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Racist incidents towards Asian students soar amidst coronavirus fears

Victor Jack
Senior News Editor

East Asian Cambridge students have been the target of at least six alleged racist incidents following the coronavirus outbreak which originated in Wuhan, China.

The alleged incidents, which all occurred in the last two weeks, saw one student's hair physically pulled on the street and ketchup thrown at her, another told to "go back to [her] country", and another asked if he was "carrying viruses" by a stranger.

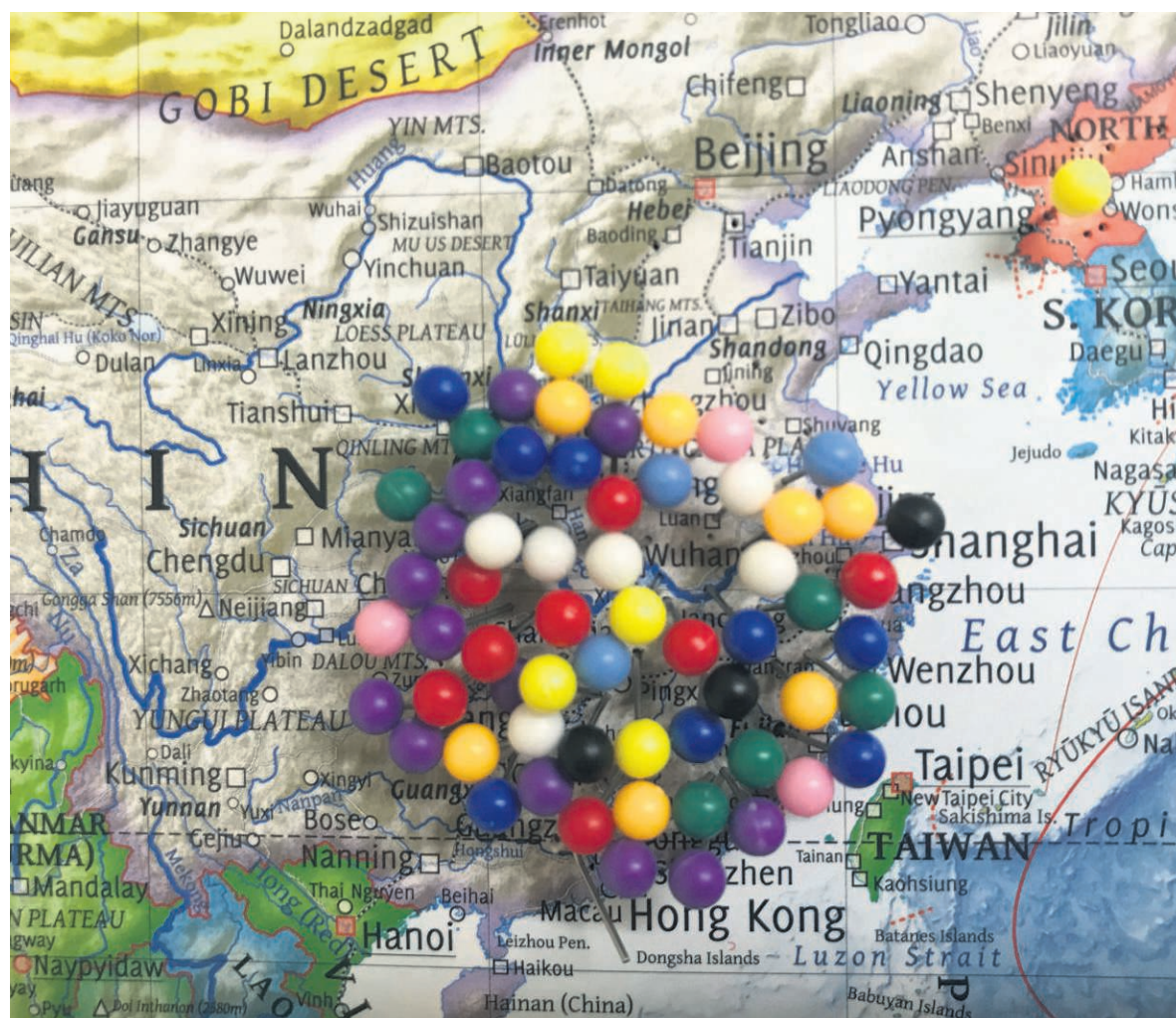
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Full story on page 2 ►



▲ A student found pins from across China on a world map in their MCR had been moved to Wuhan (ANONYMOUS)

UCU says 'We don't want to get to the 14th day of strikes'

Sophie Huskisson
Senior News Editor

Last Monday, the University and College Union (UCU) announced that 74 universities, including the University of Cambridge, will be hit with 14 days of strike action in February and March, starting on Thursday 20th February.

The disputes centre on the sustaina-

bility of the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) and rising costs for members, and on the universities' failure to make significant improvements on pay, equality, casualisation and workloads.

Members of the USS contributed 6.35% of salary in 2011 to their pension and from October last year, now contribute 9.6%, which is due to go up to 11% in 2021, subject to review under a 2020 valuation.

According to modelling by First Actuarial, because of changes to USS, a typical member will pay around £40,000 more into their pension, but receive £200,000 less in retirement, leaving them £240,000 worse off in total.

Branch Co-Secretary of UCU and English Literature Research Fellow at Gonville & Caius College, Ted Tregear, updated Varsity on the situation. He said that since the announcement in the past

week, Universities UK (UUK) - the employers' negotiating body in the USS dispute - has told UCU they are launching a fresh consultation with their members over whether universities should cover the increases in USS pension contributions that have been passed onto members, at least until the 2020 valuation of the scheme can be agreed.

UUK are to ask their member institutions (including each of the colleges) if

they want UUK to make UCU a new and better offer. UUK made an offer to UCU last year, proposing a reduction of USS members' contributions to 9.1%. However, UCU argued that this was still a significant increase on past figures and rejected the offer.

UCU wrote to the governing bodies in all colleges, urging them to respond

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News

East Asian Cambridge students have been the target of at least six alleged racist incidents following the coronavirus outbreak

► Continued from front page

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Haotian Guo is a PhD student at Emmanuel and a Chinese national. On 3rd February, while attempting to sit down to eat lunch at Downing hall with Chinese friends, he said he was told by two white students the seating space was reserved for their friend, but no one arrived as lunch-

time ended.

While seated in a different place, Guo claims he overheard these students mention "too many Chinese people" in their conversation. After Guo reported the incident to the college, Downing Master Alan Bookbinder sent out an email the following day, branding such behaviour as "unacceptable".

Four days later, while he was collecting his bicycle on Mill Lane at around 2pm, Guo said a middle-aged man approached him on the street. He asked, "Are you from China? Are you carrying viruses?"

"I was appalled," Guo told *Varsity*, "for the Downing one... I cannot believe such an incident would happen to me in the university. I thought Cambridge students believed in equality."

While Guo says this is not his first experience with racism at the university, he now feels "unsafe" following the incident on Mill Lane, and is adamant the coronavirus outbreak has "inflamed, and to some extent justified" racism in Cambridge.

Yue Zhou, another Chinese national who is taking a PhD in Education at Downing, was walking down Regent Street last Tuesday evening when she says she felt someone pull her hair from behind.

Turning around and feeling a sticky substance on her head, she said she saw two teenage girls who had apparently thrown ketchup at her.

"At that moment I didn't really know what to do," said Zhou. While she asked the girls to apologise immediately - which they

did - she said they did so while laughing at her, which she made her feel "they didn't take it very seriously."

Unsure at first whether to draw a connection with coronavirus fears, she later discovered friends, also from East Asia, had recently had similar experiences with the two girls.

"It [makes it] seem like we deserve this kind of treatment," Zhou said.

Three further East Asian students who asked not to be named have also felt racism has increased since the outbreak.

One student was walking back to their college last week claims a stranger shouted "go back to your country" to them on the street unprompted. Another student, wearing a facemask at the time, said they had sweets thrown in their face whilst walking in Market Square.

The third student last week walked into their college's MCR and found all the pins on a world map - intended for students mark their hometowns - which were ordinarily scattered around mainland China, had all been moved around Wuhan.

Speaking to *Varsity*, the student stressed "the map was intended to celebrate the diversity of the college and the international backgrounds of our members."

But the incident left the student "utterly shocked", and they strongly agreed with a statement made later by the MCR that this was a "clear reference to the ongoing coronavirus outbreak, which is causing irreparable pain to many families in China and across the world".

In response to rising racist incidents in Cambridge, police told *Varsity*, "Cambridgeshire Constabulary does not tolerate hate crime" and urged those affected "to report all incidents" to them.

"We have a diverse community in Cambridgeshire and we recognise that everyone should be allowed to live their lives free from harassment and the fear of hate crime."

In a statement published on the University website on Tuesday, Vice Chancellor Stephen Toope urged students and staff "to remain respectful and supportive of those members of our community who, at what is already a time of heightened anxiety, may feel subjected to unfounded scrutiny".

Cambridge Programmes, a summer school hosted in Churchill and Fitzwilliam colleges, which takes children aged 11-17 from around the world, has cancelled this year's programme following the WHO's announcement of a global health emergency.

"Ensuring safety is on the forefront of our minds", Cambridge Programme's Director and Founder Rebecca Clarke told *Varsity*. "We're not just a commercial organisation... it's not right to carry on [given the rapid spread of the virus]."

Clarke stressed how the decision to cancel was best "for everybody", and emailed the decision last week to around 100 applicants who had applied to take part in the course, as well as to 30-40 Cambridge students who usually act as mentors for the two-week programmes.

"We need to be worried," Clarke emphasised, urging it was "nonsense not to take a decision". Though the course has a large Chinese intake, it also hosts children from countries such as Australia, and Clarke noted she refuses to consider restricting applications just from East Asian countries alone.

Other summer schools such as the smaller Granta Academy, are yet to make a decision on cancellation and are waiting to hear from their Chinese agency partners.

Programme Director Martin Browne told *Varsity* the summer school may lose up to half its intake this year, from China, as the Chinese government looks to push forward summer holidays by a month, meaning children could no longer attend the programme.

In the meantime, his colleague and former Programme Director Adam Schumacher claimed the Academy is taking "every single precaution" in dealing with the issue.

The University and colleges this week issued renewed guidance on the coronavirus, urging all students and staff recently returning from the Chinese Hubei province, the virus's epicentre, to self-isolate and call 111 whether or not they display symptoms.

Those who arrived in the UK in the past two weeks from mainland China, Taiwan, Thailand, Japan, Republic of Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, or Macau are advised to do the same if they display symptoms.

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Cambridge alumni's critically acclaimed book to be adapted for the small screen

Zac Ntim
News Correspondent

It was announced on Tuesday that Sid Gentle Films, the producers of *Killing Eve*, have acquired the television rights to the book, *Taking Up Space: The Black Girl's Manifesto for Change*, written by ex-Cambridge students, Chelsea Kwakye and Ore Ogunbiyi. *Taking Up Space* was first published in June 2019 as the flagship release of #Merky Books, rapper Stormzy's Penguin Random House imprint. Written just after their time at Cambridge, the book is centred around the experiences of Kwakye and Ogunbiyi during their time at Cambridge. It explores the lack of diversity within higher education and discusses topics from decolonising the curriculum to access, relationships, and mental health.

Sid Gentle Films said in a statement: "We are delighted to be working

on this extraordinary manifesto for hope with Chelsea and Ore. The world they illuminate is full of potential for creating bold and breakthrough characters in a setting few have seen."

Kwakye and Ogunbiyi said they are so incredibly excited to be working with Sid Gentle Films; "they have a strong understanding of the core themes of *Taking Up Space* and are committed to bringing them to life on screen. This is a real dream come true."

The pair both graduated from Cambridge in 2018, Kwakye with a degree in History and Ogunbiyi in Human, Social and Political Sciences. During their time at the University, they were heavily involved in improving access for diverse students. They served as President and Vice-President respectively of the Cambridge University African-Caribbean Society (ACS) and organised the society's first access conference and mentoring scheme.

“The starting point for *Taking up Space*, was a *Varsity* article, by Ogunbiyi in 2017, ‘A letter to my fresher self: surviving Cambridge as a black girl’”

In their second year, the pair organised the famous #BlackMenof-Cambridge campaign, which gained the attention of Stormzy. The rapper congratulated the pair's recent success on Twitter. He tweeted: "@TakingUpSpacebk is a masterpiece and now it's being bought to your TV screens. So proud."

The starting point for *Taking up Space*, was a *Varsity* article, by Ogunbiyi in 2017, "A letter to my fresher self: surviving Cambridge as a black girl".

In an interview with *Varsity* shortly after their book's release, Kwakye said: "We can often take for granted what it is like to feel seen... when you see yourself represented you've got the confidence 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".

Following announcement of 14 days of strikes, UCU Cambridge says ‘We don’t want to be here again’

► Continued from front page

to the consultation by encouraging the prospect of a new offer. They have also written to the Vice-Chancellor, who has not made public statements on either issues that have caused strike action. If UCU makes a good offer to UCU, this could indicate a way forward in this long-running dispute, explained Tregear.

On 28th January, the Universities and Colleges Employers’ Association (UCEA), which represents universities and colleges in national negotiations, published a statement regarding UCU’s demand for improvements in pay and equality. It said that the UCEA had offered positive proposals to address important issues around employment in universities, focusing on casual employment, workload/mental health, and pay gaps on gender and ethnicity, following national negotiations with all the trade unions, including UCU.

Tregear said that the offer made by the UCEA was “deeply unspecific”, referencing their agreement to take action on casualisation and inequality and workload without specifying any concrete action.

Some progress has been made since the last round of strikes, with UCEA now prepared to talk about creating positive expectations upon employers. UCU wrote online that three key problems remain: “First, there is no formal mechanism to turn the fine words in the employers’ offer into reality for staff.”

“Second, some of the proposed expectations themselves remain too weak, particularly about the need for all staff to have a fair and effective workload model. Third, the employers refuse to increase their overall pay offer of 1.8% even though it completely fails to address the long-term decline in staff salaries since 2010.”

Tregear said that instead of eight consecutive days of striking, as in November and December last year, the Union will be staggering their strike days each week, from two days, to three, to four, culminating with a five day strike week from 9th to 13th March, leaving employers more time to negotiate with UCU before the 14 days are over: “We ideally don’t want to get to the 14th day of strikes.”



▲ It’s not just about higher pay, it’s about the continuing viability of Higher Education (JOE COOK)

“There are so many wonderful things about working in a university, and one of those wonderful things is encountering students, and teaching, and researching. You know it has got bad when people who love their jobs feel they have to do this. It’s not just about higher pay, it’s about the continuing viability of Higher Education.”

“Women, BME, international and disabled staff don’t have the rights they deserve at universities, including fair and equal pay.”

On the UCU website, General Secretary Jo Grady wrote: “We have been clear from the outset that we would take serious and sustained industrial action if that was what was needed. As well as the strikes next month, we are going to ballot members to ensure that we have a fresh mandate for further action to cover the rest of the academic year if these disputes are not resolved.”

Tregear said the UCU Cambridge branch has started discussions on the specifics of the strikes, and

“The University will take all reasonable efforts to ensure that your studies are not adversely affected, and we have written to Faculties and Departments to make them aware of this requirement”

can confirm they’ll most likely follow the same structure as those in November and December, with pickets in the morning.

In the last round of strikes, striking workers formed picket lines outside Old Schools, Downing Site, New Museums, Sidgwick, West Cambridge, Education and Engineering Departments. Tregear said UCU is committed to not picketing the Bene’t Street entrance to the New Museums site so that people can access the University Counselling Service and the Disabilities Centre.

Graham Virgo, the Senior Pro-Vice-Chancellor, said in an email to students, “the University respects the right of UCU members to take industrial action, and recognises that those who strike will not have taken the decision to do so lightly.”

“The University will take all reasonable efforts to ensure that your studies are not adversely affected, and we have written to Faculties and Departments to make them aware of this requirement.”

“Women, BME, international and disabled staff don’t have the rights they deserve at universities, including fair and equal pay”

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Varsity explains: NUS Elections

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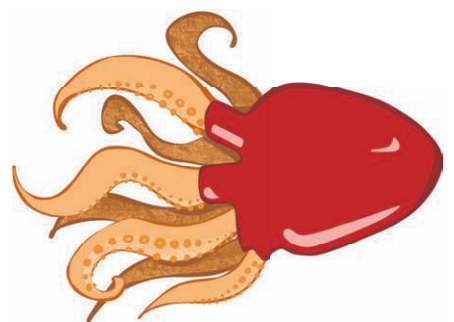
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▲ (ALISA SANTIKARN)

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News

Varsity Explains: CUSU NUS delegate election revealed as 'fundamentally undemocratic'

Victor Jack
Senior News Editor
Lottie Elton
News Correspondent

On Monday, CUSU announced the results of the NUS delegate elections, finally deciding the complete list of delegates Cambridge will send to the National Union of Students (NUS) conference in March.

The three newly elected delegates Sally Patterson, Stella Swain, and Howard Chae, will join CUSU president Edward Parker Humphreys, an ex officio NUS delegate, and ex-Access and Funding Officer Shadab Ahmed, who was elected last term, to attend the conference.

The vote gathered controversy, however, when one candidate, Peter McLaughlin, received the most first preference votes - 124 - but was not elected as a delegate due to CUSU's complex election procedures.

Varsity has spoken to both CUSU's election committee, and McLaughlin to clarify confusion and criticism surrounding this week's elections.

What is the NUS? And what are the conferences?

The National Union of Students is an organisation which aims to "promote, defend and extend the rights of students."

563 student unions from UK universities are currently affiliated to the NUS, and it has a full-time team of one President and 5 Vice-Presidents, who carry out campaigns much like CUSU over the course of a year, but on a larger scale.

The NUS holds two annual conferences. The number of delegates sent by each affiliated student union is determined in proportion to the size of the university. Cambridge sends six delegates to the National Conference every March, during which students debate and decide on the overall direction of NUS UK for the next year.

The conference is split into five 'zones': Further Education, Higher Education, Society & Citizenship, Union Development, and Welfare. Delegates discuss motions on these topics and elect a Vice-President for each 'zone', who acts and campaigns for a year based on this mandate.

In late May, the NUS also holds the

Liberation Conference, to which student unions again send delegates on a proportional basis to student population size. Cambridge sends up to six delegates. Delegates debate on issues facing black, disabled, LGBT+, trans and women students, and elect six full-time officers - with two for the LGBT+ campaign - to lead on these issues for a year.

What happened during the NUS elections?

All NUS delegates were meant to be appointed from elections in Michaelmas. However, only one candidate, Shadab Ahmed, received a greater number of votes than the 'Re-Open Nominations' ballot option, leaving four spaces open, and forcing a re-run this term.

Both Swain and Patterson ran in the Michaelmas contest, while Chae and McLaughlin did not. In this Lent election, seven candidates ran for the position of delegate, compared to five who ran in Michaelmas, and 11 who ran in both 2017 and 2018.

CUSU's Standing Orders require a Single Transferrable Vote (STV) voting system, meaning each of the 495 students

who voted for NUS delegates ranked one candidate as their first preference, and chose back-up preferences.

To be elected, each candidate needs to reach a quota - a minimum number of votes - which in this case was 98.8. In the first round, McLaughlin and Chae both surpassed the quota, receiving 124 and 102 first preference votes, respectively.

Ordinarily, the bottom-most candidate is eliminated, and in the spirit of ensuring those who put that candidate as their first preference do not see their votes wasted, their second preference votes are allocated to the remaining candidates. This process of elimination is repeated with the lowest-voted candidate in the subsequent rounds until the number of candidates reaching the quota with the second-preference votes is equal to the number of seats to be elected.

However, NUS rules also require CUSU to field a gender-balanced delegation with no more than three men. Only one male delegate could be elected this time as Parker Humphreys and Ahmed have already been confirmed to represent the University.

Therefore, as the two highest polling female candidates, Patterson and Swain were automatically elected, with 84 and 53 votes respectively, without reaching the quota.

Patterson, Swain, the remaining candidates, and RON were therefore 'withdrawn' from the process, and the committee then chose to do a run-off, holding it as if Chae and McLaughlin had been the only candidates.

Of those voters who had put a withdrawn candidate as their first preference, whoever out of McLaughlin or Chae was higher in their back-up preferences was allocated these votes, with Chae eventually winning in this way.

CUSU also elected its Liberation delegates this week. Abdullah Hared was elected as the delegate for the BME campaign with 105 votes, Alessandro Ceccarelli as delegate for the LGBT+ liberation campaign with 136 votes, and Ali Hyde as delegate for the Trans campaign, with 96 votes.

"Behind closed doors"?

The election results sparked controversy this week because the two conflict-

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Elections controversy - 'stale' or misunderstood?

ing mandates - CUSU's standing orders requiring STV and NUS rules on gender balanced delegations - left the election committee in uncharted waters.

Speaking to *Varsity*, the election committee explained their decision to hold a run-off based on a STV procedure.

"The fairest way of deciding this was via a run-off vote between the two candidates which incorporated all voters' preferences, rather than limiting it solely to first preferences, in line with CUSU's policy of using STV for elections," they said.

But McLaughlin emphasised whether or not the decision was fair, "one single committee having the power over the outcome of an election is fundamentally undemocratic," branding this "outrageous."

"This was an entirely behind-closed doors judgement call," he added. "I can't accuse them of ideological bias, but the mere fact that there was no in-built system against ideological biases is totally unacceptable and totally undemocratic."

