

VARSITY

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Presidential candidate under fire

- **Former Trinity College Students' Union committee unhappy with the leadership of ex-President and current CUSU candidate**
- **Documents revealed in which all 15 members of the committee set out their grievances**

Varsity News Team

A number of allegations have emerged calling into question Cornelius Roemer's leadership of the Trinity College Students' Union (TCSU). Roemer was the TCSU President between 2015 and 2016, ending his term on 29 January, and is currently running for the position of Cambridge University Students' Union President.

Documents seen by *Varsity* reveal a lack of confidence in Roemer's presidency among members of his committee. It has emerged that in Michaelmas Term the committee considered writing a letter questioning his continuing suitability for the role of President. At the point of composition, a document consisting of 15 individual statements from each of the committee's elected officials accused Roemer of an abrasive leadership style, alienating a number of officers and isolating the TCSU from senior college officials.

However, the committee later decided against moving forward

with this plan and the 15 individual statements were not compiled into an official letter. Screenshots seen exclusively by *Varsity* reveal that the committee decided to abandon the letter in a group thread on Facebook. One member commented, "I really don't think we should go ahead with this. Not because he's necessarily doing a better job than before (which I don't think he is), but because I dislike the alternative to him being pres." The writer continued: "I fully supported going ahead with concerted organised action asking him to step down, but in my opinion this window has long closed. Now all we would achieve is severely damaging our reputation and capacity as committee [...]". Another contributor wrote that "I believe Cornelius is doing better judging from the last committee meeting. Our role now is to keep advising him in order to keep it that way."

Others on the committee expressed reservations: "I find it slightly concerning that the people who were affected the most haven't said for it to stop... It's easy for people to forget when people feel attacked when time passes if their [sic] not directly affected."

Ultimately, however, it was concluded that "this chat room" is "redundant" and "any further discussion can be made in the committee group so that we can also include Cornelius."

The contents of this unsent document has now been revealed to *Varsity* through an anonymous source. Speaking on their motivations, the source told *Varsity*: "The position of CUSU President is an important one: a role in its very nature puts the office holder as the face of the University itself, and its student body. I am uncomfortable with the notion of 'leaking' information and I am very sorry it has come to this, but I think it is important that people are aware of what Cornelius was like as TCSU President. Many people have legitimate criticisms of the way they were treated by him during his time on the committee, and in some cases he made the roles which we took - not for pay, or personal gain - not only difficult but also caused unhappiness. I do not think it was right to allow him to run for CUSU President citing his time at the TCSU without people knowing what happened on his committee."

Continued on page 3



REVEALED:
St Edmund's
dodgy donor

SEE PAGE 4

INSIDE:

EU REFERENDUM CAMPAIGNS BEGIN, REGENI CASE DEVELOPMENTS, STUDENT ACQUITTED

And what do you *mean* by that?

As is wholly conventional at this time of year in Cambridge, the starting pistol was fired yesterday on one of the shortest (and probably dullest) races around.

For those of us who are now seeing the CUSU Presidential election for the *n*th time, the excitement really does begin to wear thin. Somehow it lacks the thrill of going to the polling station for the first time to vote in a general election, and this year's candidates don't even seem to be offering jam sandwiches to win our attention and/or votes. Boo, hiss.

Gimmicks aside, very little changes from year to year when it comes to the campaigns run by the prospective CUSU Presidents. Each will (though presumably not in the same words as their rivals) call for 'more engagement', 'more representation', 'more transparency', and maybe even 'more power'.

This is not to suggest that successive CUSU Presidents have failed to deliver material change – indeed, CUSU's constitution has been amended with surprising frequency in recent years in order to accommodate various changes. Instead, this is perhaps indicative of a certain lack of imagination among the candidates, and among the student body as a whole. Can we find nothing else to moan about? Is there really nothing else about the nature of our representation at a university level which we would rather seek to change?

Clearly not, it would seem; the idea that the candidates with the most fundamentally radical policy ideas (or at least as radical as CUSU ever gets) tend to fall by the wayside does not strike us as being particularly surprising.

This is, of course, a rather cynical view to take of the whole process, and it is one

which will not be shared by those among us who get fired up by, or even involved in, the various competing campaigns. If only the rest of us could break through our general indifference towards student politics without the assistance of edible stimuli...

