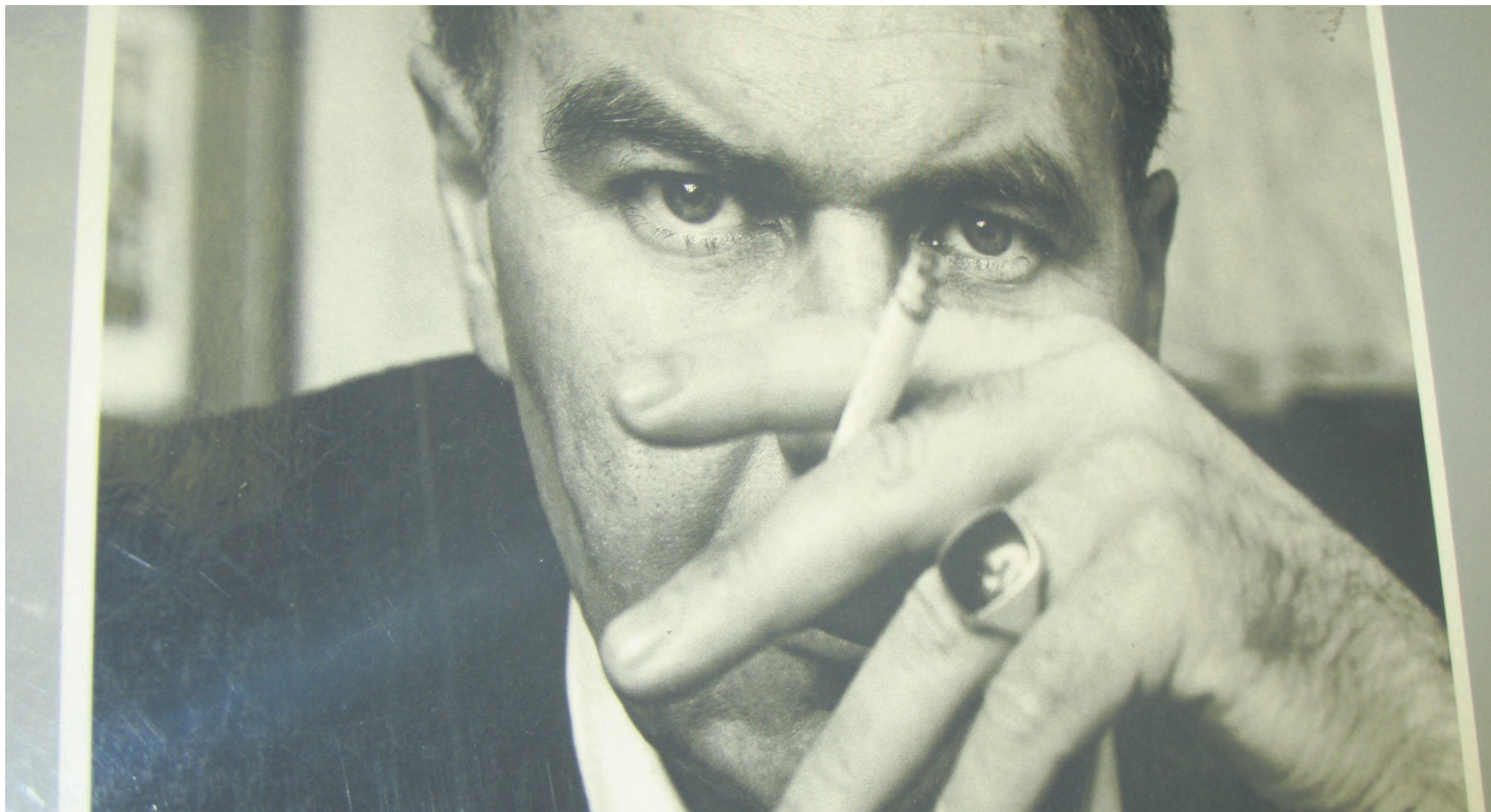
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# Arts

## Piecing together fragments of voiceless love in Carver's stories from *Silent America*



▲ "These people are real and flawed, and Carver is never too charitable in his depiction of them" (ANTHONY EASTON/FICKR)

**Rachel Weatherly** extols the quiet virtues and subtlety of Raymond Carver's short stories

Raymond Carver is perhaps the pre-eminent author in this series, considered by many as a pioneer of the modern American short story. His talent lies in drawing out the monumental from what, on the surface, appears banal, but without slipping into sentimentality.