He further stressed that "really there are more options than the two that they

listed".

The election committee defended its decision by stating "these were the two immediately obvious methods of counting, and the Elections Committee chose the one that aligns with CUSU rules for elections."

They further argued "the CUSU Standing Orders empower the Returning Officer to 'make judicial decisions regarding all election matters.'"

But McLaughlin highlighted an ambiguity in CUSU's Standing Orders on NUS elections, which he asserted may in fact mean the election had not been run correctly.

According to the relevant order, "initially a count will be run with only those candidates who self-define as women", which McLaughlin argues may imply running the election just with female candidates first, and then male candidates in a second round, rather than with all candidates from the outset.

McLaughlin added the committee had also ignored multiple emails from him and friends asking to provide the minutes of the meeting where the deci-

sion was made, and decried "that there even was a decision wasn't even announced until [he] queried it - it was just mentioned that 'a run-off had happened'".

But the election committee hit back, stating "minutes for Elections Committee meetings are [normally] published online" and would appear there soon, given they had also not been approved into circulation until Wednesday.

"EC has a clear accountability structure, through the candidate appeal mechanism, which has been outlined to Peter, and we have yet to receive any appeals to EC decisions," they added.

But McLaughlin was unconvinced, and claimed the irony of the election was that "I was running on a platform of let's change NUS... to give a voice to people who wanted to see genuine change at the national and university level."

"It's kind of indicative these people voted for increased democratisation and increased voice and it's the very lack of democracy they were complaining about that has now meant that they don't have a voice."

BAKE-OFF REACHES UL UL's millionth entry by Sandi Toksvig

A children's language book - 'Sandi Toksvig's Guide to France' was the one millionth entry at the UL's Ely storage facility, just 18 months after it opened. The storage facility receives between 7,000-10,000 books every week, which are labelled as 'low usage' and do not require storage in the main Library on West Road. Toksvig, who read Law, Archaeology and Anthropology at Girton College, Cambridge, published her book in 2009.

VALENTINE'S DAY BUMS Museum Bums team grace Cambridge

On Valentine's day, the Museum Bums team are to host an event looking at the love stories behind the statues in the Museum of Classical Archeology, exploring Greek love and statuesque bottoms as part of LGBTQ+ History Month. The museum was declared winner of the biggest statue bottom collection last year, beating the British Museum. The event will be raising funds for the Terrence Trust, which provides services relating to sexual health.

ROBOT FRIENDS Camb to hold Human Robot conference

Meet Cambridge has announced that it will host the Human Robot Interaction 2020 Conference (HRI2020). The theme for this year is "Real World Human-Robot Interaction." The event will take place from 23-26th March at Fitzwilliam College, The Guildhall and The Corn Exchange. Delegates will hear groundbreaking presentations on the latest advances in Human-Robot interaction, participate in interactive workshops and view poster exhibitions.

CIVIC BEEKEEPING Lib Dems to put beehives on Guildhall

The Cambridge Liberal Democrat councillors have offered an amendment to the City council's annual budget to establish the role of Civic Beekeeper and the installation of beehives on top of the Cambridge Guildhall. Cllr Colin McGerty said "Pollinating insects, particularly bees, are a vital component of how we address the biodiversity crisis. Yet over the last hundred years, 13 species of bee have become extinct in the UK. I'm really excited to be championing this project."

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CAMBRIDGE



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 The Fitzwilliam Museum Society

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News

Cambridge academics find themselves in a ‘changing and uncertain funding landscape’ after Brexit

Alexander Shtyrov
News Correspondant

Researchers at Cambridge face considerable uncertainty about the future of the UK’s participation in European funding programmes after the end of the transi-

tion period on 31st December this year.

The EU is the third-largest provider of research funding to the University, after UK charities and Research Councils.

The University’s Research Operations Office (ROO) has confirmed that it is “unable to anticipate how funding [for EU-

backed projects at the University] will be affected.”

However, according to Renata Schaeffer, Assistant Director of ROO, Cambridge academics are continuing to apply for European grants.

“The University has not seen any significant change to applications for EU-funded streams since the referendum,” she said.

Professor Jennifer Gabrys from the Department of Sociology, for example, is the principal investigator on three EU-funded projects, including one beginning in May 2020.

“There has been more uncertainty and

administrative work in keeping up to date on a changing and uncertain funding landscape due to Brexit, but so far the effects have not been significant. This could change, however, if in the future European funding is no longer available for undertaking research projects,” Gabrys told *Varsity*.

She also explained that, although academics have received a “reasonable amount of information” from funding bodies and the University, there is a need for more frequent updates.

Vice Chancellor Stephen Toope, in a blog post published on 31st January, reassured staff that Cambridge remains

“fully eligible” for EU funding until the end of the transition period, but stated that future funding will depend on the form of the agreement between Britain and the EU.

Universities UK, of which Toope is a member, released a joint statement the same day calling for Britain to maintain its European research links.

The University maintains that it “is working with the government and its partners in the UK and abroad to bring its fullest contribution to society following the United Kingdom’s departure from the European Union.”

RADLEY



Mathematics – Graduate Assistant

September 2020

Radley College seeks to appoint a Mathematics Graduate Assistant to work at the school for the academic year 2020-21. The position is designed to give a recent graduate in Mathematics (or in a Maths related subject) the opportunity to gain experience of teaching Maths to 13-18 year olds. It is extremely likely that a full-time post will be available in September 2021.

You will teach a reduced workload – about 12-15 forty-minute periods per week. We will give the necessary training and also provide the opportunity for lesson observation. The person we hope to appoint will be an enthusiast for Mathematics, who is considering a career in teaching. Being a boarding school there is also plenty of opportunity for the willing candidate to involve themselves in the extra-curricular life of the College

In addition to a salary and an excellent working environment, the College will seek to provide accommodation and meals during term time are free. More information on the role can be found at <https://www.radley.org.uk/about-radley/employment/teaching-vacancies>.

Deadline for applications is 2 March 2020.

Radley College is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and applicants must be willing to undergo child protection screening appropriate to the post, including checks with past employers and the Disclosure and Barring Service.

RADLEY



Economics – Graduate Assistant

September 2020

Radley College seeks to appoint an Economics Graduate Assistant to work at the school for the academic year 2020-21. The position is designed to give a recent graduate in Economics the opportunity to gain experience of teaching Economics to the Lower Sixth Form pupils. It is very possible that a full-time post will be available in September 2021.

You will teach a reduced workload – about 20 forty-minute periods per week. We will give the necessary training and also provide the opportunity for lesson observation. The person we hope to appoint will be an enthusiast for Economics, who is considering a career in teaching.

Being a full-time boarding school there is also plenty of opportunity for the willing candidate to involve themselves in the extra-curricular life of the College.

In addition to a salary and an excellent working environment, the College will seek to provide accommodation and meals during term time are free. More information on the role can be found at <https://www.radley.org.uk/about-radley/employment/teaching-vacancies>.

Deadline for applications is 2 March 2020.

Radley College is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and applicants must be willing to undergo child protection screening appropriate to the post, including checks with past employers and the Disclosure and Barring Service.

Emergency rally against deportation flight to Jamaica takes place outside Guildhall

Zac Ntim
News Correspondant

Dozens of students and local activists gathered outside The Guildhall on Sunday afternoon to protest the government’s decision to continue a controversial deportation flight to Jamaica.

Originally 50 people had been expected to be deported on Tuesday morning in what is the second immigration removal charter flight to Jamaica since the Windrush scandal.

In 2018, *The Guardian* revealed that commonwealth citizens who had arrived in the UK after WW2 from the Caribbean, at the invitation of the British government, but never formalised their residency, were detained and in some cases deported.

However, a late ruling from the Court of Appeal halted the deportation of 25 people after concerns that they may not have had access to legal advice due to an issue with an O2 phone mast near the detention centre where they were being held. Downing Street confirmed that 17 people were deported on Tuesday morning.

The protesters – who braved the heavy rain and winds of storm Ciara – carried placards reading ‘Solidarity with the Windrush Generation’ and chanted, “no borders, no nations, stop the deportations”.

“We are here because the British government has decided to continue plans to deport 50 Jamaicans by next week. These people, many of whom have lived in Britain their whole lives are being held in detention centres,” said one student leading the pro-

test

“At times like this when they may feel alone it is up to us and people all around the country to say we are standing with them.”

Speaking to *Varsity*, CUSU’s BME campaign said, “the BME Campaign stands in solidarity with those who are facing deportation this week and remains horrified by the British government’s hostile environment policy, which continues to disproportionately target communities of colour.”

“This is yet another reminder that citizenship for black and brown people is treated as conditional in this country and that the state reserves the right to upend and destroy the lives of many of us - as these deportations threaten to do.”

The government’s actions have been criticised by people from across the political divide, with over 150 MPs - including Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn - signing a letter urging the government to cancel the flight until the publication of the long-delayed “Windrush lessons learned” report.

The report was commissioned by Sajid Javid in 2018, while he was Home Secretary, to avoid any further repeat of the Windrush scandal. A draft, which was leaked to MP David Lammy and seen by *BBC Newsnight*, urged the government to halt mass deportations and consider an overhaul of the law.

Current Home Secretary Priti Patel defended the government’s decision, claiming all those on the flight had been convicted of “serious offences” and carried sentences of more than a year.

Although many of the people on the

flight had lived in the UK for most of their lives, Patel said she was bound by legislation to deport them.

One person affected is Howard Ormsby, a father of five, who was convicted of possession with intent to supply drugs, and faces deportation despite having served his 18 month sentence. Speaking to the BBC, he said he came to the UK aged 15 and has been here for 18 years of his life: “I’ve never tried to deny the fact I’ve made a mistake, but everyone has a chance to right their wrongs. I have all my family here. I have no-one in Jamaica.”

HM Inspector of Constabulary, Wendy Williams, was commissioned to oversee the “Lessons Learned” review in 2018, and its findings were originally set to be published in March 2019. However, the report has been repeatedly delayed.

Last June, extracts of a leaked draft explained the Home Office had failed in its legal duty to counter racial discrimination when it implemented its anti-immigration “hostile environment”. The report accused Home Office officials of recklessness and reluctance to acknowledge mistakes.

Ray, a representative from a local social activist group, Cambridge Revolutionary Socialism in the 21st Century (RS21), who said at the protest, “I remember when the people called the Windrush generation arrived in Britain, and they arrived to terrible hostility.”

“The Home Office and the government are institutionally racist, and the hostile environment must be fought against.”

Profile: Oxford Climate Justice Campaign and Cambridge Zero Carbon

Ellie Arden
News Correspondent

According to People and Planet estimates, Cambridge and Oxford universities have a combined fossil fuel investment of over £440 million.

Most Cantabs are familiar with Cambridge's Zero Carbon Society, which has organised everything from marches to hunger strikes to occupations in their fight to force divestment.

Zero Carbon's Oxford counterpart, the Oxford Climate Justice Campaign (OCJC), was thrown into the spotlight last month with the occupation of the quad at St. John's College, Oxford. The action resulted in a letter of support from alumni, and led to the College making adjustments to their ethical investments committee.

OCJC has been running for eight years at Oxford, where three colleges-Balliol,

St. Hilda's and Wadham- have divested in response to student pressure. Zero Carbon, in contrast, was founded in 2007 and relaunched in 2015. Four Cambridge colleges-Emmanuel, Jesus, Clare Hall and Downing-have taken action on divestment from fossil fuels so far.

In 2015, OCJC had what they describe as a "minor victory, when the University declared a screen on all future investments in coal and tar sands". However, OCJC told Varsity that this was a "hollow gesture, as it did not result in any money being moved".

Both OCJC and ZC have published open letters directed towards their respective Universities and signed by hundreds of academics, staff and students. They have also both conducted actions at fossil fuel company recruitment events from corporations such as Shell and BP.

In 2019, Zero Carbon blockaded Cambridge's BP Institute twice and activists

disrupted a lecture being delivered by a BP chemist at the Department of Chemistry. Members of the group also protested at BP recruitment events and at a careers fair.

Zero Carbon has also criticized Cambridge Zero, a climate research program launched by the University last year, accusing it of "greenwashing" Cambridge's links to fossil fuel industries. The group described it as little more than a "public relations stunt, designed to convince the gullible and divert attention away from the University's continuing link to oil and gas."

In November, campaign groups including Zero Carbon faced Vice-Chancellor Stephen Toope, the Director of Cambridge Zero and other members of the University leadership at a divestment debate held as part of CUSU's Ethical Affairs Conference. While the importance of tackling the climate crisis was acknowledged, the University still stopped short of commit-

ting to divestment and presented a divided front on its climate strategy.

At Oxford, over 800 alumni vowed to withhold donations unless the University fully divested, including public figures like George Monbiot and solar entrepreneur Jeremy Leggett. The Cambridge Campaign has been supported by the likes of Rowan Williams and Noam Chomsky.

The two campaigns collaborated on a direct action at the Oxford-Cambridge Boat Race in both 2018 and 2019. Last year, they dropped a banner which read 'Oxbridge come clean' over Hammersmith Bridge, which was prevented by the police.

OCJC told Varsity that the two campaigns "have frequently been involved in matching actions, that when put together increase the profile of student divestment campaigning... We stand in solidarity as campaigns, and support each other both in person and through amplification on social media".

OCJC described Zero Carbon as "inspiring and impressive... [we] are glad that our two campaigns complement each other in highlighting the moral responsibility of our country's most powerful educational institutions. We hope to continue working together in the future."

Cambridge Zero Carbon commented that "given the unique structure of Oxbridge... [the campaigns] can very usefully point to successes at colleges at the other institution when talking to bursars regarding divestment."

Following the occupation of St. Johns, Oxford, Zero Carbon issued a statement "in solidarity with Oxford Climate Justice Campaign", saying, "Oxbridge are shamefully lagging behind in their refusal to acknowledge their complicity [in Climate change] and instead take meaningful action."

"We call upon both Oxford and Cambridge, along with their colleges, to Divest Now!"

Clark Lecture cancelled amid Trinity academic boycott

Beatriz Valero de Urquía
News Correspondent

Trinity College's annual Clark Lecture, scheduled to take place on Thursday, was cancelled after writer and activist Arundhati Roy withdrew from speaking at the event, due to the ongoing academic boycott following the college's decision to leave the USS pension scheme last year. Roy was announced last month as the speaker for this year's lecture. However, Cambridge UCU in a statement sent to Varsity, explained that Arundhati was contacted after the announcement, and informed about the local and national censure that the college is currently subject to. "We are pleased to report that, in solidarity with Cambridge UCU, Arundhati has withdrawn from this year's Clark Lecture" the statement announced.

Roy is joining over 560 academics continuing to boycott Trinity College, who are refusing to supervise Trinity students or engage in other work in support of Trinity's teaching and research activities.

In the statement, Cambridge UCU stressed: "We are deeply grateful to her for this act of solidarity, and for the support she has expressed for our ongoing dispute with the college."

"Arundhati's withdrawal may just bring home to Trinity how far it has jeopardised its own reputation for learning and scholarship."

Despite the national censure, Trinity College has not given any signs of reconsidering the decision to leave the USS. According to Dr Priya Gopal, fellow at Churchill College and member of UCU, "Trinity's response has been further arrogance, the assumption that the boycott will peter out over time. Trinity has had to learn that integrity and moral insight cannot be bought."

"Roy is joining over 560 academics continuing to boycott Trinity College, who are refusing to supervise Trinity students or engage in other work in support of Trinity's teaching and research activities"

"Trinity must reverse its selfish and gratuitous move or accept isolation within the university and beyond. If they want to do it alone, then they must do so without the co-operation of many fine teachers, intellectuals and writers here and the world over."

At the time of Trinity's decision to leave the scheme, UCU explained that the withdrawal would "not in itself affect the financial viability of USS... but it would undermine confidence in the Scheme, and might encourage other wealthy employers with small USS liabilities to withdraw, with potentially disastrous effects for the Scheme as a whole."

Trinity College justified their withdrawal from the national pension scheme, saying it would "remove the remote but existential risk to the College arising from continued participation in USS".

Gopal told Varsity she is "appalled by and angry about Trinity's selfish and unnecessary decision to pull out of a scheme that relies on collective membership for collective welfare. It was an act of arrogance with no real fiscal justification."

The Clark Lectures, which started in 1888 and are organised and hosted by Trinity College, are an annual series of lectures delivered by English Literature experts.

Trinity College, said it "regrets the cancellation of Arundhati Roy's 2020 Clark Lecture. Ms Roy's Clark Lecture 2020 will be published on the Trinity College website on 13 February."

It was announced last week that academics will strike for 14 days in February and March, in which disputes will centre on the sustainability of the USS and rising costs for members and on universities' failure to make significant improvements on pay, equality, casualisation and workloads.

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News

XR protests at BP Institute and on King's lawn, ahead of week-long roadblock

Lottie Elton
News Correspondent

Protestors from Extinction Rebellion (XR) blockaded the University's BP institute on Madingley road last Friday and held a picnic and occupation of King's lawns the following day in preparation for their longest action yet, which begins this Sunday.

The blockade is part of XR's 'Rebel for Justice' campaign, a series of protests with three demands of the three Cambridge institutions, including the University, which they urge to "cut ties with the fossil fuel industry."

XR's demands are also levelled at Cambridge City Council, calling for it to hold a Citizen's Assembly on climate justice.

It also has issued demands at Cambridgeshire County Council, asking it to work with other authorities to provide "a plan for a just transition away from an inadequate transport system reliant on fossil fuels."

At the time of publishing, these demands have not been met, and so the group is set to shut down the city of Cambridge in a week-long roadblock, which will begin at 8am on Sunday.

Last Friday, the group arrived at the BP institute at 8am, and one protester secured himself to a door knocker with a bike lock around his neck. Others taped themselves together in front of entrances.

XR urges the University to shut down the Institute, and to replace it with a "transparent, ethically-funded research centre with a focus on sustainability and renewable energy."

In a Facebook post, the group accused the University of "allowing companies to present themselves in a positive light through connections with the prestigious academic institution," leading to "a 'green-



“The image of this university is as manicured as its lawns”

washing' of the fossil fuel industry.”

“If they truly understood how disgusting BP's exploitation of human and natural resources is, they would refuse to be associated with the name,” said Annie, a member of XR Youth Cambridge, who condemned the university for its continued association with the group. “We are showing that this connection has consequences.”

Last Saturday, 8th February, XR staged a mass picnic and occupation of King's College lawn, which they did in solidarity with Oxford student activists, who recently staged an occupation of St. John's College, Oxford.

The protestors set up tents on King's front lawn and held up signs including one which read 'Cambridge: would you care if it was your lawn burning?'

▲ The BP Institute was blockaded before XR's upcoming roadblock action (TOM DORRINGTON)

At the time, an XR spokesperson told *The Cambridge Independent* that “it is shameful that the University of Cambridge still won't cut its ties with fossil fuel companies, even after over half of UK universities have divested, and yet still curates this concerned, 'green' image in the public eye.”

“The image of this university is as manicured as its lawns, but we will not be placated with tokenistic changes and greenwashing.”

In their last action before the week-long shutdown, XR plan to protest – and hold an interactive installation – in front of Senate House tomorrow, from 1-5pm.

A University spokesperson has previously told *Varsity* in response to XR's comments that it “holds no direct investments in fossil fuels. Only 5% of the University's indirect investments are in the energy sector, and only a portion of these will be in fossil fuel companies.”

It also highlighted its membership of the Responsible Investment Network and recent Cambridge Zero initiative.

Vice-Chancellor's salary criticised by Cambridge groups

Christopher Dorrell
Deputy News Editor

The Cambridge University Living Wage Campaign and Cambridge Defend Education have criticised the salary Vice Chancellor Stephen Toope, who earned £475,000 in 2018-19, according to analysis by *The Tab*.

The Cambridge University Living Wage Campaign said: “Stephen Toope's huge salary and yearly pay increases are emblematic of the inequalities that the University is based on. FOI data has shown only 8 colleges were paying their staff £9.00 an hour and 795 college staff across the city were not earning this living wage.” “Toope should explain why the University has failed to gain living wage accreditation, despite its commitment to seek formal accreditation, and use his influence to call on the 29 unaccredited colleges to gain accreditation.”

Currently only two colleges are living wage accredited: Queens' and Girton. Despite the University deciding to seek living wage accreditation in February 2018,

it has still not been formally accredited due to the failure to pay the living wage to contractors and subcontractors.

Toope's salary was also criticised by Cambridge Defend Education who argued that “the gross salary of Stephen Toope is symptomatic of a marketised higher education system that prioritises profit over learning and conditions.”

“It is also part of a broader structure of fat cat pay with the remuneration of eight management personnel - the Vice-Chancellor, the Pro-Vice-Chancellors, Chief Financial Officer and Registry - totalling £2.1 million, and 347 staff earning over £100,000 a year.”

They also sought to draw attention to the disparity between the rising pay of the Vice-Chancellor and the consistent fall in real wages that university lecturers have suffered.

“We will be escalating our tactics until Toope responds to UCU's demands and formally recognises them as a union. The struggle against marketisation, and for a free and liberated university is a collective struggle that unites students and workers.”

These comments were issued in response to a recent investigation published by *The Tab* National. In this investigation, Mr Toope is listed as the third highest paid Vice-Chancellor in the country. His salary of £475,000 was an increase of £47,000 from his 2017-18 salary. These figures were drawn from the University's own financial statement.