What does all of this mean for the current elections? To use what surely now constitutes a Cambridge cliché when it comes to talking about CUSU, we are apathetic. Just as the word 'apathy' is horrendously overused at this particular juncture in the Cambridge year, so too are the words which we've already picked up on – 'engagement', 'representation', and 'transparency' – words which will, in all likelihood, feature in some capacity in the manifesto of the eventual victor.

Our apathy is, it seems, as much a reaction to the emptily platitudinous way in which such words are used, as it is to

their actual content. Everyone would like to see better student representation – the goal is wholly uncontroversial – but the problem is exactly that: *everyone* wants to see better student representation. When seeking election, populism of this sort is, to a certain extent, inevitable: what is an election but a form of popularity contest?

This does not, however, excuse mindless drivel. As the Labour Party found out at the last general election, high talk with little concrete planning behind it will not win over the average pragmatic voter. If candidates are going to use these words to describe their goals, they have to mean them, understand them (and their implications), and give a sense of how they could be achieved. Until a candidate can show us that such meaning resides in their words, forgive me if I don't endorse one of them – as if you care what I think anyway!

EDITORIAL

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Former committee show lack of faith in TCSU President

Continued from front page.

A number of contributors did, however, preface their remarks by recognising Roemer's commitment to the student body. One member wrote: "I appreciate your enthusiasm for and commitment to the TCSU." Another student commented: "I have a lot of respect for the effort you've put in, and I feel like you have achieved a lot during your presidency." In all, only four of the 15 statements did not include some explicit reference to positive aspects of Roemer's presidency. One member even indicated that while they were "worried" by "the amount of personal animus against you", "it is not something I feel myself."

However, the majority of the statements do indicate that it was an increasingly negative atmosphere within the TCSU which prompted the committee to act. One officer wrote that "overbearing" leadership had created "an environment [which] is untenable, and... something needs to be done to address these issues", while another member said the "[u]ndermining of officers during and outside of meetings has created a hostile work environment." Others claimed they had not directly experienced negative behaviour from Roemer, but were "very concerned by some of the things that have been told to us" as "[g]oodwill is very important to the smooth functioning of a committee."

Examples of the behaviour in question cited in the statements include not listening to committee members' opinions, threatening two officers with by-elections and

damaging the TCSU's relationship with senior college officials.

One officer described an instance where they sent "a long facebook [sic] message, which I'd put a lot of thought into, expressing just how misguided I thought your stance was [in handling a particular TCSU issue]. Rather than engaging with my arguments, you sent me a one line response, subsequently telling me that I shouldn't contact you on facebook [sic]". They cited this experience as "representative of a general inability to respect committee members and their opinions."

It was additionally suggested that "committee meetings have been inefficient as the President has not engaged or listened to the discussion at hand". One example of this described by two of the committee members occurred during a discussion of the consent workshops that were planned to take place during Trinity's Freshers' Week. "I was particularly frustrated by your insistence on connecting the consent workshops with the legal aspects of sexual assault. Given that the whole committee... disagreed with you on what was essentially a moral question, I thought it slightly appalling that you refused to acknowledge the fallibility of your own judgement", wrote one officer. Another agreed, describing how they took offence to "your suggestion of changing the sexual consent workshops to 'How to avoid jail'".

Furthermore, the statements suggest that at two separate points Roemer raised the possibility of removing committee members through by-

elections. The first complained that you "threaten[ed] to hold a by-election for my position - which you do not even have the right to do". The second alleges that they were threatened with a by-election when unable to attend a TCSU meeting due to a scheduled lecture. They summarised the response they received from Roemer as: "I'm sorry but that's not a valid excuse. If you don't go we can just as well do by-elections. If you're not committed, I'm sure others are. There are plenty of people who would want to do your job."

Beyond the atmosphere within the committee, a number of officers also cited Roemer's fraught relationship with college officials as a motivation for considering a formal letter. The former TCSU Secretary writes: "One of the major issues I have experienced is the confrontational way in which you approach the Liaison Committee meetings, which I believe is seriously damaging the relationship between TCSU and senior College staff". The Liaison Committee is a bi-termly meeting between the President, Vice-President and Secretary of the TCSU and senior members of Trinity College.

This is a concern apparently shared by the majority of committee members. One writes that "Being rude and pushy to senior members of the college is absolutely unacceptable". It was also observed that "Other members of college staff, such as the catering department, have expressed that they no longer wish to help the TCSU due to receiving rude

correspondence". This is corroborated by one officer's complaint that "I felt uncomfortable having been asked to treat caterers with an 'iron fist'".