His seminal collection, *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*, is an assemblage of fragments, three to four pages at most, but

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*They aren't borne from the glory of the American dream, but its debris*

”

they do not feel clipped or lacklustre. The brevity of Carver's stories makes them ideal for those fleeting periods of time between seminars and supervisions, or whenever you are able to find a few minutes to yourself during a busy weekday.

Strained, often voiceless love is the organising theme for this collection. Carver tells the stories of men and women living in the American Midwest, who spend their days fishing, drinking, eking out a living, and drinking some more.

One senses this community is a self-contained one, its members not venturing too far beyond the perimeters of their circumscribed world. Yet there is something striking in the banality of it all.

Carver is in no way preoccupied with staying one step ahead of his reader, there are no great surprises or plot twists, but equally this does not mean these stories are told in a manner which precludes gravity or seriousness to the situations described. The lives these people lead may be simple, but Carver grants attention and import to the very real emotions they feel.

A single moment can act as a lightning rod for a whole story. In this way, seemingly innocuous one-off incidences, like a man coming to the door of another character to sell him a picture of his house, can trigger a kaleidoscope of emotion, often unspoken, relayed through the private thoughts of a character.

Similarly, in *Why Don't You Dance?* a young

couple come across a man selling the contents of his house at the side of the freeway. Stories unravel in a way that feels natural, in accordance with the inevitability of things, but they maintain an expressive spontaneity. The

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*Older characters  
ruminate on a life laid  
to waste*

”

young woman tells the story of her encounter to everyone she meets, until of course, they tire of it. “We got real pissed and danced. In the driveway. Oh, my God. Don't laugh. He played us these records. Look at this record-player. The old guy gave it to us. And all these crappy records. Will you look at this shit?”

Older characters are more worn down, weatherbeaten, ruminating on a life laid to waste. “There was a time when I thought I loved my first wife more than life itself,” one

man muses. “But now I hate her guts. I do. How do you explain that? What happened to that love? What happened to it, is what I'd like to know. I wish someone could tell me.”

Made cynical by the disappointments of life, the betrayals of loved ones, the missed opportunities, the mundanity of existence? It appears to be a synthesis of these things.

Carver writes about what he knows - himself hailing from a small town in Eastern Washington called Yakima, his father working in a sawmill and his mother as a waitress. In this sense, the collection feels like a testimonial to his loved ones.

Carver's language is never overindulgent, even if his writing calcifies around what is left unsaid. Such brooding silence are indeed reminiscent of the troubles that come with communication in relationships, and this is captured so compellingly in the hesitant cadence of Carver's passages.

These people are real and flawed, and Carver is never too charitable in his depiction of them; they are not borne from the glory of the American Dream, but its debris. There is something of the everyman in these stories, and it is perhaps why they have resonated with generations of readers.



# How life drawing became part of my weekly routine

**Joanna Neve** says we could all benefit from life drawing, a stress-relieving creative outlet

Before coming to university, my only experience of life drawing was a few odd portraits that I did during my GCSEs, and they certainly weren't of anyone in the nude. As a big art lover, I decided that second year was the time to return to one of my old hobbies. I started asking around to see if anyone knew of any drawing classes or art societies, and I was surprised to discover that there's actually a real buzz for life drawing in Cambridge. Lots of different groups across the city run all kinds of sessions, from formal classes to 12-week courses. There are even relaxed unsupervised sessions, like those run by the Architecture Society (ARCSOC). As a complete novice, I decided to give it a go and ended up absolutely loving it. It's now something I'd recommend everyone try, regardless of artistic ability.