However, a university spokesperson said that the pay rise was not as large as *The Tab* had suggested. “The main difference between the Vice-Chancellor's pay in 2018 and 2019 is due to the fact that his pay as reported in the year to 31 July 2018 covered only 11 months, compared to the full 12 months in the year to 31 July 2019.”

“He asked not to receive any increase in pay for 2018/19 other than the national pay award given to all employees.”

The national pay award is an increase in pay negotiated each year which varies according to the salary of the recipient. The lowest increase one can receive for 2019/20 is 1.8% and those lower down the salary spine receive a larger increase.

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Sidney Sussex draws criticism for increase in room prices

Louis Mian
News Correspondent

Opposition from the Sidney Sussex College Student Union (SSCSU) to increases in accommodation prices, which they said would have damaging consequences for students' financial security and mental health, has led the college to abandon the original proposals, in favour of a more moderate plan.

The original proposals, announced by the Sidney Sussex Bursar on the 22nd January, aimed to bring accommodation rates at the college to within 5% of the university median, as undergraduate prices are currently 15% lower.

Following a meeting of the College Council on Wednesday, however, the college has dropped the plans for annual increases to reach the 5% mark and has agreed that future price hikes will require further approval.

An open letter from SSCSU Accommodation and Access Officers to the Master and Fellows of Sidney Sussex, which was presented to the Council, called for the plans to be dropped. It was signed by 90 students.

The letter claimed that at a meeting of the college's Finance and Needs Committee on 27th January, during which SSCSU objected to the proposals, "concerns about academic and mental welfare were wholly dismissed".

"This behaviour towards student welfare cannot be overlooked", the letter continued.



▲ Sidney Sussex College (LOUIS ASHWORTH)

"It is inexplicable that the same people who claim to have the best interests of their students at heart can hear the emotive testimonies about their current struggles and concerns for their wellbeing under proposed changes without considering that the rent charges are not in the best interests of the very students they are supposed to look after."

"We believe the conversations held at this committee meeting have undermined the relationship between the college and SSCSU who have been acting to represent the wishes of the student body."

The letter also raised concerns that potential applicants might be discouraged from applying to Sidney Sussex and that the student body was not being sufficiently consulted and communicated with on the matter.

On Tuesday, the SSCSU Accommodation and Access Officers met with the Bursar. The Officers told *Varsity* it was a "productive meeting" and that the Bursar seemed ready to listen to concerns about the implications for student welfare.

In defence of the initial plans Bursar Sarah Bonnett told *Varsity* that "Sidney rents are amongst the lowest of all Cambridge colleges," noting that "there has been significant investment over recent years to refurbish student accommodation."

"Students, via their student union reps, have been consulted but have not put forward an alternative, other than resisting any increase," she added.

She justified the original proposal further by stressing the need to ensure Sidney Sussex continues to achieve at least an "operational break-even", between income

and expenditure.

The small surplus the College achieved in 2018/19, Bonnett claimed, could be at risk if there are no further increases in undergraduate tuition fees, forecasts for reduced income from the college's commercial rental properties are realised, and increasing wage costs due to expanding employer pension contributions and wage inflation.

Cohort pricing would have been used to increase the rates, so that each year group

would have accommodation costs higher than that of the previous group at a controlled rate, until the charges had come to within 5% of the university median.

The Acting SSCSU President told students that, whilst the new plan does "not mean that increases will necessarily stop at the 5% increase for next year's cohort", it will mean that "students should at least have more time to consider and accept/reject any further increase."

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Equality and Diversity report shows improvement in BME data but decline in gender equality

Natasha Dangoor and Beatriz Valero de Urquia
News Correspondents

The University's 2018-19 Equality and Diversity Information Report, published at the end of January, shows an increase in the number of BME student applications, and a lowered ethnicity attainment gap, whereas the gender attainment gap has increased and the number of women in STEM subjects has decreased.

The 2018-19 report shows changes in the attainment gap between men and women. In the academic year 2017-18, men gained 7.7% more first class examination results than women, a 2.2% increase from the 2016-17 figure of 6.5%. In 2018-19, however, this gap increased further, to 8.5%.

In the 2018 round of admissions,

there were fewer applications made to the University by women, at 46.6%. However, women applicants were more likely to be offered places, making up 49.6% of all admissions. This compares against a Russell Group average of 55.5% women for first year admissions in 2017-18.

The number of women students doing STEM degrees has decreased to 38%, significantly below the Russell Group benchmark of 49.8%.

On the other hand, the data for BME students shows an improvement in diversity, with BME applicants making up 28.6% of home undergraduate applications in 2018, an increase from 25.6% in 2017. This compares to the Russell Group average of 21.7% BME for first year undergraduate admissions in 2017-18.

Moreover, the ethnicity attainment gap has decreased. In 2017-18,

White students gained 5.7% more first class examination results than BME students. This figure was reduced to 2.2% in the following year.

The Equality and Diversity Information Report has been published every year for the last ten years, following the commitment made by the University after signing the Equality Act in 2010.

In 2016, the University of Cambridge published its Equality & Diversity Strategy 2016-2021 which builds on specific objectives to map the University's direction for the following years. Objective 3, in particular, aims "to address disadvantage in student learning and attainment and issues in student satisfaction in relation to protected characteristics".

The University has been contacted by *Varsity* for comment.

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Features

App-solutely Venturesome: The Quest for Love from the East to the West



Yan-Yi Lee sheds light on dating apps and the different dating dynamics in the East and West

I grew up in the far, far east, where relationship dynamics sometimes unfold very differently from the west. The dating culture fostered in my East Asian university encouraged me to believe in pure (and almost fairy-tale-like!) college relationships – many of which usually lasted years, if not forever.

We all secretly loved someone on our course. Classmates became friends, friends became crushes, and then came the personally-delivered coffee every morning with that ever so sickly-sweet ‘I really like you’ note. With a conservative culture, many of us never considered sex to be significant. Clichéd, but I remember that back then and there, love was designed to be simple.

This perfect illusion began to crumble years later after I first moved to the bustling city of Philadelphia, where dating apps were commonplace. I was

▲ “Oh wow, you’re that kind of girl now”
(FLICKR)

“How could these shady apps be so popular?”

eager to date again, this time nervous but excited to find someone on another side of the world. While I felt queasy putting myself ‘on the market’, my dating FOMO compelled me to just do it anyway. I somehow knew I was being sucked into that swiping culture that my undergrad circle back home perceived as ‘something unimaginable that students do when they go to the west’.

‘How are these relationships with strangers even real?’ a friend sneered, with an ‘are-you-kidding-me’, distasteful eye-roll.

Of course, I never wanted to admit that her gut feelings proved true. Relationships always started out flawlessly, and then took sharp turns downhill. Anything that lasted more than two months was a blessing. First, there was the guy who tried ever-so-hard to hide his kids and the five other women in

his bucket. Then came the one whose ex wouldn’t stop following me. And then the fishy self-claimed businessman who, for some really suspicious reason, lied about his name. And then the seemingly perfect one who asked for my hand in marriage, when in fact all he wanted was a visa. At some point, there were two caring guys, but one wanted me to convert religiously for him, and the other claimed to see angels and demons.

This series of drama was also fraught with absolute confusion, usually heart-wrenching. Dating apps somehow entitled people to have multiple partners simultaneously with the pretext that they needed to ‘choose wisely’. I was always someone’s girlfriend – or so I thought – but I was also not. Relationship status updates largely concerned the will to have sex after a meager number of dates, and as if that wasn’t enough, the pressure to please with ‘good sex’. Dates had somehow transformed into a secret assessment, and the words ‘I love you’ were awkward taboo. My heart sank countless times when I opened Messenger with an anxiously racing heartbeat just to find out that they didn’t text back.

The emotional turbulence made me brew some premature ideas about dating in the west. How could these shady apps be so popular? Why this frivolous dating culture? What was so great about casual intercourse with people you barely know? What were people supposed to feel when being asked to send nudes? Flattered? Revolted?

It didn’t help that my circle back home labeled me as the Asian girl who sought joy in ‘changing boyfriends,’ and more so with an ‘interculturally diverse repertoire’. It was an unjust stigma that persistently followed, when, in reality, all I wanted was to be loved like I used to be.

‘Oh wow, you’re that kind of girl now’, sneered that same friend. ‘Didn’t know you had it in you’.

This idea of mine followed me back to East Asia after 16 months in Philadelphia, where things took an interesting turn. Still single, I found myself swiping away again in the dead of night, this time landing on dates with not just western men, but also men from home. The quest for a partner

through an app was, as it always had been, unfruitful and distasteful.

It then dawned on me that the dating nature I so dreaded was not unique to the west, but rather just a dating app culture beyond geographical boundaries: A newfound culture somehow fostered by the digital age, and perhaps also the larger society’s shifting views towards the function of relationships. I carried my earlier ugly misconceptions about western dating only because the apps were more prevalent in America and I happened to be introduced to it there. Using it at home didn’t prove to be much different – people and relationships were complex everywhere, and I was quick to judge.

My luck came just over a year ago, the very first week that I relocated to Great Britain: I decided to give the app once last chance. This time it was a soul match, and it has since then brewed into something absolutely beautiful and meaningful.

Looking back, I can’t say for sure whether those initial bumps I hit in the dating app world were a result of me being unwise, unlucky, or both. Sometimes I still envy those friends back home who have had their sweet-sixteen partners all these years – those who never had to muster the courage to start a dating profile, just to find chances, however slim, to be loved.

But I don’t regret having experienced dating apps and I’m even happy that I picked them up during my time in Philadelphia. Amidst dramatically painful episodes here and there, I came to critically question my philosophy of dating back home and whether it was naive to believe in scarless, non-political love. I started to comprehend that cultural stereotypes about relationships could be dangerously misleading.

While love can be simple sometimes, humans are not, and ‘testing the waters’ turns out to not be a bad approach after all. The rough experiences helped me grow and develop a more mature outlook about what it means to love. In retrospect, memories that were once soul-breaking now feel like interesting stories to tell. They now feel ever so invigoratingly real.

“I was eager to date again, this time nervous, but excited to find someone on another side of the world”

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Features

An abstinent girl in an over-sexualised world

An *anonymous student* discusses their experience with relationships and being abstinent in Cambridge

Not everyone is either having sex or desperately searching for it. For centuries, virginity – followed by marriage and children – has been the expectation. But this is finally being dismantled. Western culture is becoming increasingly secularised, women are no longer reliant on patriarchal economic protection, and a diversity of sexual expression is proudly bursting forth into the cultural arena. Today, our generation is one of sexual liberation. Sex is everywhere – from movies to marketing campaigns, even in the corporate world. Meanwhile, narratives in shows like *Skins* and *The Inbetweeners* feed into the idea that young people are constantly searching for opportunities to get laid.

On the flipside, if you are not sexually active, it is assumed that there is something wrong with you. The ‘sad loser virgin’ trope is astoundingly prolific, whether referring to a socially-awkward nerd, a frigid, nun-like prude, or a horny teenager whose desperation for love is only expressed through misogynistic animal-grunts and furious cry-wanking.

Every time such a character is introduced in a film or TV show, and their defining feature is their glaring sexlessness, we are invited to view them as broken. In order to escape such a damning indictment, young people, especially teenagers, feel they must ‘give away their flower’ (to use the words of young Monica in *Friends*) as soon as possible. Those that don’t feel condemned to live in embarrassment until we do.

It’s a little more complicated for those with a religious upbringing. My upbringing was one in which ‘purity culture’ was very much alive and kicking, and until I was about fifteen or sixteen, I was determined to remain abstinent until marriage. It was made clear to me by my parents, my church, and my Christian school that extra-marital sex was not a good idea, leading to a heavy cocktail of chlamydia, babies, and shame. Even more alarming was the emphasis on virginity as something that you could never get back: once that ship had sailed, sexual purity could never be reclaimed.

Personally, I would no longer class myself as particularly religious (though perhaps not exactly an atheist), and it is no longer my intention to remain celibate until marriage. However, I still subconsciously associate physical intimacy with sin, guilt, and shame. The prospect of sex remains stressful for me, and I know that exploring my boundaries will have to be a slow process with someone I trust completely. I’m therefore remaining abstinent until I feel I’m in a sufficiently safe, comfortable, and dependable relationship.

Then we arrive at the wonderful conundrum of dating. I’ve had friends not-so-delicately hint that my singleness



▲ “...the wonderful conundrum of dating”

(ILLUSTRATION BY KATE TOWSEY FOR VARSITY)

“I’m quite alright with being single for a little while longer”

and virginity is something rather sad, and that I should try to fix it as soon as possible. While I disagree with that sentiment, I actually would quite like a relationship with somebody. However, this is easier said than done. I’m sure my friends on the asexual spectrum can relate to the fact that finding someone is especially difficult when you’re not up for any hanky-panky.

The prospect of asking someone out myself is terrifying, knowing that our romantic expectations would probably clash and I would have to set boundaries that many would judge as ridiculous. I’ve tried Tinder, but this has not gone particularly well: my refusals of intimacy have been met by contemptuous comments about my “modesty”, stubbornly wandering hands, and one guy on a date blatantly stating that he was expecting sex and nothing more. I respect that other people are looking for other things in a relationship, but sometimes, when trying to navigate the world of relationships, it seems like I am on a different planet.

This is fine: I’m quite alright with being single for a little while longer.

The main difficulty I face as a celibate person is the expectation that I, like ‘everybody else’, am making a valiant and somewhat successful effort to fulfil my insatiable appetite for sex, and that this must be a conversation topic over which to bond.

One particular incident comes to mind, when I was a fresh-faced first year on my very first swap. Squashed into the basement of a dodgy, closed-down restaurant, a drunk, sweaty group of Cambridge students decided to play some drinking games. The game of choice? Fines. One person would stand up and shout out to the group: “fine if you’ve ever [insert very specific and sexually explicit anecdote about your friend here]”. Everybody would laugh, and said friend would stand up and drink while people cheered. It looked like fun, but of course it was completely impossible for someone like me to join in, having no sexual experience whatsoever. I sat in the corner quietly and watched, feeling like an outsider. One of the girls organising the event noticed this and called me out in front of everyone, shouting across the room as if I was being rude. I was very

“This is my body, this is my choice, and this is what feels right for me”

embarrassed, but it probably didn’t even cross her mind that my exclusion was not self-imposed.

Abstinence comes with a lot of baggage. We’re made to feel like pathetic, broken losers, unable to relate to what are presumed to be common experiences, and destined to be outsiders in a hyper-sexualised culture. At a time like Valentine’s, with sex and romance blared out relentlessly in fluorescent pink, the sense that we are weird is heightened. But, at the same time, this is a choice that I know is right for me. Emancipation for some people means the freedom to have sex without facing overt social stigma; for me, it’s the freedom to take things at my own pace. My right to bodily autonomy means I try to only put myself in situations in which I feel my boundaries are being respected, and I make a fuss if they’re not.

For some people, being a twenty-year-old virgin is a bit weird, but it’s something I wish I was less embarrassed about. This is my body, this is my choice, and this is what I feel is right for me. If this is also you this Valentine’s Day, you are not alone.

What fresher group chats tell us about online interaction

Ashna Ahmad discusses her 'generally negative experience' on fresher group chats

During that black hole of time between receiving my Cambridge offer and finally finishing school, I made a playlist entitled "waiting room." This may sound too uninspiring to have been the music that kept me (vaguely) sane through the endless rounds of past papers in muggy classrooms, and the blue-lit Quizlet sessions under darkening skies, which characterised the end of sixth form. But waiting was my main occupation at this time. My Year 11 friendship group fell apart as most of us moved to different sixth forms; I never really found another one at school in my last two years, and instead poured all my energy into my academic interests. When the words "I am very pleased..." appeared in my notifications on January 14th 2019, my dream had come true at long last. But I had a new question to answer: now what?

A few days later, I found my answer. I joined the first offer holders' group chat that was created that year, and joined several more over the next few months. I saw little point in committing much to my sixth form friendships, which would probably not last much longer anyway. Instead, I thought getting to know people from freshers' chats might make it easier for me to make friends once I arrived at Cambridge, and spent a significant amount of time talking to these people.

In theory, freshers' group chats help incoming freshers establish some familiarity in such a new and daunting environment, and I know that this was the case for some people. The idea that I might have spent more time talking to strangers on the internet than to other students at my school for half of year 13 seems more reasonable given

that these strangers were my potential future classmates and staircase-mates. I was making a smart investment in my future relationships, or so I would tell myself whilst procrastinating a timed essay. Although this all sounds promising and my feelings may not be repre-

few months. This kicks off a process that I like to call 'The Scramble': everyone rushing to make friends, finding their niche in the group and developing a reputation they're satisfied with.

But, as we all know, it is really easy to be 'fake' on the internet. Even outside of the hyper-edited world of Photoshopped Instagram models and bots spreading fake news, communicating on the internet makes it easier for anyone - even ordinary people - to tailor exactly how they come across.

It's natural for people to put up a bit of a wall around people they've just met, but I feel like freshers' group chats really do encourage speaking through a filter. Inherently, written communication allows for less spontaneity and complexity than talking to someone face to face. There are fewer subtle cues - like tone of voice and body language - and any message communicated is done so overtly, with the sender fully conscious of every aspect of their message. This works

well if you want to screen your posts and control the impression you make, but isn't conducive to getting to know someone beyond the wall they put up.

The 'scramble' also leads to the amplification of certain tendencies which exist in real life when people are trying to find where they fit in a social setting. I

"I was making a smart investment in my future relationships, or so I would tell myself"

had the bright idea of getting involved in political discussions on freshers' group chats (you can tell where this is going) and while some of these were interesting and worth having, a lot of them fell into one of two camps: either everyone would create an echo chamber, acting as if their conclusion were the only obvious and remotely reasonable one, or a few people would formulate their opinions in a deliberately contrarian and provocative way to get a rise out of the others.

Neither scenario is a recipe for balanced political discussion, but they are both ways for someone to project a certain image and find their place in a group: either as an inoffensive - hence likeable - person who agrees with the majority opinion, or as a rebel whose independent thinking is to be admired. Though we see this sort of behaviour in real life, the internet facilitates it much more.

The other tendency is the creation of cliques and 'inner circles.' I was surprised by just how quickly this happens online,

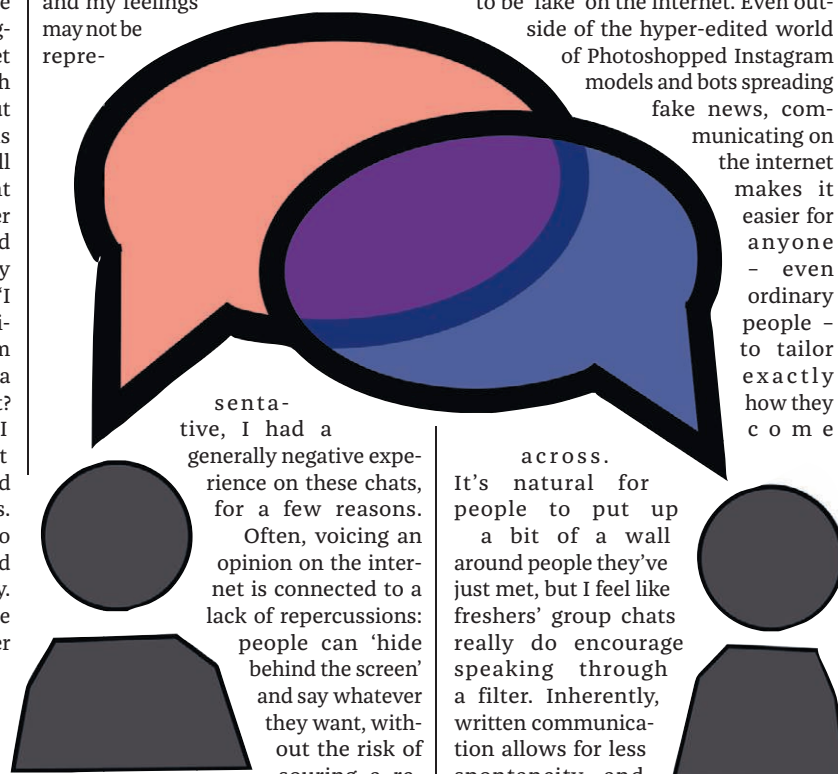
but it makes sense: as we engage in the scramble and cultivate our image accordingly, we find other people who are projecting a similar or complementary image, and team up with them. Once we have found these people, a new element is added to the scramble: solidifying this inner circle. Without knowing anyone in person, deepening a set of friendships can be difficult, so one of the main means of doing this is by beginning to speak (or type) the same way, with the same turns of phrase and inside jokes.

Not only do these inner circles feel uncomfortable and exclusive to people who aren't part of one themselves, they also feel quite artificial. If everyone is trying so hard to present themselves in a certain way, and all the opportunities provided by body language, tone of voice and facial expressions are lost, how can anyone really judge whether they have 'found their tribe'?

If I could speak to my offer holder self, who was worrying far too much about making a bad impression on fellow offer holders before even receiving A-level results, I would say that all of this is the reason why freshers' group chats are nothing to stress about. If you're reading this as someone who has made lasting friendships from freshers' group chats and strongly disagreeing with me, I genuinely am very glad that these chats work for some people; I just think there are limiting factors which make the experience on these chats less positive than it could theoretically be.

Offer-holder-me didn't need to worry; for me, arriving at Cambridge and meeting the people I'm now lucky enough to call friends felt infinitely more real.