Varsity reported last term that the TCSU faced controversy when disagreement broke out in college over a scheduled women's breakfast celebrating 40 years since women were first admitted to the college. At the time, the Women's Officer told *Varsity* that "I am confused and saddened at the aggressive responses [from within the college]."

Varsity can confirm, however, that the documents questioning Roemer's presidency had been composed prior to this event. Speaking to *Varsity*, the then Women's Officer has said that while "[t]hese events happened after the letter was written... [his handling of the events] furthered my lack of confidence in Cornelius."

She continued: "I find it uncomfortable that Cornelius may be in a position of representing an entire university when I was completely misrepresented by him to the college and to the press after a celebration of 40 years of women being admitted into college, an event organised by the heads of college, which Cornelius was not involved in (because of my more relevant role and better rapport with the organisers)."

The statements seen by *Varsity* therefore reveal discontent in the TCSU committee prior to the disagreement arising from the planned women's breakfast. It was compiled by all members of the committee except Roemer, who did

not in the end receive a letter.

When approached by *Varsity* about why a formal letter was not compiled, the former Access Officer gave the following statement: "In my opinion, no further action was taken because it was generally agreed that it would cause a lot of disruption to the function of the TCSU. As Access Officer, I didn't want committee infighting to prevent me, or any other officer from doing the job we had been elected to do. The TCSU is there to serve the students of Trinity, and I felt that moving forward with the letter would have only caused more divisions, tension and made us less able to fulfil our responsibilities. However, as the letter shows, there were significant problems with Cornelius's management of the committee, which led to an extremely unpleasant working environment for several officers. I think our specific complaints about him as President of our JCR are relevant to the CUSU elections, particularly if he intends to cite his time as President of TCSU as experience in his campaign."

Roemer declined *Varsity's* request for comment. His campaign for the position of CUSU President began yesterday morning when the official CUSU campaigning period opened at 8am.

Manifestos for all candidates, as well as further information about elections and voting, have now been released.

Details can be found online through the elections section of CUSU's website.

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Revealed: St Edmund's dodgy donor

Documents seen by *Varsity* track a series of allegations against donor who funded College Tower

Louis Ashworth

Senior Investigations Editor

St Edmund's College Tower was funded by a donation from an organisation which was subsequently involved in multiple high-profile scandals, and from which the college is considering soliciting a new donation, *Varsity* can reveal.

Internal documents seen exclusively by *Varsity* show that the University of Cambridge conducted a review into the operations and history of Teikyo University and the Okinaga family who run it, and their involvement in a series of scandals in Japan and elsewhere from 1994 to 2010, involving political corruption, cash for university places, tax evasion, recruitment bribery, bugging and an alleged attempted cover-up of rape.

The college received a donation of £1.5 million in April 1991 from the late Dr Shoichi Okinaga, a sum described on St Edmund's website as a "magnificent benefaction." The money was used to build its College Tower, which was opened in 1993.

Okinaga was at the time President and Chief Executive of Teikyo University, a private university based in the Itabashi ward of Tokyo, Japan. Teikyo University has several educational projects overseas, including ones in Durham and Buckinghamshire.

The documents seen by *Varsity* state that that St Edmund's "would like to step up its cultivation of the Okinaga family and Teikyo University" and to "potentially seek a future donation."

St Edmund's Master, the Hon. Matthew Bullock, is expected to make a trip to Asia this April, visiting Japan, Hong Kong and Singapore. While in Tokyo, he will make a speech at Teikyo University to commemorate its 50th anniversary, which will be followed by another speech at a public health forum hosted by Teikyo.

In November 2015, Cambridge's Advisory Committee on Benefactions and External and Legal Affairs (ACBELA), chaired by Vice-Chancellor Leszek Borysiewicz, received a due diligence review from Richard Anthony, St Edmund's Bursar, reporting on multiple "issues of concern" regarding the Okinaga family.

The review notes several scandals involving the Teikyo University group. It reports that, in 2002, the Japanese education ministry carried out an inspection into the university's medical school, which discovered that the university had received 9.65 billion yen (£50.2 million) in donations from students "who eventually enrolled". £12.8 million of that figure came in the form of donations made before students were formally admitted. The practice of making pre-admissions donations is banned by the education ministry.