With two friends, I went along to one of ARCSOC's very relaxed Friday night life drawing classes, which run regularly throughout term in the architecture department. I absolutely loved the freedom that the session provided. There wasn't anyone coming around to tell you that you were holding your charcoal wrong, or that your drawing was wildly



▲ Illustration for Varsity by Amber Li

out of proportion. Trust me, it doesn't take an instructor to point out that my drawing skills are awful, or that in my sketch the arms looked a lot like legs. But regardless, I was able to get on with my own piece and take a nosy look at those around me, which was a really insightful way to catch a glimpse of other people's drawing styles. Either way, there was no judgemental vibe – it was a very positive space to experiment with half-minute sketches, followed by progressively longer ones as the session went on and culminating in a half-hour detailed piece.

While the drawing side of it was great fun, I wouldn't just recommend life drawing in Cambridge as a way of trying out new sketching techniques or watching those of others. It's a great edition to any student's week – after leaving the class, I felt so stress-free. Sure, the model for that session had an incredible figure, but the exercise demonstrated that we come in all shapes and sizes, and that taking the time to appreciate the human form is actually quite a necessary activity. We often chuck clothes on or off without really looking at our own bodies, let alone appreciating somebody else's. The model in the session we went to

had lovely hair, for example, but it's the kind of thing you wouldn't notice if she walked past in the street.

The experience also made me think about the meaning we attach to clothes – I found it hard to develop an idea of the model's personality when she was naked, yet when she put her clothes back on, I soon generated a first impression based on style alone. All round, it was an eye-opening experience – even someone who doesn't like art could gain a lot from trying it.

With so many classes held across Cambridge during the week, life drawing is the kind of activity that could fit into almost any schedule. Some classes, like the ARCSOC one I went to, are dominated by students, which is of course expected, but other slightly more expensive ones are perfect for more experienced artists and are attended by a greater mix of people.

Life drawing is now part of my weekly schedule, so friends visiting my room had better get used to nude murals littering the walls. It's just the distraction I needed to space out a busy term, and I'm sure it could do wonders for us all.



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# Music



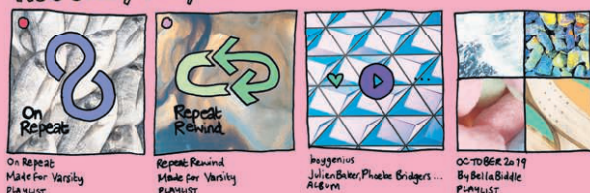
## Vulture's



### AUTUMN PLAYLIST

by **Lottie Reeder**

#### Recently Played



▲ Illustration by Bella Biddle for Varsity

**By Your Side**  
Flatsound

**South London Forever**  
Florence + the Machine

**Clocks Go Forward**  
James Bay

**You're Not The Only One**  
Sam Fender

**Lights Up**  
Harry Styles

**Slow Life**  
Grizzly Bear

**Stolen Dance**  
Milky Chance

**re:stacks**  
Bon Iver

**All the Pretty Girls**  
Kaleo

**1980s Horror Film II**  
Wallows

**Can't Stop**  
Red Hot Chili Peppers

**ARE WE STILL FRIENDS?**  
Tyler, the Creator

◀ Sam Fender

(INSTAGRAM/  
@SAMFENDER)

Everything Not Saved Will Be Lost, Part Two is the musical sequel we didn't know we needed

The second part of Foals' two-piece project is an artistic success, writes **Eddie Milton-Seall**

Everything Not Saved Is Lost Part 2 is the second part of Foals' most ambitious project to date. After the success of Part 1, many critics questioned not only the necessity, but also potential quality of a second album released within the following six months. The frantic disobedience embedded within this album juxtaposes Part 1 brilliantly: it is a sequel we never knew we wanted. Yannis describes Part 1 as "more from the perspective of viewing what's going on, whereas Part 2 is on the run." On the run from what? It may not be clear at first glance; the album highlights such a variety of current issues that it can be difficult to understand its overarching message.