PIXABAY



When Harry Met...No One

Meg Reidy writes about not defining herself based on the success of her relationships

The most thumbed-through books on my shelf are *Heartburn* and *Emma*. I brought my *Amelie* DVD to uni despite not having a disc drive in my laptop. I am an incorrigible romantic, but the last three years have shown me that, try as you might, you cannot write yourself into a love story.

Amidst the congratulations I received from my family on getting a place at Cambridge, one comment seemed to recur with surprising frequency: "You'll get yourself a nice man there, won't you?" Besides mentally correcting the heteronormative assumptions of my aged relatives, I think I generally agreed with them. Where better to meet someone who shared my interests, was ambitious without being callous, lived in London, knew how to poach eggs the right way, and would write sonnets about me?

I'm now a finalist, and single.

I want to offer an alternative to the usual narrative that seems to accompany this situation ('before I graduate', 'running out of time', 'getting desperate'

etc.). I see the relationships I have had here as pockets of happy memories; it's just that, ultimately, we weren't right for each other. The world - and Cambridge - is full of good people who don't quite click romantically. I have found that these people tend to make excellent friends, and that a successful friendship is less lonely than a failing romance.

I think that one of the reasons we are so preoccupied with relationships is that we see romance as the highest level of intimacy. A romantic partner, we believe, should know us inside out, and help us to create a coherent idea of who we are. Not only that, but they will love us; or they will love the idea of us that they have helped to create. In Cambridge, where interactions can often feel superficial, this is a very tempting prospect. We want someone to gather up the disparate parts of ourselves which we hand out to others, stick us back together, and tell us that we're amazing.

It is a strange phenomenon that many of us believe this confirmation

"Being in love is more about noticing than being noticed"

must come in the form of romantic love. Being attracted to someone certainly heightens your awareness of their physicality and behaviours. "I love that you get cold when it's 71 degrees out. I love that it takes you an hour and a half to order a sandwich. I love that you get a little crinkle above your nose when you're looking at me like I'm nuts." And so on. (For those of you who aren't as well-read in rom-coms as I am, let me redirect you to *When Harry Met Sally*).

We are self-absorbed, so we place an inflated sense of importance on the thousands of minute decisions we make every day. Surely we must receive some commendation for our co-ordination of socks and jumper? Surely someone must be mesmerised by the witty Beckett allusion we made in the brunch queue? The phrase "I'm in love with you" reassures us that we have been noticed in the way that we want to be noticed.

However, our friends perceive a touching amount about us too - there are just fewer outlets through which intense, individualised affection can be expressed on a platonic level. To

"The world - and Cambridge - is full of good people who don't quite click romantically"

quote Dolly Alderton (as I am wont to do), 'When you're looking for love and it seems like you might not ever find it, remember that you probably have access to an abundance of it already, just not the romantic kind. [...] Keep it as close to you as you can.' (*Everything I Know About Love*).

When I started university, being single equalled looking for a relationship. I haven't actively chosen *not* to look now, but embracing those scattered selves can be wonderful, and meaning different things to different people is refreshing. It really has taken me this long to learn that relationships are not a substitute for self-esteem.

Being in love is more about noticing than being noticed. Of course, it can be hard to feel like no-one has chosen you to be their person, the one who clearly stands out to them more than anyone else, because we all want to feel special. This might not happen for all of us in Cambridge, and that's okay. In the meantime, we should give more of ourselves to our friends, and not reserve our most sparkling conversation for a first date.

Features

Being a Cambridge comic with depression

Anna Trowby discusses how performing comedy sketches interacts with her mental health

Content Note: This article contains detailed discussion of mental health.

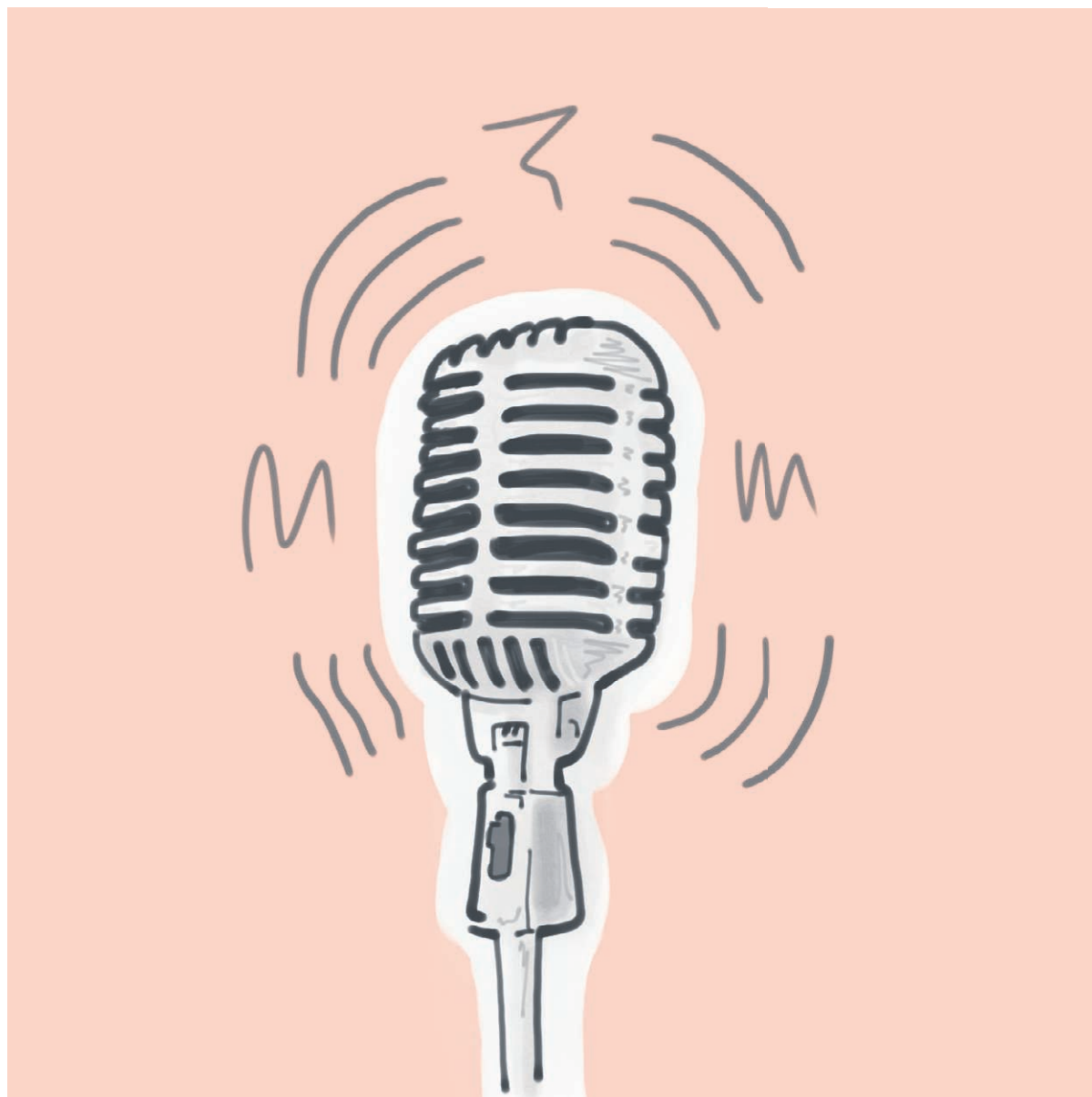
It's seconds before I'm due on-stage, and I'm already feeling nauseous. My nerves drain my mind of any comprehensible thought, my limbs shake with trepidation, and I keep on swallowing and clearing my throat, scared of messing up my set.

Tonight is the Lady Margaret Players' *Scratch Night*, and I'm about to perform a character sketch with my friend and writing partner. There's no reason to be this nervous, especially since the night is less about a perfectly finished product than it is about the capacity of the performance to be developed into something further, and the process behind creating new theatre pieces. There is hardly any risk factor involved, so why am I so frightened of going on-stage? Of a potential slip-up in front of people who wouldn't otherwise care?

Maybe it's because, deep down, I know that I don't have the right mindset to do comedy. It's gotten harder to keep up the comic façade, especially when I have been suppressing a faceless beast that I'm scared of even giving a name to.

I started taking treatment for depression in Michaelmas, right before I started doing comedy gigs around Cambridge. I thought that doing comedy would be an effective way of escaping my problems – to pretend, even for five minutes on stage, that I didn't have a gaping hole inside of me. I thought of comedy as an alternative universe I could lose myself in, only to discover that it exacerbated my relationship with my mental illness.

I have been suffering from depression from around the age of 16, although I have only been taking medication for it since I was 19. When I first expressed concerns about my mental health to my GP, I was told that my symptoms were merely a result of raging hormones and



“It's gotten harder to keep up the comic façade”

the sudden loss of my grandmother to lung cancer when I was 14 years old. Had the doctor known more about my personal and family history with mental health, I would have likely received treatment earlier.

As a child, I often had to move from family member to family member. The most impactful living arrangement was with my mother after my parents' separation at age six. It was around this time that my mother developed severe mental health disorders, and, to this day, I am not sure what to call the demons that afflicted her. My father believes that she suffered from dissociative personality disorder or bipolar disorder, but after years of trying to get her to seek professional help and watching as she refused to take responsibility for her mental health, I have given up on ever knowing what she had. All I know is that living with her left an invisible – yet profound – mark on me. My mother was prone to mood swings, bursts of anger, and severe depression. I can remember days when she'd pivot from one mood to another, one minute laughing maniacally and the next minute crying into her balled-up fists. My mother could not function as a human being, and she was so caught up in the extremes of her emotions that she could never find a core of stability.

Growing up, I absorbed this parade of emotions, passively witnessing her extreme outbursts without realising that this was abnormal. I eventually moved away to live with my grandparents, who were able to give me a more stable upbringing. It seemed that I had been saved from the angry masks haunting my mother, but the truth is that we ignored the trauma of my upbringing, until it exploded into full force a few years later.

When I was 16, I started suffering from periods of depression, suspended in a silence that ate itself away to nothing. The illness came in waves, receding to a calm serenity before washing me over in the same symptoms that have plagued me for nearly four years: constant exhaustion, sleeplessness, restlessness, weight loss, and thoughts telling me to do away with life. If it wasn't for the fact that I fear death, I may have committed suicide a while ago. Right now, I feel like I am neither living or dying – I feel nothing, and I sometimes wonder if I exist at all.

I started doing comedy because I thought it would make me feel something again, anything to ease off the chorus of depression and suicidal thoughts. If anything, I found that stand-up aggravated my depression. My acts are often hyperbolic and excessive, and I often wonder if the audience

▲ “Comedy feels like an extension of my depression”

(ILLUSTRATION BY RAPH WRIGHT FOR VARSITY)

“It's no secret that comedy coincides with mental illness”

If you are worried about your mental health, the following are useful sources of support:

- <https://www.counselling.cam.ac.uk>
- <http://studentmindscambridge.co.uk>
- <https://www.cpft.nhs.uk/about-us/mental-health-crisis.htm>

can see past the performance and into the dark side of my life. I wonder if they can see me flailing onstage, grasping for laughter in the darkness, reaching for the lighter part of their souls – and mine. I also wonder if they can sense how much my mother's ghost stalks me, when I act out the highs and lows of each phrase, waiting for applause.

It's no secret that comedy coincides with mental illness. Renowned comedians, from Stephen Fry to Robin Williams, have been upfront about their experiences of depression and how it interacts with their comic craft. In my case, it is a blessing and a curse. Performance temporarily gives me an escape route to dislocate myself from my body. But it also feels like a chore. As much as I love making people laugh, I also know there's something fake and indulgent about my stand-ups, as if I am trying to gloss over the cracks I don't want the audience to see. Comedy feels like an extension of my depression, not an end to it – the anxiety that I feel before a performance, the way my limbs quiver like branches in the wind, and the high of performing before I descend to the inevitable low, just as my mother experienced.

It offers me little comfort that this is something that will affect me for the rest of my life, and I must come to terms with this fact. The least I can do, however, is to be more honest with myself and others about my experience of depression, and to stop giving cover to something that had been so impactful on my life. It doesn't feel right to act like I have suddenly found a solution to a problem I am still in the midst of processing. Being optimistic is something that I could only fake at this point. Certainly, however, there are possible remedies and articles like this can at least give a voice to my experience with what I have finally given a name to – depression.

Opinion

Reading between the lines: Chinese morale amidst the coronavirus



Shedding light on Cambridge students affected by the coronavirus, and the difficulty that Chinese students are facing in their public and private lives

▲ As concern around the coronavirus grows, Chinese students are affected
(WIKICOMMONS)

Olivia Halsall & Yuan Sun

The latest student demographics show that in 2018/19, the University of Cambridge welcomed 1,288 Chinese students (5.7% of the total student body) – of which 458 were undergraduates, and 830 postgraduates. While it is not possible to acquire data on how many students for this academic year are from Wuhan specifically, it is certain that nearly all Chinese students have been affected by the outbreak of the Coronavirus.

For Cambridge students that went home to Wuhan for Chinese New Year, which fell on Saturday 25th January, it has been impossible to return to Cambridge. At 10am, 23rd January, all public transportation including outbound trains and flights were halted within the city of 11 million. The plethora of information, rumours, words of hate and love made things difficult to navigate, let alone the countless memes and proliferation of fake news. One particularly worrying example of fake news included a widely shared academic article (not peer-reviewed) that speculated the virus' makeup "unlikely to be fortuitous in nature" – in other words, speculating the virus had been engineered.

Moreover, identities of being Wuha-

nese, a Hubeier, and Chinese have been tangled together, mutating in confusing variations. As many families have decided to self-quarantine, netizens began venting their frustration. One Weibo post against regional discrimination has been shared by thousands. It reads, "Wuhanese are not (the) virus. They are just you, in the most unfortunate situation". The most liked comment reads "The way you see Wuhanese is just the way the rest of the world see [the] Chinese".

One Cambridge graduate, who is stuck in Wuhan and preferred to remain anonymous, expressed her concerns: "For me, the pressures are two-fold. I'm worried about all the inconvenience to my college and my department caused by my being away from Cambridge. What if I go back to Cambridge being isolated and feared as a Wuhan-born Chinese? At this point, I'm confused about my identities. I love my home city, I hate to see her being sick like this. It seems people are eager to help, but also frightened about the virus. But there's nothing we can do regarding this paradox".

China is composed of 23 provinces – including Wuhan – and 34 administrative divisions. Whilst a nation home to 1.4 billion may seem incomprehensible

“Being cautious is one thing, but overstepping that fine line into the realms of racism is another”

to many – the variation of cultures, dialects and mannerisms within each are profound. Naturally, when inquiring as to "Chinese" sentiment about the spread of the Coronavirus, 1.4 billion different opinions, subjectivities and unique experiences emerge.

One MPhil student at Trinity told Varsity, "It is dangerous to generalise China as a whole since cities are so unique, however I would say that in response to the BBC video of people singing to one another from within skyscrapers, this is our community culture as Wuhanese, and not Chinese people. Perhaps those from Wuhan don't have a good reputation as their dialect sounds somewhat aggressive, but in reality people in Wuhan are warm and friendly. I was a kid when SARS broke out; people said that "refugees" from Guangdong (where SARS broke out) were warmly welcomed to Wuhan at that time. Yet during this period people from Wuhan or Hubei were badly treated within the country, let alone outside the country."

In an effort to debunk certain myths surrounding the Coronavirus, which have become a sadistic means to justify racism towards Chinese people, many students have expressed outrage at ig-

norance surrounding Chinese culture. What China eats has become a point of fascination, exacerbated by the widely shared video of Wang Mengyun (the host of an online travel show) eating bat soup. The fact that the video is 3 years old and was filmed at a restaurant in Palau, an island in the Western Pacific, seems to have been deemed irrelevant by bored netizens.

Yan, an MPhil Education student told Varsity, "In reality it's only a very very small amount of people in China who eat wild animals. For most of us, we just eat things like beef and chicken. Nationwide, Chinese people have expressed huge dissatisfaction and anger towards those who ate and sold wild animals in the market (where the virus started)". It is worth pointing out the exact origins of the outbreak remain hazy – and that bats are not part of the local Wuhan cuisine.

Tales of racist outbursts aren't solely limited to China's eating habits. Reaction among the Chinese community of the Lion Yard Shopping Centre cancelling its Chinese New Year event on January 31st has been mixed. One Facebook user pointed out that the Foreign Office mentioned nothing about cancelling public gatherings, declaring "Chinese people are not a threat to the public and treating them as such is discrimination". Once it had been confirmed that the decision was in fact made "after discussions with committee members of the Cambridge Chinese Federation", the user retracted to say that the way the original post had been phrased "alienated many Chinese and East Asian people in Cambridge" in addition to "emboldening racist and xenophobic elements of the local population who might have taken this decision as evidence that all Chinese people are a threat to public health".

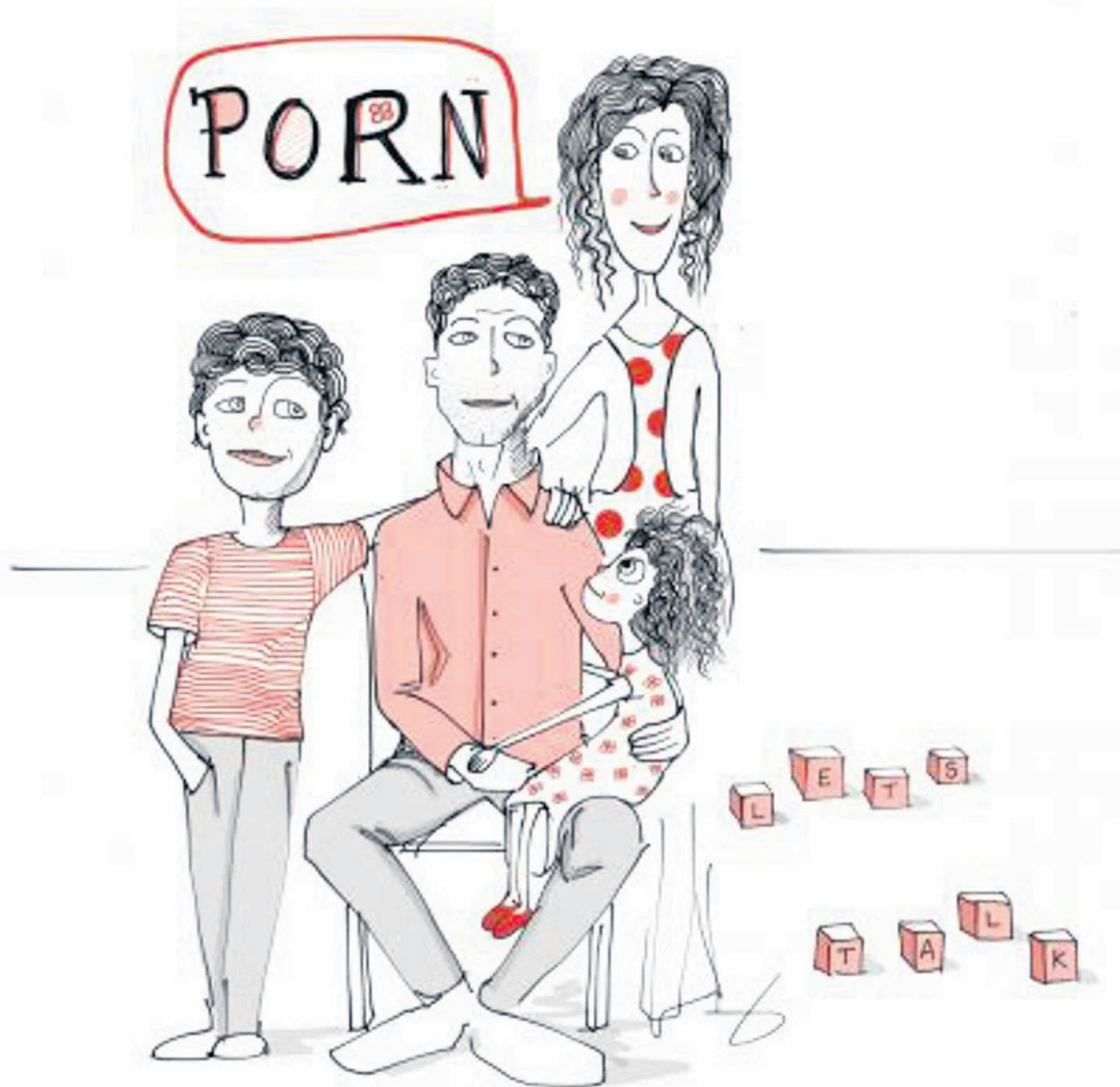
As the UK reported its first case of the Coronavirus on January 31st, thorough but sensible measures should be taken – of which do not include cancelling public Chinese gatherings. Being cautious is one thing, but overstepping that fine line into the realms of racism is another. In France, the hashtag #JeNeSuisPasUnVirus has garnered attention on social media, reminiscent of similar attitudes during the 2003 SARS outbreak. Countries around the world are bathing in ignorance – some refusing to serve Chinese customers and others going as far as to boycott Chinese businesses.

Joseph Needham, one of the greatest scholars of Chinese History, once said, "Chinese civilisation has the overpowering beauty of the wholly other, and only the wholly other can inspire the deepest love". For many, the answer in reaction to the Coronavirus is simple: a call for mutual understanding and dignity.