In 2002, Japanese Vice-Minister of Health, Kazuaki Miyaji, resigned over allegations that he had used his influence with Teikyo University Medical School on behalf of a constituent. The constituent, who was believed to be a relative of a backer of Miyaji, had a grandson who was about to take the entrance exam for the medical school. Associates of Okinaga were understood to have instructed Miyaji to give them the prospective students' exam number. Miyaji resigned over the allegations.

The due diligence review found that, in 1994, a professor at the affiliated Teikyo Loretto Heights University

in Denver filed a lawsuit accusing Okinaga and the school administrators of conspiring to "protect their own cash flow" by stopping students from being expelled. The lawsuit also claimed that administrators had attempted to "cover up" the participation of students in the attempted rape of a foreign exchange student from Russia. The documents also record that the lawsuit alleged that a "Teikyo registrar" had accepted a car from a student in exchange for altering the student's grades. The case was settled out of court.

“

IF WE DECIDE TO DISTANCE OURSELVES FROM DONATIONS BECAUSE OF FAMILY HISTORY, WE MIGHT AS WELL CLOSE THE COLLEGE

Other legal cases noted within the due diligence review include a lawsuit filed by former students of Marycrest International University in Iowa against Okinaga which alleged "civil conspiracy, negligent misrepresentation, deceptive trade practices, and breach of contract." The students claimed that Teikyo or its affiliates had collected "more than \$125 million in donations, suspected by some of amounting to bribes, from the parents of students."



The eponymous room

Other members of Okinaga's family are also thought to have engaged in illegal and ethically dubious behaviour. In 2003, Shoichi Okinaga's brother Yoshikazu Okinaga was given an 18-month prison sentence for a scandal involving university admissions, and also fined £180,338 by the Tokyo Tax Bureau. Okinaga's sister, Kimie Okinaga, was fined £515,251 in 2001 for concealing income which was alleged to have come from parents of students. At the time of the respective incidents, Yoshikazu and Kimie Okinaga were high-ranking members of Teikyo

Gakuen Educational Association (Teikyo-Gakuen), which manages all the Teikyo educational institutions, including Teikyo University.

Okinaga died in 2008, but his sons are both still closely linked to Teikyo. Yoshihito Okinaga is Chairman and President of Teikyo University and Trustee and Director of the Teikyo Foundation UK. Yoshihito's brother Shohachi Okinaga is Chairman of Teikyo-Gakuen.

In 2010, Yoshihito Okinaga was ordered to pay back £3 million in back taxes after he failed to declare £11.5 million inherited from his father, which had been held in Liechtenstein.

After the presentation of the due diligence report to the ACBELA and a discussion about it, the committee agreed that it saw no reason why St Edmund's should not "commence cultivation" of Teikyo University and the Okinaga family, but said that the matter "should be reviewed again once more was known."

At a meeting of the St Edmund's Development and Alumni Relations Committee (DARC) in November, held in the College Tower's Okinaga Room, it was noted that the Teikyo University Group had reportedly "signalled that they want a stronger relationship with the college and asked for details on the development plans."

Disputes were raised at the meeting, in which St Edmund's Combination Room President Brendan Mahon noted concern "about how the acts of bribery and corruption would look outwardly."

The college's master said that the allegations against Teikyo University Group were now "historic."

Dr Helen Mason, a St Edmund's fellow, noted that "academic standing and our own reputation is the most important thing," and expressed concern "over the implications of accepting money from the Okinaga family a second time."

It was mentioned that both Durham and Oxford have also received donations from the Okinaga family. In 1991, Shoichi Okinaga donated £4.5 million to Wadham College, Oxford, to support its Bowra Building. Wadham also has its own Okinaga Room in his honour. Okinaga also gave £7 million to a Durham-based overseas campus of Teikyo University.

Teikyo University has links with Harvard University, where the Teikyo-Harvard Program exists as a collaboration between the Harvard School of Public Health (HSPH) and the Department of Public Health at the Teikyo University School of Medicine.

In an interview with *The Times* following his donation to Wadham, referenced in the documents seen by *Varsity*, Okinaga said: "My position allows me to participate in the management of Oxford University...I also have the right to send two Japanese undergraduates a year to Oxford University". Anne Lonsdale, then Director of Oxford's External Relations Office, described Okinaga's claims as "emphatically not true."