The new album is littered with distinctive and interesting imagery. The opener 'Red Desert' is a beautiful and brave instrumental. Its *Clockwork Orange* inspired mystery contrasts with the defiance and absolutism of 'Sunday' at the end of Part 1. The album swiftly lifts into 'The Runner' - which I'm now convinced is one of their best songs to date - where closed throat falsettos evoke a unique and genuine sense of pain and desperation. This, combined with the gospel raising aura produced by the drums and baseline, means this song captures your imagination and at-

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A varied mix of metallic  
alt rock and emo inspired  
introspection  
”

tention immediately. The album continues with this chaotic, confused rock sound, calling back to the uncompromising nature of the band's first LP *Antidotes*. Almost twelve years on, songs such as 'Black Bull' and 'Wash Off' have the same energy as *Antidotes*, but convey a much more nuanced structure. They feel like the twisted cousin of hits 'Inhaler' and 'What Went Down', whereas 'Like Lightning' would feel more at home in a Black Keys LP rather than on this record. This is a definite blip.

For me, '10,000 Feet' is the album's crowning glory. Philippakis mutates his voice as he howls and screams about finally becoming at one with nature in death, all while the band produces an aggressive eeriness through the music. Together, a feeling of personal inadequacy prevails, which is so prevalent today as a result of the climate crisis. 'Into the Surf' continues this theme, as the band paints a picture of death. The ambition of this two-part project was criticised by some as pretentious, but the connections between the two



▲▼  
INSTAGRAM/  
@FOALS

albums are well reasoned and, perhaps more importantly, subtle. The climax of the album comes in the form of 'Neptune', a ten-minute mesmerising odyssey. This mini-epic is about trying to escape mortality, where venturing into the abyss of space to die is the only solution. Philippakis stated before the release of Part 1 that music currently exists "in the wreckage". Whether this project was an attempt to prove to the world that his hypothesis was correct or not, I am unsure. However, the varied mix of metallic alternative rock and emo-inspired introspection has produced a sensational record. This is a fantastic socio-political soundtrack which also succeeds in being a hugely enjoyable listen.





# The beginner's guide to making films in Cambridge

**Bea Goddard** shares valuable tips on how to start out as a film-maker in Cambridge

In my first term at Cambridge, I knew I wanted to make films, but I had no idea how. I didn't see the Cambridge Film Association (CFA) stand at the Freshers Fair and I didn't know anyone who had made any films in Cambridge. Since then, I've worked on four films (three documentaries and one short fiction) and am currently working on my fifth film.

Almost exactly two years ago, I felt incredibly powerless about environmental breakdown and decided I wanted to make a documentary about how Cambridge was (or wasn't) tackling it. This became *The Cambridge Climate*. I had the idea, but I didn't have the resources to make it happen.

I had no equipment or experience aside from some really awful (I mean awful) short fiction films I'd made with my friends in sixth form.

After some googling, I found CFA and spammed their Facebook inbox with all my questions. They told me to join the Cambridge Film Facebook group to do a call out for crew. I borrowed kit from CFA and learnt from my team members and the people we interviewed about how to actually make the film.

Looking back, my first film is one of my proudest achievements. It may not be the highest quality film I've made, but what I

▼ **Bea Goddard** (LOIS WRIGHT)

learnt from it were undeniably useful in making my next three documentaries; *It Takes Art* (exploring different art forms in discussing feminism, co-directed with Lina Fradin), *Their Story* (a documentary about rough sleepers and vulnerably housed individuals, to be released online on 30th November), and my current project *Hit Like A Girl* (following the women's team of the Cambridge University Amateur Boxing Club, exploring sexism in sport as well as the struggles and joys of training for an intense sport while studying).

I think there is no better way to learn about filmmaking than learning on the job, but here's some of the things I've learnt in the last two years.

“  
I knew I wanted to make films, but I had no idea how  
”

Ask questions to anyone who does anything vaguely film related – if they don't know the answer, they can put you in touch with someone who will. CFA exists to facilitate filmmaking and are very willing to

answer your questions and put call outs to their emails (find them on Facebook). Equally, ask people to watch your films after you've made them – this could be friends, family, on social media, or even filmmakers you admire (it's worth at least emailing them).

You don't need your own kit, you can borrow the CFA kit by messaging that year's kit officer. Watch as many other films as you can. I've started a notebook of all the documentaries I watch so I can refer to what I thought about how certain films were shot or structured. You don't have to go in and direct a film straight away.