Opinion

We need to talk about porn

Pornography and sex should be discussed in an open and healthy way



Young people's pornography habits have long preoccupied policy makers and the national media. The latest report to make headlines is the British Board of Film Classification's (BBFC) survey of adolescent viewing habits, which reveals that more than half of 11-13-year olds have seen pornographic material, a figure that rises to 66% for the 14-15 age category.

The BBFC's investigation joins multiple studies into the demography of porn audiences, charting the growth in young viewers streaming explicit online content. Last year a BBC survey revealed 77% of young men admitted to streaming X-rated content within the previous month. Studies like this regularly provoke panic, with headlines like "Pornography 'one click away' from young children," stirring outrage and terror over young people's internet history. While this anxiety is warranted, the current responses are counterproductive.

Porn is big business. Thanks to cheap and portable internet-enabled technology, the industry has ballooned since the early days of kinky rags like Playboy and Hustler. Typing "porn" into a Google search yields more than two billion web-

sites in 0.33 seconds. Today, explicit sites receive more traffic than Netflix, Amazon and Twitter combined, with Pornhub claiming to stream 75GB of data every second. Although the industry's financial status is highly contested, most estimates exceed \$6bn.

The accessibility, volume and nature of much pornographic content poses serious concerns for gender equality and healthy sexual relationships. For over 50 years, feminist and anti-porn activists have rallied against publication of explicit imagery, rejecting porn's glorification of sexual violence against women and destructive masculinity. As feminist activist and Women Against Pornography (WAP) co-founder, Susan Brownmiller asserts, pornography transforms women into "adult toys," fostering the rape cultures we have seen in recent high profile harassment cases across the #MeToo movement.

For some, the solution is not less pornography, but more. Several feminist projects have produced liberating, autonomy affirming porn, with content which centres the actors' agency and pleasure. Indeed, the Feminist Porn Awards honour the erotic narratives challenging stereotypes and fostering

positive sexual role models. However, while this healthier pornographic material is to be celebrated, it remains a niche market that barely makes a dent in the global industry.

Others have tried to regulate the problem away. In a recent attempt to control audiences, the UK government announced an age-verification block, prohibiting minors from viewing pornographic material on the web. However, the scheme quickly fell apart when the practicalities of policing this enormous and diffuse industry became clear. To the embarrassment of security providers, The Guardian managed to penetrate the firewall in a matter of minutes. By October last year this proposed regulation had been abandoned.

Technological fixes are clearly not the solution. Rather than prompting more regulation, the BBFC's survey reveals the need for healthier conversations around pornography. Adolescent audiences are repeatedly regarded as being "exposed" to pornography, with reports claiming children "stumble" across explicit material. Framing viewing habits as non-intentional or deviant ignores the reality of pornography in the lives of people across the world, prevent-

▲ **"Porn is not likely to disappear any time soon."** (ILLUSTRATION BY OLIVER MARR FOR VARSITY)

"Rather than botched regulation or feigned ignorance, we need to talk about porn"

ing young people from discussing their experiences. The BBFC's study displays this clear lack of communication. 75% of parents did not believe their children watched adult material, yet the majority of their children admitted to doing so. Furthermore – and arguably even more distressingly – most assumed that if their daughters had viewed porn, it was accidental.

We urgently need open and honest dialogues which do not simply condemn watching pornography but discuss the ethics of the industry and its repercussions for consent and gender equality in a safe space. This begins with better sex education. When schools still address intercourse as a mechanical, heterosexual act, is it any wonder that over 50% of young men are using explicit material as their primary authority on intercourse?

It is even harder for young gay, lesbian or bisexual individuals, for whom sub-par sex education leaves porn as one of the only sources for understanding their sexuality. "As a gay man, sex education in school didn't address any of my concerns, it was actually porn which allowed me to explore my body and relationships with other men", reflects one student. The curriculum must go beyond providing advice on avoiding pregnancy and STIs and towards sex-positive education, which discusses pornography as part of a syllabus that foregrounds explorations of sexuality and indeed the pleasure of intercourse – particularly for women.

Luckily, it seems like change is afoot. The UK government has announced a new sex education curriculum, which, from September, mandates lessons on online safety, female genital mutilation and confronting homophobia. However, recent protests over LGBTQ+ equality teaching shows implementing this is easier said than done. "It is often difficult for teachers to navigate these lessons," said Nick Baily, an ex-teacher, now Education and Development Masters student at St Edmund's College, Cambridge. "We need to support the fantastic work of external professionals coming into schools to teach on sex and relationships."

Porn is not likely to disappear any time soon. If expanding audiences over the last few years are a barometer for what is to come, pornography will continue to be a major force in young people's lives, probably with technology that we cannot even currently comprehend. Rather than botched regulation or feigned ignorance, we need to talk about porn.

Isobel Duxfield

We should be celebrating foreign films, not ignoring them

We should overcome the barrier of subtitles and give foreign films a chance

Lauren Pilley

Awards season in film brings with it inevitable criticism of the careless treatment of 'foreign cinema.' This year is no exception.

The Academy's release of 2020's Oscar nominations has revealed their decision to rename the award for 'Best Foreign Language Film' to 'Best International Feature Film.' However, the category rules have not changed: the fact of a film being in a 'foreign language' remains the variable factor determining whether or not it qualifies for the category. This matters because the Oscars, BAFTAs and Golden Globes influence what we watch, and also praise the best films of the year. If foreign-language films are not recognised on-par with English-language films, they automatically become less popular. This should not be the case.

That being said, this week's Oscars saw the award for 'Best Original Screenplay' given to *Parasite* - a foreign film with subtitles. This is fantastic, and quite surprising - but it should be the norm.

One advocate of this is Bong Joon-ho, who utilised his acceptance speech for best foreign-language film at the Golden Globes to encourage the audience to ex-

"If we want to celebrate foreign cinema we need to dismantle its status as 'other'"

plore more non-English speaking films. He urged the audience to "overcome the one-inch tall barrier of subtitles" in order to "be introduced to so many more amazing films."

However, I'm unsure that it's fair to place all of the blame for the struggles of foreign cinema on an aversion to subtitles. It's not unusual to do so, and over the years, imbuing them with so much importance has led them to take on a life of their own.

On the other hand, playful approaches to subtitles could combat their demonisation, and surprise and delight audiences accustomed to seeing the same austere fonts in every film, regardless of budget. For example, in *Night Watch* (2004), the Russian director Timur Bekmambetov utilised pictorial and dynamic subtitles that change to reflect their content.

Subtitles can be used (or omitted) in many creative ways. The meme format of the Hitler's bunker scene from *Der Untergang* (2004) with deliberately incorrect subtitles exaggerates the translation errors that do make it into movies. The failure to subtitle the much of the Japanese dialogue in *Isle of Dogs* (2018) was explained by director Wes

Anderson as an attempt to maintain the film's fun and ensure we "listen to the language" - he argued that audiences would "understand the emotion" if not the words.

Nonetheless, it is important that we recognise the wide variety of factors - other than subtitles - that prevent American or British audiences from enjoying foreign cinema. Indeed, it would seem that subtitles have come to be used as a shorthand for much bigger culture barriers, which, in fact, often dwarfs the minor inconvenience of subtitles. In a nutshell, foreign cinema can seem intimidatingly highbrow. It has many associations, from cult Italian horror to the experimental Nouvelle Vague to sophisticated melodrama - but there is an overarching impression that their enjoyment requires slightly more thought.

English and American films work to impress us, which is clear in the break-neck pace of the well-cut trailer, their casting of stars and their adhesion to genre rules. With foreign cinema, there is the vague sense that we are watching to impress someone else - perhaps, in an abstract way, we want to impress the director by spotting his oblique intertextual references, or more concretely, to

out-do the cinephile figure in everyone's lives - the one who you wouldn't dare tell your opinion on the latest Tarantino down the pub for fear of being told that you were completely wrong.

This dichotomy is, of course, senseless. It's easy to see how it arises, though. When foreign cinema is rejected in multiplex cinemas, the only way we ever experience it is by having foreign films pushed on us by those who know better. Perhaps we are forced to watch them in GCSE German or told to watch them by Netflix algorithms wanting us to 'try something new.' We are socialised to see them as a chore, and the clearly outdated, awkward afterthought status of international films at various ceremonies makes it clear that the governing bodies have a similar opinion of them.

If we want to celebrate foreign cinema we need to dismantle its status as 'other' by changing the way we receive it. Foreign films should be celebrated in a context where they are not an outlier. Anyone with any kind of influence over what we watch should be talking about foreign cinema, just like Bong Joon-ho. When they do, they must be willing to shout over the multitude of barriers that are more intimidating than subtitles.

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Interviews

Where does China stand?

Henry Bowler evaluates China's current global position in light of a discussion with Prof. Steve Tsang, Dr Yu Jie, Benedict Rogers and Nigel Inkster, as well as the FT Future Forum on the US-China trade war

On Thursday 16th January, Prof Steve Tsang, Dr Yu Jie, Benedict Rogers and Nigel Inkster discussed the question 'Where does China stand?' in a panel event at Peterhouse, which I chaired. Between the director of Europe's largest university, China Institute, a senior think tank expert on China, a prominent human rights activist and a former assistant chief of MI6, they covered a wide range of different experiences and expertise. But I was struck by how much they actually agreed upon – and by the message they were giving. Above all, their answers showed nuance and caution beyond the usual hysteria.

I was also very privileged to attend the Financial Times' 'Future Forum' event on the US-China trade war. There, Gideon Rachman chaired a discussion between Dr Yu Jie, Martin Wolf and George Magnus, with an audience of business leaders contributing their own experiences. This panel agreed with that at Peterhouse on China's current state, but – along with the fascinating perspective of business leaders – offered a more worrying view for the future than we had seen on the 16th.

China now

China's extraordinary rise – remarkable both for its rapidity and for the heights to which it has now climbed – is much discussed in the West. Various journalists, academics and politicians have written about an inevitable and dramatic shift of political power eastwards and a 'new world order' emerging, centred on China. Others have prophesied a meteoric trajectory for China, with an even more abrupt collapse to follow its dazzling progress, but few have given the sort of subtle, intricate, nuanced picture to which we were treated last Thursday.

Our speakers at Peterhouse refused to be tied into either of the catego-

ries upon which so many writers have based their analysis, shying away from melodrama at both extremes. There was recognition of and admiration for the stunning success China has enjoyed. Nigel Inkster and Steve Tsang agreed that there had been, until recently, a period of at least fifteen years without a serious policy mistake. What other country can make that claim, they asked.

Yu Jie highlighted China's newfound supremacy in many areas of technology, from Huawei to TikTok. She argues that this marks an important difference from the Cold War relationship between the USA and USSR: today's superpowers are intertwined in ways which were simply impossible across the Iron Curtain, and China is ahead of the USA in areas where the USSR always struggled to keep up. On the other hand, the speakers all agreed that the narrative of inevitable Chinese dominance, even in its own region, is overblown. When I asked whether they saw the growing authoritarianism of Xi Jinping's regime as a sign of strength or weakness, the speakers' unanimity surprised me. They all agreed that the CPC's return to repression – stifling both dissent and debate – is a sign of serious weak-

▲ **China's rise has been much talked about in the West, but do we truly understand China?** (XI- AOCHENO/PIXABAY)

ness.

Benedict Rogers gave the example of his own treatment: he is constantly bemused at the Chinese government's obsession with what he says. He receives regular anonymous abuse to his home address, an address which is not publicly available. His neighbours have been sent letters telling them to 'watch him'. Even his mother has been sent smears about and threats towards her son.

On another level, he told us that Chinese officials, in high-level diplomatic meetings with their UK counterparts, have, on occasion, wanted to talk about Ben Rogers's irritating campaigning rather than apparently bigger governmental issues. As well as entertaining the audience, Ben was making a serious point here: namely, that the CPC seems to take even distant foreign individual dissent far more seriously than might seem rational.

He compared this very minor case to the infinitely bigger cases of Xinjiang and Hong Kong, where the speakers all agreed that growing Chinese repression belied a fundamental weakness and anxiety. Steve Tsang demonstrated the heavy-handedness of the mass internment policy in Xinjiang by noting that the number of

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It is worth reminding ourselves how much China has changed
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terrorist incidents originating from Xinjiang can be counted on one hand. Nigel Inkster went further, warning that – although there was no significant Islamist threat in Xinjiang when the camps began – Xi's brutal policies risk creating an irredeemable hatred of the Han Chinese Communist authorities among the Uighur Muslims there.

This was one reason why Steve Tsang talked of a period of 15 years without a serious policy mistake – until recently. All four agreed that Xi Jinping has handled issues in Hong Kong, Taiwan and Xinjiang very badly. Tsai Ing-Wen has been re-elected as President of Taiwan in a landslide win, for which she should be thanking Xi Jinping. The polls showed her to be in serious trouble a year ago, but Chinese aggression – in the form both of incursions into Taiwanese airspace and waters, and of a clear demonstration in Hong Kong of the real meaning of their offer to Taiwan of 'One Country Two Systems' – consolidated support for her hardline pro-independence and pro-democracy position.

When discussing Hong Kong itself, Steve won the biggest laugh of the night with his claim that, because Carrie Lam and Xi Jinping have made the



Interviews



▲ Professor Steve Tsang, Dr Yu Jie, Benedict Rogers, and Nigel Inkster at Peterhouse (HENRY BOWLER)

wrong decision more often than they would have done by tossing a coin to decide policy, “a donkey could have done better”.

It is worth reminding ourselves how much China has changed: Ben Rogers recalled dinners out in the open with human rights lawyers and campaigners in Beijing, all of whom are now in jail, in exile, disappeared or dead. Within the regime, power has been centralised in Xi’s grip, backed up by a personality cult not seen since Deng Xiaoping, or perhaps even Mao Zedong.

The most well-known element of this cult is the ‘Xi Jinping Thought’ mobile app, whose lessons in the thought of the country’s leader are compulsory for all. The outbreak and spread of a novel coronavirus in and beyond Wuhan offers a biting example of the consequences of this authoritarianism, according to all three panellists at the FT’s event. Dr Yu explained that, on the one hand, decision-making has become far more centralised, meaning that regional party figures fear and avoid taking any action themselves.

At the party conference last year, it was made clear that key decisions would be made by the central leadership, not local officials. On the other hand, the disappearance of pluralism and debate within the top hierarchy in Beijing, as disagreement with Xi has become very difficult, has meant that those same regional leaders also fear and avoid reporting issues which might not fit into the narrative decreed at the top. Bad news, particularly during Chinese New Year, would not go down very well.

This has been demonstrated in sharp relief by the response to the coronavirus. Dr Li Wenliang, a medical doctor in Wuhan, tried to alert his colleagues to a possible new SARS-like outbreak in the city, advising them to wear protective clothing. Four days

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They all agreed that war was possible, but none predicted it would happen
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later, the police instructed him to sign a letter admitting that he had made “false comments” and “disturbed the social order”. They later apologised to him – but, by this time, he had himself contracted the virus. Dr Li died on 6 February from coronavirus.

Such administrative paralysis has led some to use other means to push for change. Dr Yu highlighted, again at the FT event, that reformists in Beijing are using American trade pressure to push their own regime towards liberalisation measures that they wanted for China anyway.

At the time, this did not surprise me: it is far from the first time that moderates have used outside pressure to persuade hardliners to reform. However, this trend is deeply significant on two levels. Before Xi, debates between liberalisers and ideologues would have happened within the party up to the very top.

Now, decisions are far less collective, and debate far more limited – hence reformists have to work cautiously and indirectly. Secondly, the political table has turned: Deng Xiaoping started a long trend of economic liberalisation twinned with a narrow, controlled public sphere. But Xi has put a stop to that trend, brutally reversing the political liberalisation and restoring the hardliners at the expense of the liberals. So, debate has gone, and the policy has reversed.

Predictions for the Future

The Belt and Road Initiative – an enormous infrastructure investment project aiming to connect Europe and Asia to China – has only just got started. However, already, Bruno Maçães sees it as the all-encompassing vehicle for a new Chinese world order. In

contrast, our speakers at Peterhouse were more sceptical about this project, and what it might mean for the future of China and the world.

One oft-cited example of BRI in action is the Sri Lankan port of Hambantota. Cases such as this led Rex Tillerson to call BRI a ‘Faustian pact’ whereby developing countries take on enormous debt from China, cannot repay it, and suffer a political price. In this case the price was to give China a 99-year lease on the port of Hambantota, which some fear will now be turned into a military base. But Steve Tsang pushed back against the notion that such cases are successes of China’s so-called ‘debt-trap diplomacy’. Instead, he sees the example of Hambantota as an embarrassing failure. Chinese businesses invested heavily in the area, but could not find any way to make a profit from those investments – so they took control of the port on the basis of the majority stake which their investments had bought.

The aim had been to turn Hambantota into a profitable port, thriving off trade with China: it was only when this failed that China took control of the port. All the other speakers at Peterhouse agreed with this scepticism. On the basis of their analysis, and their indictment of the Chinese government’s counterproductive authoritarianism, a new Chinese-dominated world order is probably still some way off.

The other popular prediction among Western analysts is that of war. Graham Allison famously developed the idea of a ‘Thucydides trap’ whereby the dominant power and the rising power, competing with each other, so often become trapped in a cycle of growing conflict. At Peterhouse, the speakers refused to be drawn, although none agreed with Allison’s view of history. They all agreed that war was possible, but none predicted

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Deep financial links between the two powers make conflict much more difficult for both
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it would happen.

Dr Yu stressed the interdependence between the US and Chinese economies as an important buffer on conflict which did not exist between the two Cold War powers, whose economies were so isolated from each other. She, and others, have argued that the deep financial links between the two powers make conflict much more difficult for both.

However, here, the FT event offered a different – and more concerning – perspective. At this event, the focus was on the US-China trade war, and one word kept cropping up: ‘decoupling.’ This is the buzzword for the next few years in the economic relationship between the USA and China. Yu Jie talked of the prospects of two different regulatory regimes on technology; Martin Wolf predicted that, despite the Phase 1 trade agreement actually encouraging a closer coupling of the two economies through insisting that China buy more American goods, the USA would eventually settle on a strategy of serious decoupling.

Most interesting was the perspective of business leaders. Amongst those I heard and spoke to, there was an acceptance that decoupling is now the route they will have to take – meaning a deeper separation between US and Chinese branches of their companies. This prospect did not seem to concern them in terms of feasibility.

It was only at this point that I started to become concerned about how far this could go. Many foreign policy writers have argued that conflict will not happen because the two economies are inextricably linked. But, if the biggest companies and investments funds all start to decouple their Chinese involvement from the American, how inextricable are those links?

Science

Charles Darwin: a revolutionary figure?

To mark the anniversary of Darwin's birth, **Rory Cockshaw** questions whether our modern understanding of evolution can be wholly attributed to Darwin

In a historical study of science, one thing becomes clear above all others: remarkably few people, if any, have had the power to bulldoze 'old' science and make way for the 'new'. Philosopher of science, Thomas Kuhn, himself a revolutionary, writes of how 'normal science' proceeds in a routine manner while extraordinary shifts take place rarely, as a result of some 'paradigm shift' whereby the tectonic-scale destruction of long-held ideas makes way for an entirely new set of theories.

Who, then, is responsible for these earthquakes in science? Ask anyone, and the answer will be the same: Copernicus, Galileo Galilei, Isaac Newton, Albert Einstein, Marie Curie, and, of course, Charles Darwin and his discovery of evolution by natural selection.

Darwin was born on 12th February 1809, making this year's Darwin Day his 211th birthday. Fascinated with nature as a child, he later studied to enter the medical profession, where many an early scientist had cut their teeth. Finding the profession not to his taste, he studied instead for the priesthood in Cambridge, where he had ample time in the week to pursue natural history, often skipping lectures to collect bee-

ties from around the Cambridge countryside.

After graduating 10th in his year of 178 students, he went with Adam Sedgwick to conduct geological fieldwork in North Wales and planned to travel to Tenerife to study tropical natural history. Upon arriving home early from North Wales in August 1831, however, he found he'd been invited on the trip of a lifetime: a 2-year voyage on the HMS Beagle as a self-funded gentleman naturalist.

Now, this is the part of the story that people 'know': Darwin sailed to the Galapagos, saw the finches and the tortoises, and with a flash of enlightened genius, realised that the varieties of species seen on these young, volcanic islands had to have come from a common ancestor. Darwin had done it: species were mutable, and not part of some fixed creation. After all, Darwin was a teenager when Mary Anning discovered the first plesiosaur and it was during his travels that she discovered the ichthyosaur – and, in doing so, discovered extinction, immediately throwing into question the fixity of nature. Who is to say, after all, that if species could go extinct, they couldn't also come into being through evolution as a natural

counterpart to their disappearance?

Alas, Darwin didn't uncover natural selection at all on his great journey; only once, on the way back home, did Darwin diarise his private doubts on the unchanging permanence of species. The reason for this is in part down to inexperience: Darwin was a geologist, not a zoologist. Many of the finches he collected in the Galapagos he'd labelled as mockingbirds, and it was only on his return and collaboration with the Natural History Museum scientists under Richard Owen that they were recognised as a wide variety of finches. Darwin viewed the variation between islands of the Galapagos originally as just a geographical quirk and not much more while on the voyage; his return home and collaboration with more experienced scientists gave him the real food for thought.