A Cambridge university spokesman said on behalf of St Edmund's College: "The College has not yet approached either the Teikyo University or the Okinagas for new philanthropic support. Both are fully verified and approved by the University of Cambridge Advisory Committee on Benefactions and External Legal Affairs."

They said that any insinuation that St Edmund's admissions process could



have been influenced by a past donation was "wholly wrong."

In the ACBELA minutes received by the DARC, St Edmund's fellow Dr Eden Yin is reported as saying: "I think if Harvard, Oxford and Durham think it is good enough, we should not walk away from this opportunity."

The unconfirmed minutes for a DARC meeting in January show that Bullock noted that the intention was to provide the university and St Edmund's with "connections to Teikyo University, to further cement our bond."

“

COMFORTABLE THAT THE MONEY HAD BEEN REDEEMED BY THE NEW GENERATION

St Edmund's Bursar, Richard Anthony, noted that the ACBELA "were not concerned by the history of the Okinaga family", and that there was "nothing in recent family history that gave the committee concern."

This was challenged by Mahon, who raised concerns about the prospect of "accepting money from the Okinaga family", particularly with regards to "the reports of bribery in the admissions process."

Mason noted that the college was in "possible negotiations with a different generation" to the one implicated in the scandal.

Bullock said that a donation, if discussed, would not affect St Edmund's admissions processes. He said that it was "not an exchange of gifts", and that "no pupils would be admitted into the college based on any donations."

It was noted by Mason that "historically we had proposed admitting three PhD students a year" from Teikyo University, but that St Edmund's had "struggled to find three who could meet the entry criteria." It was noted that previous Teikyo students who had been admitted had a "very poor" grasp of the English language. Mason

said that the college had once paid for a student to take an extra-curricular language course. It was suggested that St Edmund's could swap fellows, Senior Members and Research Fellows with Teikyo University "rather than students."

College Dean Alban McCoy said that he initially "felt some reservations", but now "felt comfortable that the money had been redeemed by the new generation of the Okinaga family."

He said that "if we decide to distance ourselves from donations because of family history, we might as well close the college."

Anthony noted that "tax evasion is more frequently reported in Asia", a remark which was supported by Edward Hagger, Chair of St Edmund's Alumni Society.

The leaked minutes state that "the committee discussed that the Okinaga family money could be 'redeemed' by helping the college fulfill its development plan."

St Edmund's ongoing development plan, the first phase of which was reported in the due diligence report to cost £16 million, aims to expand the college to be able to support its student body, which has undergone "rapid growth" since 1990 – something which the report said had placed "considerable strain" on St Edmund's physical infrastructure.

Minutes from a meeting of St Edmund's college council on 25th January this year noted that the ACBELA "had considered the status of a potential donor and found it to be satisfactory", and that Combination Room representatives "continued to have reservations about historic allegations of financial irregularities relating to a deceased member of the potential donor's family". It was proposed by a council member that the college's ethics committee "might in due course be consulted."

St Edmund's DARC are scheduled to meet again today.

Sources within St Edmund's have indicated to *Varsity* that there will not be any discussion of Okinaga or Teikyo University at the upcoming college meeting.

PalSoc simulates Israeli checkpoint

Anna Menin

Deputy News Editor

Cambridge University Palestine Society (PalSoc) held a demonstration on Monday at the Sidgwick Site to mark the start of Israeli Apartheid Week.

The demonstration involved “recreat[ing] an Israeli military checkpoint with the aim of raising awareness of the current situation faced by the Palestinian people and Israel’s continued discriminatory and apartheid policies.”

Speaking to *Varsity*, Anna, President of PalSoc said: “It’s easy to forget that these kinds of issues are happening on a daily basis,” and that the intention behind the simulated checkpoint was to “shake people...out of their lethargy.”

“

PALSOC STANDS IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

Anna, who does not publicise her surname to preserve her anonymity for potential visa reasons, added: “I think that Cambridge is not a very politically-minded place,” as “people might lose track of what the world is

like outside of Cambridge.”

“To me, Palestine is the South Africa of our generation; it’s the thing that we’ll be able to rally around, and ask for justice,” she continued.