You can do a call out with an idea you've had, or produce/direct/write/shoot/edit the whole thing if you want, but it's worth applying to projects people post on the Cambridge Film or Cambridge Filmmakers Facebook groups.

If you want to lead a project, copy other people's call-out posts if you're not sure how to write them. Give a brief introduction to the film and provide some photographs as visual references so people get a sense of your vision. The more people you have on your team, the more people you can delegate to (you really don't have to do everything yourself).

When filming interviews, use two cameras as this makes cuts smoother in the edit (but make sure they are both shooting in the same

format) and frame shots so that people fill most of the screen.

Be reasonable on how big a project you have the capacity for. Also note, most film festivals consider short films to run for less than 20 minutes, and most film schools and talent managers usually won't watch anything longer than that, so keep this in mind if you want to use it for these.

There are loads of funding sources in Cambridge willing to fund short films, the CFA has a full list but check out Trinity Filmmaking Society and available college funds.

I've raised over £500 from a college music and drama fund so it is very worth applying to ones that aren't film specific. It doesn't matter if your film isn't what you expected or wanted it to be, you've made something and that's an achievement in itself. You will have definitely learnt a lot in the process.

Try making different types of films. I tried out producing a short fiction piece last year and just didn't get as excited about it as I do about documentaries. Now I know that I definitely prefer documentaries – that's fine. Remember – no experience is required to make movies.

Bea Goddard's latest film is out on 30th November: [www.facebook.com/theirstorycambridge](http://www.facebook.com/theirstorycambridge)



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# Violet

By VARSITY

## When life imitates Brexit

Despite the utter chaos of the situation, there are certainly still a few valuable lessons that Brexit can teach us, says **Bethan McGinley**

Q

**I'm feeling really overwhelmed trying to balance work with seeing friends and going out – any advice?**

A

First things first, you're certainly not the only one. Cambridge would not be Cambridge without the perennial stress of managing work, friends, hobbies and sleep. But working on your degree and seeing friends shouldn't be mutually exclusive. Arrange a study date and try library hopping. Maybe invite someone over for lunch or grab a quick bite in between lectures.

Ask yourself what part of the night out may be hindering your work. If you drink just a little less you really can get a lot more done the next day. It can also feel impossible to be productive when you're tired: a nap followed by a coffee can work wonders for your productivity. Alternatively, start getting ready for a night out an hour later, or even just leave earlier as this will hopefully mean you can still get a decent few hours of sleep.

If you are really falling behind, Cambridge has many safety nets to catch you. Email your supervisor asking for an extension, or send in an essay plan in instead. You can also contact your tutor. It is really important to look after yourself mentally and physically and seeing friends is a great way to do that. Just remember that although your degree is important, your health comes first!



**Got questions?  
Get in touch at  
violet@varsity.co.uk**

I must confess that part of me has stopped paying attention to British politics in light of the fourth Brexit extension, partly because it's exhausting and partly because it's now too painful to watch.

However, upon reflection, I have decided that there certainly are a few things we can all take away from it.

### 1) Extension, extension, extension!

Have a big project deadline coming up? Is a supervisor hounding you for an essay? Don't worry, just get an extension! If you keep putting it off then eventually there'll be no point handing it in at all. And if not, there's a possibility that if you harp on about a mystical 'essay plan' for long enough, they may just accept that it's probably so shit it's not even worth reading.

### 2) It's always a good idea to lie through your teeth

Think you might not get that committee spot? Trying to secure a second date but not sure you're up to it? Just chat shit. Make sure it's convincing, but honestly go to town. Why not write on that application form that you're the sole reason we're getting a *Gavin and Stacey* Christmas special? And if they suspect that the rubbish you've spouted

isn't true, don't worry:

a) they'd lose face if they backed out now so of *course*, that's not an option, and

b) if you keep up with 'promises' you'll keep them hanging on in hope.

### 3) Need a self-esteem boost?

Forget retail therapy. When you need a bit more confidence consider having a go at something in which the competition is essentially non-existent or completely wank. For example, if you're desperate for a blue but don't have the skill for uni sport, I'd advise having a go at Eton Fives.