Indeed, Darwin wasn't even the first to suppose evolutionary change in species through time. His grandfather, the writer Erasmus Darwin, was a key evolutionist but wrote his thoughts in verse and with little scientific credibility. Lamarck, who preceded Darwin, also proposed evolution through inheritance of acquired characteristics. These thinkers were widely ridiculed scien-

tifically, not just religiously, because they had proposed no mechanisms, or mechanisms that simply didn't work (scars are acquired, but not inherited, for instance). Darwin wasn't novel because of his evolutionism, he was novel because he realised the mechanism that caused evolution was natural selection.

There were other limits to his novelty, too. Firstly, Darwin came up with the theory underlying natural selection at the same time as another naturalist, Arthur Russel Wallace, who had conducted fieldwork in the Amazon and on the Malay Peninsula with whom Darwin jointly published. Secondly, Darwin's theory of common origin didn't lead him to a progressive attitude towards equality. Prejudiced by Victorian ideals, Darwin, Huxley and others managed to justify common discrimination by asserting that Caucasian men were the pinnacle of evolution. Darwin himself said that "man has ultimately become superior to woman".

Rome wasn't built in a day, and a revolutionary understanding of origins doesn't immediately translate into equality. However, there are some interesting nuances to Darwin's views. His wife, Emma, is described by their

great-great-granddaughter (a writer also named Emma) as an "enabler" who was "always Charles' first reader". Evidence from letters suggests she was something of a free-thinker religiously, so was able to tolerate her husband's lifelong doubts and eventual agnosticism on the topic of God. She remained Darwin's closest confidante throughout their lives together. Further, Darwin remained a passionate abolitionist as long as he lived, saying it was impossible for him to see a black man and "not feel kindly towards him" because of what he saw on his travels to the Americas.

In later life, Charles Darwin suffered heavily from long-term illness (perhaps from a bite sustained in Argentina in 1835) and died on 19th April 1882. While we speak of Darwin as a giant of science – one of the very few who have so utterly changed the way we think about the world – he did not exist in a vacuum. He lived in one of the most interesting periods in scientific history, when the world started to move away from religious dogma and towards an unapologetically scientific paradigm. He may have been just one piece in the puzzle that made up Victorian science, but he was certainly a great one.

Death by heartbreak: truth or drama?

Serena Li explores the little-known condition of takotsubo syndrome, and how it may constitute death by heartbreak

From Tristan and Isolde to Yoshihide in *Hell Screen* to Madame Butterfly, the broken heart is steeped in global literature and, in many cases, in our own lives, whether from romantic desolation, familial loss or platonic dissolution.

Yet, can humans really die from heartbreak? Or, is it simply an over-used, melodramatic trope employed to heighten our emotional connection with literary characters? The evidence is limited, but the identification of takotsubo syndrome in Japan in the 1990s – and the condition's global prevalence – supports the former argument.

Takotsubo cardiomyopathy, or 'broken-heart syndrome,' is a temporary, sudden weakening of the heart's left ventricle – which pumps blood to the rest of the body via the systemic circulation – usually following severe emotional or physical stress.

The condition was named takotsubo syndrome because the left ventricle, when afflicted with the condition,

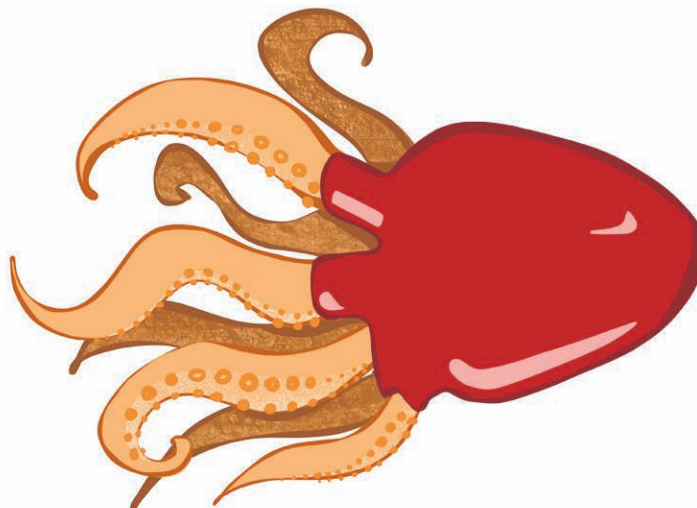
looks like a tako tsubo, a pot used to trap octopi in Japan.

Perhaps most interestingly, the disorder is non-ischæmic, meaning – unlike in coronary artery disease – it is not caused by an artery obstruction leading to a heart attack.

In fact, the two conditions are almost indistinguishable, save for this difference with the symptoms of takotsubo cardiomyopathy mirroring those of a heart attack, including chest pain, shortness of breath and similar ECG abnormalities.

This is thought to be a result of a sudden surge in catecholamine release (such as noradrenaline and adrenaline) that leads to arteries tightening, blood pressure rising and increasing stress on the heart. This leads to problems with the heart carrying out normal contractions. However, relatively little is known of the direct causes or mechanisms.

Interestingly, 90% of reported cases are in women (although, in Japan, the condition is more prevalent in men). Additionally, 28.5% of patients had



▲ "The condition's name comes from the fact that, when affected by it, the left ventricle resembles a 'takotsubo', a pot used to trap octopi in Japan" (ILLUSTRATION BY ALISA SANTIKARN FOR VARSITY)

no evident trigger and while physical triggers were the supposed cause for 36% of reported cases – compared to a lesser 27.7% by emotional triggers – half of patients with the condition had an acute, former, or chronic neurologic or psychiatric disorder. Overall, death is rare, although heart failure is common, along with other cardiac complications.

Whilst the prognosis may not be as bad as it was for Lady Montague in *Romeo and Juliet*, takotsubo syndrome perhaps indicates the strength of the communication between the brain and the heart, and the significant ways in which our psychological and emotional state can influence our physiology.

The understanding we have on takotsubo syndrome is, frankly, rather poor. That being said, perhaps what we can gather from this recently recognised condition is the richness and strength of human relationships, whether romantic, platonic or familial, and the significant influence of these connections on our survival and our lives.

vulture.



Illustration by
Chloe Marschner

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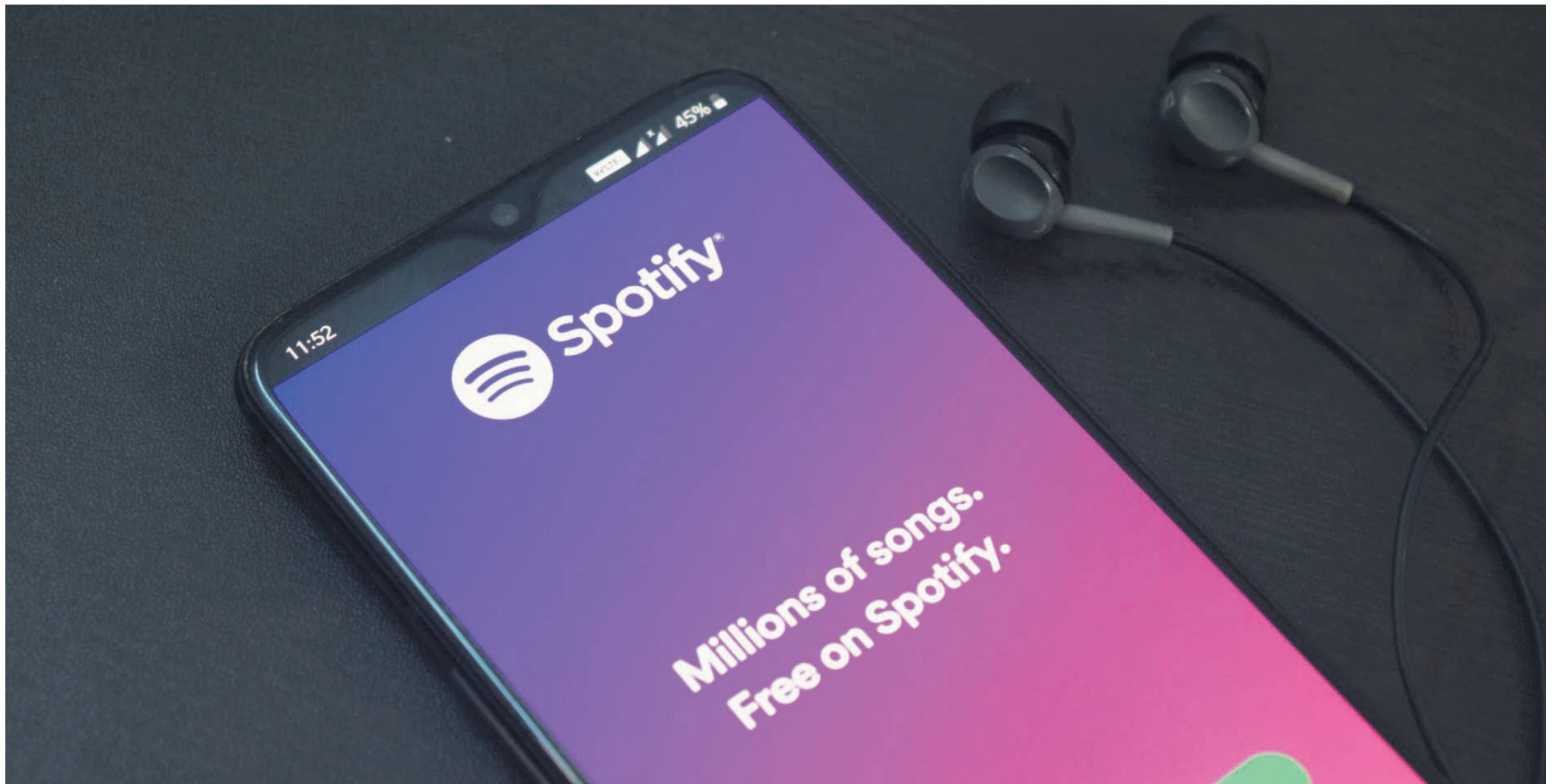
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MUSIC

Does streaming spoil us for choice?

Izzi Dickson dissects the pros and cons of the rise of streaming



▲ 'The Spotify premium user is able to stream from a catalogue of over 30 million songs' (DEEPANKERVERMA/PEXELS)

The way that we listen to music is being revolutionised. No longer dominated by CDs or vinyl, the world of music consumption today is dominated by Spotify, Soundcloud and Apple music. In 2020, the Spotify premium user is able to stream from a catalogue of over 30 million songs, all merely a few keyboard-taps away from instant retrievability. Last year, it was reported that Spotify has 248 million users. Music ownership, as the prime way music is diffused through society, is dead. But what are the implications of this?

For one, artist loyalty feels less vital. Some of my friends don't know the names behind their current favourite songs; I fre-

quently save songs from an artist without bothering to explore the rest of their music. My dad's puritanical approach to listening to albums (the whole way through, exactly in order, never skipping tracks) seems vastly outdated. Years of unwavering artist loyalty means that he owns every David Bowie album from 1971 to 1983 (unfortunately including *Pin Ups*) – and that's a repeated theme for many more of his favourite artists. Today that seems outmoded, foolish even. If you know that 70% of an album is going to be filler (as many are), why would you buy it?

Suddenly, the album is second fiddle to the playlist. Mixtapes, once described as 'the most widely practiced American art form', have been around since the 80s, but are now rendered obsolete in the wake of hordes of Spotify playlists. Songs are hand-picked by well-paid content creators and constantly updated. These playlists can make or break an artist today; if your song makes it onto a big one, you're basically in. Unsurprisingly, they seem to favour the bigger artists. My Spotify homepage was inundated with images of Drake on the day that *Scorpion* came out, because he was the cover photo for so many playlists.

The victors of the musical revolution are the big players: the Ed Sheerans, the Taylor Swifts (lest we forget how Swift pulled her music off Spotify in protest against

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The rise of streaming
(in areas beyond music)
means that the media we
use is less personal to us
”

the service in 2014, then put it all back on in 2017). The victors are the record labels who back the international megastars and who can afford to fling money about to create sponsored content. The victors are the smaller artists who just about make it onto a well-liked playlist and get more streams, revenue and clout than they ever would otherwise.

But we shouldn't forget that there are plenty of losers in this game. Although the rise of music streaming is said to have caused gross profit to rise in the industry, a disproportionate amount of money from Spotify goes to big artists. An individual artist's revenue is directly related to the number of streams they get, and it's

thought that the top 10% of songs make up 99.2% of streams. That doesn't leave much room for the minor league players, who are often forced to tour extensively to make enough money to live on. If you care about supporting smaller artists, it's worth buying the albums of those you listen to a lot.

It's annoying – and unsettling – that Spotify algorithms have evolved to the point where they can pick music I genuinely enjoy. Call it the gripes of an audiophile who is losing her edge, but I avoid listening to *Daily Mix* and *Discover Weekly* as far as possible, because the notion that a computer can predict my music taste distresses me (using software which constantly collects data on my listening habits definitely doesn't help). I secretly worry that Spotify is conspiring to homogenise

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The unprecedented quantity of music we gain access to is undeniably great value for £9.99 a month
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the world's music taste. In the presence of the wealth of music that streaming services can offer though, maybe music nerds need to get over themselves.

But a more universal concern is that the rise of streaming (in areas beyond music) means that the media we consume is less personal to us. In the days where one had to build up their own record or CD collection, that collection was a glimpse of their inner self. It spoke as to which music they cared about enough to invest in and,

“

'Streambait' is on the rise - a mix of faux-EDM drops, trap beats, hip hop style vocals and easy-to-remember lyrics

”

in a way, illustrated a narrative of their life through the records they had bought over time. If you went to someone's house and perused their records, it would reveal another facet to them. Now that we are no

longer as committed to our 'collection' of music, what do our listening habits say about us?

Of course, the eminence of music streaming isn't the first thing that's had an impact on how we listen to music - the invention of vinyl let the album come into being, and today the viral power of TikTok is behind the rise to fame of many songs. Perhaps the most momentous consequence of the rise of streaming services, though, is they are changing how artists make songs. 'Streambait' pop is on the rise - a mix of faux-EDM drops, trap beats, hip hop-style vocals and easy-to-remember lyrics. The streambait song has little or no intro, and often jumps quickly into a chorus to avoid that pre-30-second-skip. If it's skipped before then, the artist won't get paid. Songs have become shorter, too - the average song length on the Billboard 100 is 20 seconds shorter than it was 5 years ago.

Spotify is a good deal. The unprecedented quantity of music we gain access to is undeniably great value for £9.99 a month. It's vital to support your favourite smaller artists by buying their albums though. Don't give in to the algorithms too much - use online music publications to find new music too. Don't let your taste be ruled by the big record companies. And always, most importantly, remember to put your Spotify on Private mode if you're going to listen to the High School Musical 2 Soundtrack. ●



▲ The purchasing of music, other than among vinyl collectors, has effectively been replaced by streaming (JOEHAUPT/FICKR)



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A love letter to...Georgy Sviridov

Nadya Miryanova applauds the talents of this lesser-known Russian composer

When people think about Russian music, names such as Stravinsky, Rimsky-Korsakov and Tchaikovsky typically spring to mind, conjuring associations that range from the chaotic turmoil of the Russian Revolution to the lively elegance of a ballet.

Throughout the centuries, music has formed an intrinsic part of Russia's national culture and identity, originating with the early sacred music of the Orthodox Church and progressing to more modern styles, such as the experimental avant-garde movement of the early 20th century. In the Soviet Era, classical music in particular was used as patriotic propaganda to illustrate the country's prestige. While the West widely acknowledges the masterpieces of Shostakovich and Prokofiev, one of the period's most important and influential composers remains shrouded in obscurity. Georgy Sviridov is a name rarely recognised in Britain, which took me by surprise, since he is immensely popular in Russia and his melodies are amongst the most powerful I have ever heard.

Born in the Russian town Fatezh in 1915, Sviridov's musical aptitude was recognised early on when he was invited to play the balalaika (a traditional Russian stringed instrument) at his local folk orchestra, having learnt it independently and by ear. After attending music school, he was admitted into the prestigious Composers Union when only 19 and was advised to enrol at the Leningrad Conservatory, where he studied piano and composition under the direction of Dmitri Shostakovich. He graduated with top honours in 1941, creating the First Symphony and Concert for Strings, evocative compositions which underline the tension brewing in a world that had just launched into a global war once more.

Throughout his career, he composed in a myriad of genres - instrumental, film, theatre - but his music tended to gravitate towards choral works, turning poetry into lyrics. He turned to Pushkin for inspiration on several occasions, first gaining high critical acclaim for a set of lyrical romances based on the poet's verses in 1935, and later, his composition 'Pushkin's Wreath' (1979). Folk and epic elements chime alongside the spirituality of Orthodox Church music to create a colourful vision of Pushkin's Russia: dra-

matic, solemn, bold, light-hearted. The contrasting movements evoke Russia's musical heritage, as well as patriotically reviving a nostalgic, idyllic view of the distant past. Less conventionally, Sviridov set the poetry of Yesenin to music, creating an oratorio in his memory, an emotionally resonating composition filled with haunting melodies that mourn the loss of a revolutionary poet. So popular was his choral music that two of Russia's greatest singers of the 20th century, Elena Obraztsova and Dmitri Khvorostovsky,

to perfection: the suite starts with a valiant troika, lively and strong in character, accompanying the galloping of horses across winter fields. The brass accompany the strings of the orchestra in a graceful and vibrant waltz, composed in an innovative, neo-Romantic style which now calls to mind images of a snow-covered Kremlin and pine forests at winter. However, the most captivating movement of the suite is arguably the Romance. A strikingly beautiful and lyrical motif

passes round the orchestra, from the melody

to Sviridov's music, as a segment from his monumental score for the film *Время, вперед!* (Time Forward) was chosen as the opening theme to the news on the First Channel of the USSR, and later Russia's, Central TV *Время* (used to this day). The piece brings to mind an engine making steady and confident progress, illustrated by a piano motif with constant underlying percussion. However, it was the heroic trumpet refrain, a powerful ascending melody, that was cho-

“
Even Russians who took no interest in music listened for decades each evening to Sviridov's music
”

sen to become the symbol of changing times for an entire nation. Sviridov was so successful at capturing the patriotic Russian spirit that this composition was chosen to play during the Russians Sochi presentation in 2014 in Vancouver, a credit to the composer's long-lasting legacy.

Sviridov's prolific brilliance as a composer was fully recognised during the Soviet era, as he was honoured with the State Prize of the USSR multiple times, the People's Artist of the USSR award (1970) and the Lenin Prize. He was even named an honorary citizen of Moscow, Russia's greatest tribute for an artist. Though he belonged neither to the new era of avant-garde composers nor to the Romantics, he gracefully brought together the two styles to create original and innovative compositions of his own, uniting tradition with modernity. So why should he not be mentioned more now? His diverse oeuvre serves to celebrate all aspects of Russian tradition, recalling scenes of a glorified motherland while providing an invaluable window into Russia's rich musical culture. ●

fought a legal battle for the right to sing his compositions first.

Though he is most renowned for his choral works, I first discovered his music when watching the Russian film “Метель” (The Blizzard, 1965), which was based on a short story by Pushkin. His orchestral suite complemented the action of the film

low violin to spirited trumpet, brimming with passion and despair while reflecting the inner confusion as the main character walks in the forest after her true love departs.

Even Russians who took no interest in music listened for decades each evening



▲ (TWITTER/EMBASSYOFRUSSIA)

LIFESTYLE

Half-way through first year...

Georgina Buckle discusses the inevitable instability that comes with navigating Cambridge's terms

Thinking back to the first week here in October feels like an eternity ago. Yet, there is still a pervading sense of newness, even halfway through. The emphasis placed on counting weeks (whether for work or Camfess purposes) means that in some ways we are hyper-aware of the time racing past – but with that awareness is also an expectation of each week bringing greater stability. While I can wholeheartedly say that life here has become more familiar, it would be disingenuous to correlate the time passing with feelings of greater stability. If anything, reaching this halfway point has made me realise with more certainty that perhaps stability should be accepted as unattainable here – and this might be something to relish in.

The notoriously short and intense terms undoubtedly play a part in this paradox. It can feel that life here is one constant, spinning wheel of 'what's next?', both socially and academically; there's almost never a chance to plant your feet on the ground and stay rooted to one moment. The fast-paced unravelling

“
Life here is a perpetual
sense of trial and error
”

of Cambridge life can lead to both a sense of having lived here forever, whilst still not being able to shake off the freshers week feeling: of running in the pitch-dark. Perhaps this is why the realisation of being one sixth of the way through my degree has come with such surprise. I feel like I am still figuring things out, trying new things – personally and with work – and yet this is difficult to reconcile with time passing by so quickly and the inevitable expectation that this passing time should amalgamate into me 'knowing what I'm doing'.

Rather, it should outright be said that life here is a perpetual sense of trial and error.

Reflecting on the first half of the year, this trial and error has given way to a kaleidoscope of experiences and feelings. The unique balance of pressures on maintaining a social life and trialling all the wonderful (and sometimes



▲(INSTAGRAM/CAMBRIDGEUNIVERSITY)

bizarre) opportunities that Cambridge offers, whilst we all try and pretend we're not at university which constantly demands us to be more academically focused than anything else, has naturally produced mixed results in attempting any semblance of 'routine'. There's such a vast mix of pressures that it's impos-

sible not to feel both overwhelmed by the time left at Cambridge – the sheer concentration of feeling and doing involved in just one week – and like there simply isn't enough time left to revel in it all.