### 4) Working on a group project that isn't looking promising? Just bail

Do it. You may have volunteered to lead, but you can divest yourself of all responsibility by simply highlighting how uncooperative the other members of your group were and how hard the project was.

### 5) Don't have a plan? Don't worry, you don't need one

We've all been there before. Sat in a suppo that we're totally unprepared for. Never fear though, if it all goes tits up, just leave: you probably don't need a degree anyway. Someone else can just do it for you – or make a hash of it trying.

“  
Just chat  
shit  
”

## Hermes and online banking: a tale of Cambridge admin

**Sofia Johanson** recounts her struggles with the daunting and downright messy world of admin

Before coming to university, I had never been responsible for administrative matters in my life. And so, admittedly, I started Cambridge on an admin-fuelled high. The countless documents my college made me sign were all returned before the deadline. But as soon as lectures, going out and “normal” life kicked in, my organised persona took the hint and swiftly departed.

Take the College Bill: at the time of writing, due in 4 days. Have I paid it? Well, I started off strong by genuinely trying to set up my newly-bought card reader, but it seems online banking was not built for people as inept as me.

GP registration has also posed challenges. Everyone else seemed to have their NHS numbers memorised, while I had to call my home practice over 15 times before being told to hang up as my query was not urgent.

Ever the optimist, I tried to give in the form without the number, hoping the practice would somehow be able to find it. I had forgotten that, despite the beauty of the NHS, their powers don't stretch to plucking random numbers

out of cyberspace...

Other things I have given up on completely. Post-Freshers' week I was struck down by a particularly aggressive strain of freshers' flu and finished two packs of Strepsils within the first few days. PBoots, 6 minutes away on Google maps, was just that bit too far from my room. I ended up putting off said trip for so long that I didn't need them anymore.

I have also acquired the particularly unsatisfying talent of completing the most irrelevant and unnecessary admin tasks on my hypothetical to-do list (actually writing one would be way too organised). I met the very early deadline for sending the money for my college puffer jacket. I ordered my blue fleece despite never having represented Cambridge.

I'm also beginning to think that the real reason I applied here was simply for the unbelievable amounts of stash. This brief dip into adulthood has not been to my taste, but since I can no longer shove it all onto my mum, I guess I'd better grow up and get to grips with that bloody card reader.

## Not thriving, but surviving

Looking after both yourself and your plant can be hard, writes **Maddie London**

I picked him up at the Freshers' Fair. I heard on a podcast that there is scientific evidence that having plants in a room can improve your feelings of serenity.

But who am I kidding? The real reason was that I thought his beautiful blue ceramic pot would go with the cosy yet 'edgy' aesthetic of my room. It made me feel slightly less cool, however, when pretty much everyone in the queue had the exact same plant. The salesman at the till knew what he was doing when he convinced me to buy some 'plant food'. Obviously the last thing I wanted in all this Fresher's pandemonium was to be responsible for a dead plant, so I reluctantly handed over another few quid and wandered away with the little bonsai at my side.

Plant parenting is a challenge during Freshers'. You are constantly on the go, to the point that you don't even have a few spare minutes to take care of a plant, let alone yourself. My bonsai often stares at the shut curtains all day, an indicator of my complete inability to think about anything else in the morn-

ing but my poor, fatigued body. Sympathy please!

And I'll be honest, I'm a bad mother. Even if the curtains are open you'll find him perched on the sill above my bed, staring hopelessly at the bleak Cambridge sky, begging for a little glimpse of sunshine. I must say I share the sentiment.

Occasionally in a flurry of panic at the near death of my bonsai, I throw in a bit of plant food and just hope he survives the week. This needs to stop. Perhaps I am struggling with an identity crisis, unable to conform to the maternal expectations inflicted upon me by society... or perhaps I'm just making excuses. My plant's life should not rely on my complete erraticism and failure at time management.

The point at which I begin to nurture my plant will coincide with the moment I embark on a programme of self-care. It is difficult to find a moment in these first few weeks to stop and relax; breathe and feed my plant. But as soon as I do, you will catch me (or hopefully you won't) lying in bed at 8pm, cup of lemon and ginger tea in my hand, bonsai on my right, as we cosy up to an episode of *Planet Earth*. I think he will like it. Hopefully my plant's growth will be an active metaphor for my growth over the next three years. At the very least let's hope he makes it out alive.

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My plant's  
life should  
not rely  
on my  
complete  
erraticism  
”

# Are you just trying to be sexy? Finding strength in a sport the University refuses to recognise



**CUPS Competition Secretary Natalie Singhal speaks to *Chloe Henshaw* about the empowering potential of taking up pole as a sport**

Despite having seven hundred and fifty people registered to their mailing list, Cambridge University Pole Sports (CUPS) did not appear at the Freshers' Sports Fair this year. In fact, they have not been present in any year since their establishment in 2016.

Although CUPS is recognised as a society, the University refuses to recognise it as a sports club.

This is just one of the many challenges facing pole athletes trying to legitimise a sport which is frequently tabooed due to its heavily sexualised reputation.

Natalie has been practicing pole for three years and is currently Competition Secretary for CUPS, having joined last year as a fresher. Throughout our conversation, we time and again returned to the same point: "I'd like to be referred to as an athlete," she tells me.

Pole has been recognised by the Global Association of International Sports Federation (GAISF), yet CUPS and the University have come to an impasse over its recognition: while sports with similar skills such as trampolining, gymnastics and dance are recognised as University Sports Clubs on their website, pole is nowhere to be found.

The University has not responded to Varsity's request for comment.

▲ The University Sports Centre  
(LOUIS ASHWORTH)

Pole includes a wide range of competitions, from those which are more performance and dance-based, to those which are almost entirely physical, such as that established by the International Pole Sports Federation (IPSF).

Natalie explains that in the latter, "everything you do has very exact points, it's very much like a gymnastics routine," and looking at the IPSF Code of Points, I am struck by the accuracy of the stipulations regarding technique and style which are required for the athlete to score highly.

Not only this, but a range of rules are included which limit the sexuality of the sport, from music choice to the discreteness of costume.

Yet, it's hard to find legitimacy in a sport which has often been automatically associated with strip-clubs and sex workers. Natalie herself initially struggled with this reputation, saying that "I used to think it was degrading to women".

However, her mother, who believed it would help with strength and stamina, encouraged Natalie to take part. Despite being taught in the dance studio where she had been practicing dance for years previously, Natalie claims she experienced a certain shyness about starting pole.

Her confidence was affected by the overshadowing stereotype that she was "just trying to be sexy".

She has often felt the need to justify her engagement with pole in a way she never felt with dancing or trampolining.

Outside the dance studio, performances were difficult. Not only were there the usual nerves, but members of the public would attend competitions just to ridicule the athletes and performers. It is completely unjust that an athlete in performance should feel so sexualised and targeted by the public.

Natalie, like the sport itself, has learnt to overcome these preconceptions. While pole has evolved to become more athletically inclined, Natalie thinks that its sexual connotations remain a strong part of the identity of the sport, and she thinks "that side of it is very valid as well".

Pole, for her, represents a reconciliation between many aspects of her sporting identity – encompassing strength, artistic expression and empowerment by embracing her sexuality.

The sport, although female dominated, is also widely practiced by men. The IPSF competitions include male categories, which Natalie tells me are very popular. CUPS is representative of all the different aspects of pole.

Every year, the club participates in the Inter-University Pole Dancing Competition (IUDPC), an inclusive competition for both men and women. Athletes compete in a range of styles from athletic performances to those which are more artistic and resemble dance. Cambridge will also host the second Varsity Pole competition this year in Easter term, allowing athletes to engage in the Cam-

“  
*I never felt like an athlete before, but with pole, I do*  
”

bridge tradition of attempting to outperform our closest rival, Oxford.

These competitions have been sustained by the huge growth in the sport's popularity in recent years.

The society immediately took off following its inception in 2016, registering seven hundred students at the Freshers' Fair in its first year. This year, it has proved to be so popular that there are three beginner's classes running each week. There is no pre-required experience, and anybody looking to improve their strength and flexibility is free to come along.