For all the difficulty that the instability brings, there is also so much good that just wouldn't be gotten from routine. The heap of trials and errors left to be made are daunting, but are also part of what drives the exciting churning of life here and what makes me want to cling onto the days passing as tightly as possible – to not get too lost in the wheel of 'what's next?' and to appreciate the time here whilst I am living in it.

It's possible to take all the conflicted feelings about time here and realise they can co-exist. The terms here can be both far too short and yet feel like an eternity. The days can pass without ever feeling like they bring greater constancy or routine. Approaching the halfway point of my first year has made me realise that all these new experiences are indebted to the characteristic instability of life at Cambridge, something that I'll make efforts to savour in the next coming months. ●

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FILM & TV

Marriage Story is a heartbreaking tale of separation

Baumbach's newest feature is an intimate story about the complexities of love, writes **Elisa Halkes**

Noah Baumbach's *Marriage Story* is a poignant depiction of love gone wrong. Through simple, careful shots, and captivating performances, we come to understand the intricacies of a crumbling marriage: Nicole (Scarlett Johansson), and Charlie (Adam Driver), are a pair growing apart. As Nicole's bitterness for a relationship that have stifled her independence becomes ever more visible, and her acting career pulls her back towards her childhood home of Los Angeles and away from the pair's married life in New York, both partners are forced to reconsider how to navigate their new lives.

At the heart of this story is consideration of what 'love' is. The film opens with a stream of what one half loves about the other, from small traits – “she's always inexplicably brewing a cup of tea that she doesn't drink”, to bigger things: “he loves being a dad”. Such an opening lays the groundwork for the intimate tone of this

story, a film that often feels as though, as viewers, we are imposing upon a deeply personal narrative. Yet the presentation of the universality of love in all its shapes, be it between lovers, parent and child, or friends, ensures we are not left behind.

“
The film is filled with tender, understated moments of love
”

Indeed, we come to see Henry, the couple's young child, inevitably affected by the ripples of divorce, as his family structure alters. We also come to know, and

enjoy, the wider cast of characters in this couple's life: work colleagues, or Nicole's mother and sister.

Whilst nostalgic close ups and dated haircuts might tell us otherwise, this is a decidedly modern retelling of the trials of love. As Nicole and Charlie's marriage falls prey to the ugly world of divorce, we are taken through the multi layered challenges of separation. Laura Dern's performance as Nora, Nicole's powerful divorce lawyer, is a brilliant, humorous portrayal, that serves as a foil to Nicole's very much present emotional turmoil. Such a cautious balance between humour and sadness is struck throughout the film, giving it a delicacy that makes it an interesting watch.

Here we see a nuanced depiction of 21st century love: one inextricably linked to the bureaucratisation of our private lives. Through juxtaposing the warmth of intimate moments of family life with the cool world of the courtroom, Baumbach man-

ages an impressive feat: an engaging tale of a love that has not been destroyed, yet has mutated. The film is filled with tender, understated moments of love: putting a child to bed, or, perhaps most impactful, a heart wrenching apology that comes after a descent into an ugly, cruel argument. Nicole's suggestion that “I think about being married to you, and that woman is a stranger to me” is crucial – this sense of change and development underlines a narrative that switches between recollections of the past, and the realities of the present.

The complexities of these characters are portrayed with depth, care and understanding by established actors Johansson and Driver: it therefore comes as no surprise that *Marriage Story* has been widely predicted great success in 2020's upcoming awards season. Rightly so – this is a well crafted film that provides an incredibly human insight into the events and consequences of separation. ●

Put Sex Education back on your timetable

The second season of Netflix's 2019 teen leviathan only builds on the impressive first, finds **Gabriel Humphreys**

Content Note: This article includes discussion of sexual assault and brief mention of self harm

Following hot on the heels of an engrossing and hugely successful first series last year, Netflix's *Sex Education* is back for a second, continuing the story of Otis and his makeshift secondary school sex therapy clinic as he enters a new academic year.

Having adored the first season, I was healthily skeptical about this one, especially considering the speed of its release: it felt like a potential Netflix cash grab, and the accompanying Chromebook and Now TV adverts starring members of the cast and filled with dodgy innuendo didn't help to shake that feeling. Honestly, to begin with, I was rather disappointed. The first episode or so had brought me back into the diverse and wonderfully woven-together narrative structure of the first season, but things slowed down as soon as Maeve returned to the school and it felt like we were just going to be re-hashing season one with slightly altered interpersonal relationships.

Yet the show quickly sways from its episodic structure and finds a new rhythm: as Jean's presence in school truncates Otis'

business, the series finds a new macrostructure, one that allows for rich and nuanced character development that I didn't even know we were missing until now.

Netflix's impressive star-pulling power continues to be one of its most valuable features, and the series only builds on the impressive ensemble cast of the first season, with excellent additions including Chinenye Ezeudu as Viv and the brilliant T'Nia Miller as chair of the school board. Continuing from last season, Gillian Anderson is a standout as Jean, given more screen time as she wrestles with romance and domestic intimacy, in an internal conflict laced with the trappings of a mistrust that runs convincingly deep. Ncuti Gatwa's Eric matures too – I felt in the first season he was a little too much 'Otis's sidekick', but in the second installment his character arc is fully fleshed out. Gatwa's performance is given the ebbs and flows it needs to shine even brighter.

Sex Education is often a show of troubled – even tortured – characters, and individual performances carve out their own valuable glints of tragedy amid a sea of comedy. Emma Mackey as Maeve and Anne-Marie Duff as her mother, Erin, are a formidable duo, and their game of emotional cat-and-mouse, trust and betrayal is both poignant and heartbreaking to watch. More serious

topics also find space for discussion – stress-induced self harm, addiction, and, most notably, sexual harassment and assault. The latter topic is treated with admirable sensitivity and realism in the show's depiction of the slow-burning weight of trauma, and makes for some of the most powerful moments of all eight episodes.

“
Sex Education carefully teases out our misplaced assumptions about sex
”

The show remains one of the most visually compelling series going, with a bizarre 80's/modern-day blended aesthetic that is at once unplaceable and unmistakable, all set against swelling valley panoramas and lush forests. I think camera work can be easy to forget in television, but I've always found that *Sex Education* perfectly hits the mark: beautifully shot with effortlessly

composed tableaux, and lingering medium shots, often simultaneously lending realism and intimacy.

It can be far too easy for some, in a pained and very 'British' way, to find the concept of a programme about sex and sex therapy inherently laughable – something to giggle awkwardly at, not with. This show never shies away from being shocking, but as many have rightly pointed out, it frankly puts our actual sex education in the UK to shame. On top of that, the show continues to be the gold standard for unselfconscious diversity, and, in particular, for its tender examination of the diverse nature of sex and love. Sex-positive perspectives in television and film might be on the rise, but this one truly embraces the multiplicity of sex, and breaks down a huge amount of boundaries and misconceptions in the process.

Sex Education carefully teases out not only our misplaced assumptions about sex, but about sex education itself. It is a show about identity, discovering that identity, and navigating a world that is constantly telling us how we should live and who we should have sex with (or not). But its gentle didacticism never edges into preachy, and its characters stay ever-so-human.

If Year 7 PSHE didn't quite cut it, give this *Education* a try. ●



▲ *Marriage Story* is 'a poignant depiction of love gone wrong' (TWITTER/MARRIAGESTORY)

▼ Otis and Eric get themselves out of the classroom – with mixed success (TWITTER/SEXEDUCATION)



ARTS

Bella Biddle: 'My student room is full of jelly, wire and curry'

Continuing her column, **Lydia Bunt** talks to student artist Bella Biddle

I think we can all agree that Cambridge teaches precision. Whether it's referencing

▼ spectral traces (35mm gloss print)

down to the wire or analysing an idea in minute detail, we're no strangers to exactitude. But what if you want to produce something that's messy – in fact, all over the place? Second-year student Bella takes that approach when it comes to creative exploits. She completed a foundation course in Fine Art at Central Saint Martins before starting at Churchill, focusing on fine art in two dimensions. Her work encompassed animation, sound and video as well as painting. "In art school," she explains, "you're being taught to look in a way only I could look, or think in a way only I could think."

But now that she's tackling an English degree at Cambridge, things are a little different. "Art is no longer the purpose of my day," she admits. "It's not the core thing I'm doing – it gets pushed to the side-lines." She goes to ArcSoc life drawing classes fairly religiously: "It keeps my eye in with drawing but it's not necessarily creative." Despite her assertion, I hazard a guess that what she produces is in fact very imaginative. "I do try and push myself with things like blind contour or continuous line drawings, as well as using weird materials," she smiles. And when making art independently, she's found herself straying

into the realms of illustration and graphic design, which require less equipment, time and space than projects she's been used to working on. Though she's been proud of some of the work she's produced to a brief, she also tries to think about how the projects she takes on reflect on her as an artist.

"I'm actively trying to stop doing things that I'm not excited about."

Since sixth form, Bella has been exhibiting in London galleries, including in an exhibition called Muscle Wire at the Gerald Moore Gallery with established creatives Amy Ash and Emma Finn.

How does exhibiting in Cambridge – and largely on a student arts scene – compare? "Student-run arts events are rarely curated to a particular theme," Bella muses. "I've struggled to find events where the collection of art was created to be shown as one coherent exhibition."

Last year, however, she exhibited as part of Consequences, an exhibition run by Fleapit. The students involved met up, exchanged objects and responded to each other's work in a shared space; there was more breathing space and trust in student artists to create something without having to work to a brief. "I felt like we curated that space together," she explains. "In student exhibitions, you're often focused

on coming up with a piece that you already know the identity of, but some of the most interesting stuff I've made are things that have just emerged over time." Her insistence on art as an inquisitive process is clear.

“
It all sounds creative to the core
– and deliciously messy
”

Moving into illustration at Cambridge, Bella has developed a unique style, layering up swimming watercolour backgrounds with ink or pen detail and cloudy, obscured photographs. What's the process behind these pieces? "I have a folder of textured papers and pre-existing things that I like to draw on," she begins. She'll sketch on these or white paper in fine-line marker, scan the drawings in and chuck them in Photoshop. The photographic images she uses as texture are pulled from free stock images. The technique links to not having a great deal of time in Cambridge, but it has also yielded some unexpected results. "If you run 35mm photos under water, the gel coating becomes really soft, and you can just wipe it off," she explains. "With digital photos, it's easy to believe they're doctored, but printed images can be edited too." Her art runs up against questions of authenticity, mingling methods and worrying the edges of media we might think of as distinct.

I wonder, perhaps a little naively, about the issues that push Bella to create art. "Thematically, I'm very interested in sea levels rising at the moment," she says, her face lighting up. Leaning back, she explains her desire to convey the effects of climate change

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Her art runs up against ques-
tions of authenticity, mingling
methods and worrying the
edges of media we might think
of as distinct
”

in line with her own attempts to lead a zero-waste lifestyle. "But I'm also interested in the visceral, tactile textures of water and plastic," she adds. Next, her focus is combining the



▼ dad (ink on white acrylic)

(ALL IMAGES BELLA BIDDLE)



▲ "I'm actively trying to stop doing things that I'm not excited about" - Bella repurposes weird materials and unfamiliar textures to make her eclectic art

graphic, illustrative style she's worked out through projects for Varsity and Cambridge theatre with the heavy, thick, sculptural paintings she's made before. It all sounds creative to the core – and deliciously messy.

But it's difficult to maintain messiness at Cambridge, as it turns out. "My student room is full of jelly, wire and a twenty-three-year-old curry that a friend dug out for me," Bella laughs, evoking her friends' bemused responses when they come knocking. "At the moment, I'm interested in textures like those of jelly, meat or trash, but it's not very practical!" Often, student art shows are full of very tidy, two-dimensional work: "It's very liveable-with". But perhaps the art we make doesn't have to be like the essays we write – even if jelly doesn't look good on a bookshelf, or meat-art sounds like something Lady Gaga would have worn back in the '00s. It makes sense that in London, Bella's favourite haunts are the ICA and working galleries, where art is process rather than a tidy, four-sided, done-and-dusted product.

Throughout our interview, I get a sense that artistic space is ever opening up in Cambridge; space to react to and to understand art. But Bella finds the emphasis on craft on the university arts scene a little restrictive. Perhaps it's time for Cambridge creatives to start thinking more broadly about the art we create – in other words, to allow ourselves to be messy again. Hence her final call to arms, as we pack up to leave: "Rather than just flexing our drawing skills, let's be more inquisitive and make really interesting work." ●



Cultural Appropriation: a poem

Sandaleen Qaiser explores the baffling experience of buying cultural objects online when far from home

My Etsy seller likes to call it a tassel bell-shaped Hindi-Muslim Indian-Bengali gypsy-style jhumka-jhumki dangler-wrangler authentic ethnic earring.
Fair enough, I think, does get the point across.
I miss home, I tell Ammi, so I'm going to buy myself some jhumkis.
Little ornaments to wear as your history.
You'd get them cheaper over here, she tells me.
Ammi, they're only two pounds.
Wow, that's a lot cheaper than you'd get them over here.
It's called capitalism, darling, my dad's voice is heard somewhere in the background.
The marketing tool is rich culture; the product is cheap material.
Ammi and I roll our eyes into our front-facing cameras. He doesn't see us do it.
I giddily send her a link to the tassel bell-shaped Hindi-Muslim Indian-Bengali gypsy-style jhumka-jhumki dangler-wrangler authentic ethnic earrings.
I wait for expected opinions. She'll say, too big and heavy-looking. Not feminine enough for her liking.
She raises a grainy eye-brow at me all the way from Islamabad.
Baita, she says, these aren't jhumke. These are kaante. ●



▲ (ALISA SANTIKARN FOR VARSITY)

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FASHION

The problem with Ethical Fashion

Is sustainability just the latest fad? Fashion Editor, **Mier Foo**, explores whether ethical consumption can really exist in the mainstream fashion market

Sustainability is now the zeitgeist of contemporary fashion. Brands are under more pressure than ever from consumers to adopt ethical practices or be rendered obsolete. According to the 2018 State of Fashion report by the Business of Fashion & McKinsey, 66% of global millennials are willing to spend more on brands that are sustainable. A further 90% said they would boycott a brand if it was not sustainable. This is especially significant since millennials now have the greatest purchasing power out of any generation and have the potential to effect significant change in an ever-evolving industry.

Despite the demand for ethical fashion being at an all-time high, there are only a handful of ethical brands that align with millennial tastes. Notable names such as Eileen Fisher and Stella McCartney have been frontrunners in championing sustainability within the industry but cater largely to the luxury market. Alternatively, clothes from famous mainstream brands like Patagonia and The Reformation are priced on average in the low three digits, just enough to position the brands between the boundaries of affordable and luxury. Acceding to demand from consumers for more affordable prices, The Reformation created a sister line, RefJeans, which debuted in 2017. In its press release, founder Yael Aflalo cited the inspiration for the line as her answer to tackling “the worst polluting type of clothing that we buy all the time – denim. My biggest dream is to bring sustainable fashion to everyone.” Still, a quick browse on their website shows a pair of their ‘classic sweatpants’ listed for £84, when a stroll down the high street could yield a strikingly similar pair for the fraction of the price. This reveals how sustainable brands are still disproportionately skewed towards targeting millennials with higher spending powers. How can we expect consumers to make conscious choices if there is a lack of viable options available to them?

The Reformation posit themselves from the outset as the ethical choice, with sustainability interwoven into the core of their identity. The description that accompanies each piece of clothing is pithy and sleek – ‘Hungover? Heartbroken? Grocery run? These are for you.’; it practically teases. Yet their accountability comes across deceptively simple: they state that upon purchasing said pair of sweatpants, one saves 8.0 lbs of carbon dioxide, 720.0 gallons of water and 1.2 lbs of waste – how exactly this is calculated is not divulged. Wouldn’t it make more sense to not buy a pair of sweatpants you don’t necessarily need?

Herein lies the paradox of sustainable fashion: it creates a need which it then fills. This is encapsulated in its manufacturing model, where clothes can go from design to fruition in a matter of weeks, echoing the fast-fashion

life cycle where efficiency is key in order to stay on top of trends and stimulate demand. Aflalo believes that “the prevailing sustainable platform—‘Buy less, use less’—isn’t a scalable strategy”. The Reformation thus fills that gap; it offers shoppers in return peace of mind, as one customer calls it ‘shopping without the guilt’ (well, if you can afford it). As the Reformation founder once told *Vogue*: “You buy clothes because you really want them. The sustainability part is for us to figure out.”

Similarly, Stella McCartney has been criti-

“
Herein lies the paradox
of sustainable fashion, it
creates a need which it
then fills
”

cised for using sweatshop labour in her collaboration line with Adidas, where a pair of leggings can cost up to £120. A spokesperson for McCartney called the issue an “Adidas supply chain matter”, and asked that all enquiries be directed to Adidas instead. It is highly unlikely that a brand, synonymous with ethical fashion since its conception, is unaware of such commonplace exploitative practices being carried out in the industry, especially by fast-fashion brands. If consumers are expected to make conscious decisions in their purchases, brands should also be held accountable for partnering with companies whose practices conflict with their own ethos. Abdicating responsibility upon the first sign of controversy calls into question just how ethical a brand really is if they refuse to practice what they preach.

In an age where value-driven consumers are incentivising brands to adopt sustainable practices, brands simply cannot afford to remain silent. Yet, it is important to ensure that sustainability is not simply being used as a buzzword to prey on unsuspecting consumers. H&M’s newly launched ‘Conscious Collection’ is testament to this, after being found guilty by Norway’s Consumer Authority for misleading consumers about the true nature of their sustainable clothing collection based on the ‘greenwashing statements’ made by the company on their website. The company also offers a clothing recycling programme where customers can bring in old clothes to be recycled at any participating store in



▲ INSTAGRAM/STELLA MCCARTNEY

“
Sustainable brands are
still disproportionately
skewed towards targeting
millennials with higher
spending powers
”

exchange for a H&M gift voucher – a marketing technique which rehabilitates the image of the brand, whilst encouraging consumers to buy more clothes, a confusing dichotomy. The irony of such an incentive is especially apparent when you consider that it would take the company 12 years to recycle what they produce in a day.

A study conducted by the Stern Center for Sustainable Business at New York University found that products that were marketed as ‘sustainable’ sold significantly faster than products which were not. The financial motivations for brands to embrace sustainability are clear but it must come hand in hand with accountability. These incidents are a timely reminder that no matter how ethical a brand claims to be, fashion is still first and foremost a business, concerned predominantly with its bottom line. ●

Jean-Paul Gaultier: The Couture Chameleon

With Jean-Paul Gaultier announcing his retirement, **Isabella Martin** reflects on his escapades in haute-couture and the legacy he leaves behind



▲ (ALL IMAGES INSTAGRAM/GAULTIER_FOREVER)

Jean-Paul Gaultier, fashion's finest creative chameleon, announced his retirement from the world of 'haute couture' this year. Going out with a bang, he celebrated the end of an era with an exuberant grande finale, a parade of the many eclectic phases of his design career.

Having grown up in the Parisian suburbs, Gaultier never had formal training as a designer. Instead, at an early age, he began to send sketches to famous couturiers in the hopes of landing a job. Pierre Cardin was impressed by his talent and hired him as an assistant in 1970.

After this lease into the world of couture, he worked through a series of jobs at various ateliers and couturiers, before finally premiering his first eponymous collection in 1976. From his debut, Gaultier's irreverent attitude had earned himself the reputation of fashion's 'enfant terrible'; rule-breaker, and risk-taker. With a vision to blend street-wear and high fashion, Gaultier has long since provided

an unapologetic shock factor, and honoured his desire to always present an 'element of surprise.'

In his debut couture collection in Spring 1997, Gaultier pushed the limits of haute couture itself, by reworking humble materials like denim, camouflage and mesh. It was in part his shoestring budget which prompted him to repurpose these materials and to elevate them with the meticulous craftsmanship of his couture atelier. Even blending details typical of ready-to-wear, including visible garment tags and logos, Gaultier was a wild card among his couture contemporaries: a long leap from the 'dressed up aesthetic' of John Galliano and Alexander McQueen's debut couture collections for Christian Dior and Givenchy respectively.

His debut SS97 couture show features slick tailoring, but on both male and female models. Gaultier gives his own edge to traditions of female

silhouettes and masculine cuts; yes, there

“
Gaultier has done unisex
couture, which is probably
the newest take on the old
métier yet
”

is skin on show, but we glimpse it through black mesh, or between pinstripe suit lapels. The models all exude Gaultier's attitude; garish makeup elongates their eyes up to the eyebrows, lips are an unapologetic red, whilst the men walked with a slick of eyeliner.

Gaultier took pride in his display of a myriad of beauty on his catwalk; including older men and women, fuller-figured models, pierced

and heavily tattooed models. This was a move that consequently earned him both popularity and polemic. In his open casting, Gaultier sought a certain 'allure' and 'attitude' in his models. In showing differences, he wanted to display the 'multiple definitions of beauty.'

In an interview, Gaultier questions "Why not Couture for men?". Seizing this concept, Gaultier proceeded to establish the "jupe pour homes," or 'man-skirt,' as a household classic, presented as part of his 'Et Dieu créa l'Homme' collection.

An illusion created by adding a panel to wide-legged trousers created the impression of a skirt. He wanted to push the hyper-sexuality of his male models, breaking design and gender binaries. It's couture; reworked.

But Gaultier does not deny couture its desire for elegance; a translucent white dress of tulle with a matching black shawl and a pink-dragon-embroidered corset dress with a draped skirt both made the pages of Vogue. And yet, in a typical twist of tradition, Gaultier closed his show with a new conception of the wedding dress, featuring a mesh corset bodice which extended into the veil and over the face. It is in this particularity that Gaultier finds his niche: the ability to rework tradition, respecting tailoring and the artistry of the atelier, yet bringing abounding playfulness to his designs.

On January 17th 2020, Gaultier announced that he would be retiring from the runway after his 50th-anniversary haute couture show which took place on January 22nd 2020, during Paris Fashion week. Embracing the true spectacle of fashion, Gaultier staged his grande finale in Paris's storied Théâtre du Châtelet.

Through the phases and transitions of this extensive show, Gaultier exhibits the many faces of his design career:

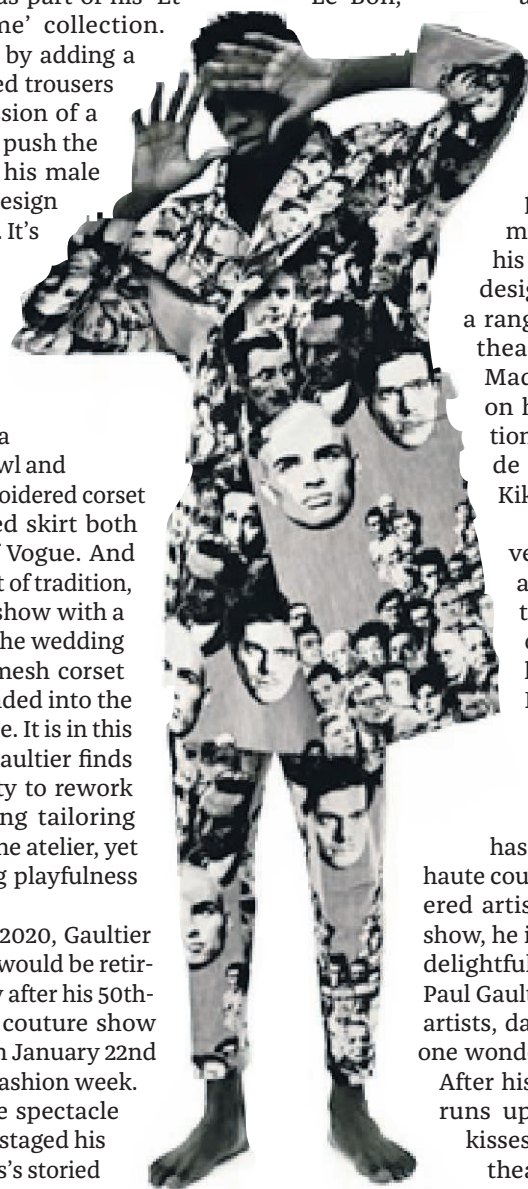
moving through leitmotifs including corsetry, the blue and white striped 'marinière,' and reworked textiles.

Gigi Hadid, fashion's young blood, took up the 'marinière' heritage in a reworked masterpiece of blue and white striped organza and matelot pants. Alongside young faces, Gaultier re-called his original catwalk icons to walk in the finale, including Anna Pawlowski, who modelled in his very first shows, Yasmin Le Bon, and Erin O'Connor.

Gaultier's creative prowess knows no limits, and rightly so; his work is multi-functional and multi-disciplinary. Childhood passions for cinema and music have carried over to his career, and he has since designed the wardrobe for a range of film, cinema, and theatre. You might recall Madonna's conical corset on her 1990 Blonde Ambitions World tour, and Rossy de Palma in Almodovar's Kika.

Perhaps this cross-diversification of fashion, art and music is what the future holds for the designer: he inaugurated his very own cabaret, FASHIONFREAKSHOW in 2018 at Paris' Folies Bergères. It seems that Gaultier's relentless appetite for creativity has surpassed the realm of haute couture, and into undiscovered artistic territory. With this show, he invites us "escape to the delightfully crazy world of Jean Paul Gaultier," with a collective of artists, dancers and musicians in one wonderful production.

After his grande finale, Gaultier runs up the catwalk sending kisses to the audience, a final, theatrical au revoir. Wearing a classic Breton under a boilersuit, he exudes a certain euphoria; celebrating what has been, but more importantly, what is yet to come. ●



Violet

By VARSITY

How to fall back in love with Cambridge this Valentine's day

After weeks of stress, **Rachel Imrie** reveals how we can repair our relationship with Cambridge as Week Five rears its ugly head

The day is upon us. For some, it is just a day, regarded as no more remarkable than those that came before, nor those that will follow. But for others, it means so much more. For a lucky few, it is a landmark achievement – a symbol of hope and a promise that even greater things are to come. However, for many it serves only as a dreary, unfortunate reminder of the tedium and dissatisfaction that characterises their every waking moment. Greeted with either excited expectation or reluctant dread, that fateful day has finally arrived – the beginning of Week Five.

By this point in term, Cambridge life can feel like a monotonous weekly cycle of supervision deadlines, Wednesday Cindies, and Sunday Lives, punctuated only by the occasional formal, or, to be even bolder, a Thursday Lola's. Even the mid-term crisis, once the emotional pinnacle of our eight weeks here, has become predictable. As Week Five blues clock in for their quarter-annual shift, we

“*Cambridge life can feel like a monotonous weekly cycle of supervision deadlines, Wednesday Cindies, and Sunday Lives*”

await its arrival with anticipation, begrudge its passing with exasperated shrugs, and wave it a relieved goodbye the following Thursday, rather like the aunty that no-one looks forward to seeing at Christmas. We note the comings and goings of city-wide despair as though it is a travelling circus simply passing through, full to the brim with thousands of grotesque clowns crying and unravelling in various locales.

Like a failing marriage that has long since lost its spark, by Week Five, the relationship between Cambridge and its students has become one in which both parties recognise their love for one another, yet both are kind of just waiting to be rid of the other. When misery and tedium have become commonplace, something has to change, otherwise bitterness only grows and the fond feelings you once enjoyed recede further into memory. So, whether in a happy couple, or comfortably single, here's some ideas on how to fall back in love with Cambridge this Valentine's day.

Be a tourist: in the midst of work

“*Sometimes, the best way to appreciate how much you love something is to see how much you miss it when it's gone*”

and personal tragedy, taking the time to actually look at your surroundings en route to morning lectures can be surprisingly difficult. However, perhaps on a day when your spirits are remarkably high, try to notice something new about our little city. Maybe you'll realise the special way that the sun hits the spires of your college in the afternoon light, or you'll appreciate the number of stars overhead as you stumble across orgasm bridge on your return from a tipsy solo dinner date, or maybe you'll even notice that your supervisor looks particularly dashing in that new coat you've seen them rocking. Whatever it is, take a walk, take photos – or better yet, don't take any photos at all.

Another option is to simply leave: Whether it is to home, to London, or somewhere nearby like Norfolk or Ely, escaping Cambridge for the day serves not only as a reminder of everything you loved about the place during that first week of Michaelmas on your return, but also that there is actually a world outside of our city. A world in

which the language of DoS's and pidge is as foreign as the culture of over-working and unhappiness (although this actually may be less effective if London is your destination of choice). Nevertheless, the so-called 'Week Five Blues' are often just a nasty case of Cambridge Cabin Fever. Whilst we're making strides to remedy this unfortunately frequent misdiagnosis, the cure for the latter is much simpler than the former.

So, whether you're single or coupled up, make the effort to fall back in love with Cambridge this Valentine's Day. Look at her, admire her, and see that, whilst she's not perfect and she's not always kind to you, she probably just wants to better you. Sometimes, the best way to appreciate how much you love something is to see how much you miss it when it's gone. We only have a short time here, and it is always a tragedy to realise that a love lost was, in fact, a love never expressed. A short time unless you're a medic, that is. In which case, my pity goes far beyond this situation.

The desperate dash for uni romance

This city offers a wealth of love-finding opportunities that don't always pan out as planned, writes **Anna Feest**

One of my friends once described my love life as a 'meme.' Based on the evidence, they weren't wrong: a few hilarious incidents with roommates who came back earlier than expected, many questionable decisions, and a habit of 'wrong place, wrong time' with just about everything.

Some people just seem to have it all sorted out, with couples walking together hand in hand, disgusting the rest of us lowly singles with their superior, loved-up smugness. How do they do it? Is it some sort of secret club I haven't got the tap on the shoulder for? Does it come with a certain number of Crushbridge submissions?

I've made my attempts at a simple, in-college relationship. On the surface, it seems feasible: there's always that one couple who have been together since freshers, the few who are just hooking-up, and the two who have somehow kept it really quiet. But why not me? It should be perfect – nice and close, mutual friends, brunch together. That is unless it all gets a bit complicated, the college

gossip goes wild and there's no way of avoiding them. If it works for you, well done. But if it doesn't, trust me, it's horrific.

Out of college, there are other options to find your perfect match. There you are, finishing up an essay and someone comes by who grabs your attention. It could be in a library, Newnham Café, or walking across the grass on Sidgwick (probably not Downing Site or West Cambridge because there are too many STEM students actually concentrating on their work). A few lingering looks, a faint smile, and then, based on my experience, you'll most likely never see them again.

However, let's not forget the Cam-fess or Crushbridge that could come out of this. Forget Tinder – these shining beacons of hope are proof of the often-hidden, romantic souls of Cambridge students. Let's be honest, we're all desperately looking out for a submission that maybe – just maybe – applies to us, even though the author is anonymous and unless it's particularly specific, you'll never know for sure. It must have worked for someone, or these little love let-

ters would surely have dried up a long time ago. "I'm gonna wear my new coat to Sidgwick and I'd better get a Crushbridge for it" is something I have genuinely heard, and the primal need to be noticed really does serve as an incentive to change out of the trackies and hoody, even if it's just for a trip to Sainsburys. Imagine: "to the girl with all the dairy milk..." Little do they know, it's all for me while watching Netflix alone.

Crushbridge may be a debatable replacement for Tinder, but RAG Blind

“*...these shining beacons of hope are proof of the often hidden romantic souls of Cambridge students*”

Date takes it to the next level. The joy, though, comes from filling out the forms (best to do each other's and accept the roasting) and then receiving the new ones back to analyse and thoroughly stalk on Facebook over brunch. RAG, you may not yet have found me my one true love (although



▲ The hunt for love in Cambridge is rarely an easy task (FLICKR)

there's still hope), but the laughs we had were worth it.

Once you accept that none of these work – or maybe that's just me – the last option is to get on Ticketbridge, sell your first-born for a ticket and head out to Cindies. This could lead to some fairy-tale, Hollywood scene in which your eyes lock across the ballroom and you meet in the middle under the crystal chandelier. In reality, however, it's a sweaty, darkly lit room surrounded by drunk students singing along to Mr Brightside.

Still, your eyes have indeed met – a few choice dance moves later and it's about to go somewhere. If you're really classy, you'll even move it along to the smoking area. But, ultimately the next morning when the hard reality, natural lighting and hangover hits, you'll regret your choices, have to hop back on Ticketbridge searching for your dignity (and the rest of your belongings), and realise that you're going to be seeing them absolutely everywhere for the next three years. Perfect.

‘If you allow yourself to be dragged along, eventually you are going to crash and burn’: Liam Hughes talks mental health

Ben Phillips and Joseph Powell

The importance of good mental health in sport has rightly been an issue receiving far greater coverage in recent years, and football – as the nations most watched and engaged in sport – naturally occupies a big part of that conversation in the UK.

In the past two years, footballers such as Aaron Lennon and Danny Rose have spoken out about their struggles with mental health and abuse playing the game. Former Man Utd midfielder Michael Carrick previously revealed he suffered from depression for two years following the team's defeat in the 2009 Champion League final. West Ham Women's captain Gilly Flaherty has also bravely described her battle against suicidal thoughts and impulses.

But these players, as those willing to go on the record about their own struggles and vocal advocates for positive mental health, are still very much

exceptions in their sport. At the end of last season, the Professional Footballers' Association (PFA) reported that the organisation expected to help 'double or treble' the number of players in 2019 than in 2018. These numbers had already increased dramatically, with accessing treatment in 2018 up from 160 in 2016.

In order to shine a light on this area of paramount importance, the FA has determined to use the 2019/20 season to boost awareness and make some statements. Last weekend (8-9th February) the FA embarked on its first ever 'Heads Up' weekend, launched by FA president and mental health campaigner, the Duke of Cambridge. Teams across the land will come together to 'kick off the biggest ever conversation around mental health through football'.

In Cambridge, one of those courageous enough to do just this in describing his own experiences with mental health and the stigma around it is former Cambridge United midfielder,

Liam Hughes. After coming through the Cambridge youth system, Liam would go on to gain 161 professional caps for the U's over six years before moving on to Barrow in 2016.

Returning to Cambridge to speak with students, Liam discussed spiralling out of control and turning to drink and drugs instead of talking openly about his feelings. Having played at the Abbey for eight years, he spoke about the emotional rollercoaster of being a footballer along with the pressure and limelight that comes with becoming a professional.

"I struggled with the highs of Wembley and scoring there and then the lows of injuries. If you allow yourself to be dragged along on that rollercoaster of emotion, of constant ups and downs, eventually you are going to crash and burn out and that is what happened to me.

"When I realised I had a real problem was when I was driving down the A14

thinking I wanted to drive into oncoming traffic with a bottle of Disaronno in my hand, but I decided to reach out and asked former club physio Greg Reid and the club doctor for help. They were there for me and took the time to listen and for that I am forever grateful."

It is this availability of a support network that is absolutely crucial for those suffering: the ability to speak, and the ability to be listened to.

"There are good people out there who are willing to help and listen. Cambridge United is a great club, with a great fan base and I have lots of fond memories from my time here. I would love to become a sort of mental ambassador to the fans and give my time back to anyone that needs help talking about mental health."

Since leaving the Abbey, Liam has played at a range of different clubs including Inverness, Guiseley, Billericay and Darlington, and is now part time at Bradford Park Avenue. It was at Dar-

lington, under Tommy Wright, that Liam admitted to still drinking heavily. Here, he was drinking on a daily basis, relying on his natural footballing ability to get him through.

Deciding enough was enough, Liam checked himself into rehab to seek further help. This proved to be a turning point. Having now fought off his addiction, Liam has set up his own business, WAND, to help others by giving talks and holding workshops on developing young people's understandings of mental health, anxiety, addiction, stress and stigma.

In dedicating his energy to this cause, Liam becomes another like Danny Rose, Aaron Lennon, Michael Carrick or Gilly Flaherty, who are using their experiences to positively influence these discussions. And, as the 'Heads Up' game week continues, conversations like these – that Liam engages in week in, week out – will hopefully be making it easier for someone, somewhere, to speak up.

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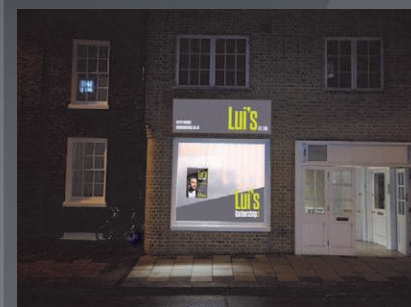
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Sport

‘We expected publicity and hype, but to not to such an extent’: catching up with Kenya’s pioneering women’s lacrosse team

Finn Ranson caught up with coach and founder of Kenya Lacrosse, Storm Trentham, after another incredible chapter in the team’s story

Finn Ranson
Sports Writer

In the space of three weeks, Kenya’s U19 women’s lacrosse team went viral after featuring on ESPN’s Twitter, made it onto House of Highlights’ Instagram, and even found themselves put up in the house from *Cheaper by the Dozen 2*.

It was a pretty glamorous World Championships in Canada last summer – and a successful one, too. Kenya won three of their eight games and lost 7-6 to the eighth seed, Germany, after a last-minute winner.

It is a remarkable turnaround from the circumstances in which I last spoke to former Cambridge Lacrosse coach, Storm Trentham, last February, when the Kenyan government had effectively banned the sport.

“We expected publicity and hype, but to not to such an extent,” Trentham said. “The opening ceremony was a massive eye opener for us. All the teams were desperate to have photos. Even the Canadians, the reigning champions, were queuing up for photos and jumping in for dance lessons.

“We had people travelling from the UK, Australia and America to watch us play. One particular club called Janie Lax came from the US for one game with a couple of their young players.” The same club soon after raised over \$750 to contribute to the team’s school fees, thanks to a lemonade sale organised by a five-year-old girl.

At each practice match in the build-up, the squad received school equipment,



▲ Kenya’s U19 with Canada U19 (TWITTER/SCOTTARNOLD12)

lacrosse t-shirts and caps. Opposition players have since shown their support too. America’s goalkeeper has been in touch with Trentham to discuss sending lacrosse equipment. The family of one Canadian player has offered to sponsor all of the girls’ education, regardless of what year they are in or what arrears they owe. One of the Kenyan girls and Germany’s star player, Bella Herrera, were inseparable for much of the tournament after she marked the German out of the second half of their match. Herrera is now trying to fundraise for Kenya Lacrosse. Such is the effect of the Kenyan Queens, rivals quickly become supporters.

The Kenyan girls continued to be social media dynamite. “On our first day training at the facilities we were lucky enough to join Team Australia and be coached by Jen Adams”, Trentham said. “As we were finishing our session, Israel were heading to the practice pitch after us. They were screaming and chanting because they were like ‘oh my god we’ve been following you on Instagram for months and you’re all like celebrities,’” she laughed.

On Day 7 of the tournament, Israel became part of the sensation. A video of them giving each Kenya player cleats ahead of their match went viral and was quickly snapped up by ESPN and House of Highlights. Almost three million watched it.

“They [the Kenya team] got the love and support they deserved,” Trentham said. “I’m glad that everyone around the world had a tiny glimpse into how amazing these girls are on and off the pitch.”

And yet, as far as Trentham is concerned, nothing has changed.

Scroll down the replies to ESPN’s video and it does not take long to find sharp criticism of the Kenyan government, infamous for chronically failing its athletes. In ironic contrast to Israel’s gesture of goodwill, Kenya’s race walkers were never given any track shoes at the 2016 Olympics because, according to a government report following the Games, Kenyan officials ‘may have stolen them’.

“
I’m glad that everyone around the world had a tiny glimpse into how amazing these girls are on and off the pitch
”

Trentham tells me that she is friends with a few Kenyan track athletes and rugby players. “In the last three weeks alone, they’ve been banished from the national team for either publicly standing up for their rights, or because they’re the wrong tribe so the officials in that sport would not gain financially from their appearance money,” Trentham explained. “After the last *Varsity* article, I was actually contacted by a Kenyan saying I should be careful about what I say about the people of Kenya. I just replied, if they did what was right, I would not have to say a word. He’s never replied.”

These girls’ success is irrevocably

tainted by its very Billy-Elliott-ness. It is tainted by the altruism and the exceptional force of will it has depended upon from players, coaches and volunteers because – as Trentham was quick to acknowledge – this is untenable.

“One minute I’m on a high because all this is happening,” she said. “And the next I’m thinking it shouldn’t have to get to this and we can’t rely on these people donating the whole time. We are the only team that did not pay for a penny of our trip.

“As I’ve always said this is not sustainable and it’s up to Kenya now to really sort it out. The fact that we didn’t have one shilling donated by a Kenyan company or the Kenyan government is outrageous and embarrassing.”

Even during those heady days in Peterborough, the players’ daily tribulations were never far away. One of Trentham’s girls is an orphan who brings up her siblings.

“I could see this player was having a bad day and so I went to her room to have a chat,” Trentham said. “It transpired that it was the year anniversary of her mother’s death the very next day.

“She also didn’t know whether her contract as a cleaner at a hospital was going to be renewed. Her sister had to go to a dentist while she was away and she didn’t have the money to pay for that. Her uncle was demanding money from her salary and she’d promised her brother she would find the money to send him back to school if he did really

well in his exams. He had passed with flying colours yet she had no money to fulfil her promise.”

But something extraordinary happened next – something that never hit the Twittersverse.

Four days after arriving home, the same girl messaged Trentham with a photo of her outside her local orphanage. She was passing on some of the gifts she had received during the World Championships.

“She said she was making sure everyone in the community benefited from her experience in Canada,” Trentham said. “That just sums these girls up. Girls that don’t have much themselves giving things that they do have to others less fortunate.”

The team were met by press in Nairobi airport when they landed. The next day, they were on KTM, the country’s main news channel. Then it was back to the daily anxieties of school fees and job contracts.

This project was always something more than three weeks in Canada. “It’s just about being part of Kenya Lacrosse, being part of a team of players,” Trentham put it. “For some of them it’s really the only family they have.

Kenya’s final game against their famous donors, Israel, was powerful testament to that resolve. The girls had played for eight days straight and had only two subs left. They had already lost to Israel, and found themselves 1-6 down at halftime. But they hauled the game back to 10 goals apiece before conceding a heart-breaking winner. There was more to heroic efforts like this than new shoes.

The team’s fame has inevitably faded away into the social media ether. Stories like this are cheaper by the dozen in sport’s rapacious appetite for feel-good moments packaged up into 10-second clips.

But Kenya’s women have always been full of surprises. They will be back: maybe for the senior World Championships in 2021 and the World Games. Maybe for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics. And the joy eighteen young women brought to Peterborough will never be forgotten by anyone involved in this historic Championships.

“People were saying to me ‘thank you so much for opening our eyes to what this sport’s about and what life is really about,’” Trentham said. “Your Kenyan girls have really shown there’s a massive lesson to be learnt here for parents, coaches, players. That’s something the girls can be proud of.”