Considering the prejudice the society faces, it is encouraging that such a niche and empowering sport is beginning to make such a dominant appearance at the University. Its success in spite of the inherent obstacles confirms that there is certainly more to it than initially meets the eye.

As we finish the interview, Natalie tells me: "I think that's part of why I love pole, because I was never a sporty person at school... I never felt like an athlete [before], but with pole, I do."

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**KELSEY KERRIDGE**

“  
Although CUPS is recognised as a society, the University refuses to recognise it as a sports club  
”

**Are you just trying to be sexy?** Chloe Henshaw discusses the empowering potential of pole **31**



Cambridge 7

Southampton 0

# Cambridge knocks Southampton for seven in high tempo match

**Joseph Powell**  
Sports Reporter

Cambridge Women's 1sts put on a rampant display on Wednesday afternoon, dispatching Southampton back home without a goal to their name in a 7-0 drubbing.

After a tight tie last week against Cardiff which saw the Light Blues come away with a 3-2 loss, fortunes were reversed in dramatic fashion as Cambridge lodged goal after goal to gain their first win and first three points of the 2019/20 ICG South Women's Premier season.

Southampton began proceedings by passing back and establishing a hold on the game which would see them control possession for the first five minutes. During this, the Light Blues got back in numbers and defended as a unit to ensure any of the opposition's chances were limited, marshalled all the while by keeper Morgause Lomas.

Although one shot slipped through an otherwise solid defensive line, Lo-

mas was quick to action, smothering the ball to send Southampton packing.

This was to mark the start of the rest of the game for the Light Blues, and their opponents were barely afforded a chance beyond it.

Cambridge's Martha Hoult managed to capitalise on this pressure, rifling a shot through a disorganised Soton defence to rack up the first goal of the game in the 5th minute.

With no intention to rest on their laurels, the Light Blues were rapidly out of the blocks again, with Number 10 Liv Shears making a breathless run from the half way line to chase a ball and knock it against a Southampton defender for a short corner.

The resultant play saw the ball whipped in for Number 3 Izzy Montgomery, who coolly picked a gap and doubled the lead before 10 minutes.

After recommencement the Light Blues demonstrated hunger and quickly won possession again, with Number 8 Izzy Austin releasing the ball into the area for 7 Alicia Murphy to stop and lay

▲ **The Light Blues displayed relentless energy**  
(JOSEPH POWELL)

up Montgomery for her second and Cambridge's third in the 12th minute.

With the Reds now on the ropes, Cambridge operated with a freedom which saw them confidently pass the ball around their own goal area. Some determined Southampton attack yielded no fruit, and the teams went to half-time with the score at 3-0.

With the break over, Cambridge passed back to build against a noticeably more vocal Southampton side. This greater communication saw them gain one of few short corners of their afternoon.

Cambridge were back on the offensive soon after. After occupying the goal area for some time, they received their reward in the form of a penalty flick, assuredly lifted into the bottom left corner by captain Amy Edwards to take the tie to 4-0.

Strong defensive play from Austin kept things under control for the home side.

Back up the other end, Cambridge's Mollie Ring-Hrubešová and Lucy Law-

rence demonstrated some fantastic interplay which ended with Lawrence firing in from close range to make it 5 goals with 23 minutes of the half gone.

Lizzie Jack made athletic runs down right flank and Ekaterina Privalova performed some evasive spins to bring the ball into a dangerous position on multiple occasions.

In one of these moments, Cambridge's Olivia Dudge performed a lovely dummy on the left-hand side of the area to send a Soton defender the wrong way before firing off a shot for the Light Blue's sixth five minutes from time.

Going to the last, Cambridge were awarded another short corner in the dying seconds. Not content with their half dozen, Edwards received the ball on the edge of the area and was able to find another gap in the patchy Southampton defence to shoot home, doubling her own tally and finishing at 7-0 at the whistle.

Cambridge will match up against Bristol 1sts in a fortnight's time on 20th November.

“*Cambridge were back on the offensive soon after*”