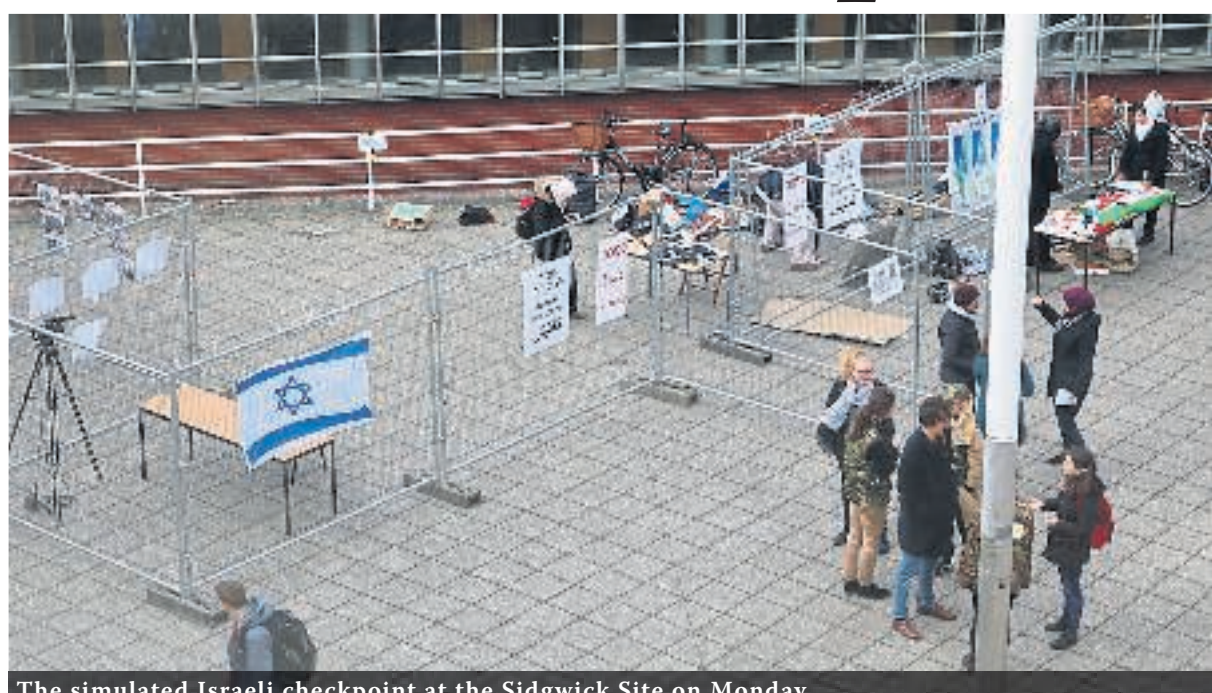
Varsity also spoke to Julia, another PalSoc member, who alleged: “people who are active against the government in peaceful protest get put into administrative detention quite frequently, and that’s detention without any kind of trial or charge laid against them, so they often don’t even know why they’ve been arrested in the first place.”

Julia also stated that she hoped that the protest would “help people to understand the emotional dimension of what it means to live in this kind of situation.”

In a statement released alongside the protest, PalSoc claimed: “The word apartheid best describes the situation on the ground when referring to the systematic discrimination against the Palestinian people and Israel’s ongoing efforts to privilege one ethno-religious group over another.”

It also stated: “PalSoc stands in solidarity with the Palestinian people and their struggle, and in doing so, we answer the call of Palestinian civil society to engage in a non-violent campaign of Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions until Israel complies with its obligations under international law.”

According to its website, Israeli Apartheid Week “aims to raise awareness about Israel’s ongoing settler-colonial project and apartheid policies over the Palestinian people.”



The simulated Israeli checkpoint at the Sidgwick Site on Monday

Last week, PalSoc boycotted Middle East Peace Week, which was organised by the Israel Society, the Persian Society, the Kurdish Society, Calais Refugee Action Group, and One Voice, with the intention of creating a dialogue between societies that “all strive for one goal – a better Middle East.”

However, PalSoc questioned the timing of Middle East Peace Week, alleging that it was intended to

overshadow Israeli Apartheid Week.

Assumed to be in response to PalSoc’s protest, the Israel Society claimed in a Facebook post sharing the last Middle East Peace Week event that it was “opting for meaningful discussion and conducive dialogue rather than inaccurate amateur dramatics, as others have sadly opted for today.”

Speaking to *Varsity*, Joel Collick, Co-President of the Israel Society, stated: “It’s a shame that PalSoc chose

not to partake in the cross-society initiative, Middle East Peace Week, but instead opted for inaccurate amateur dramatics.”

He added: “sadly, this is indicative of their longer-term approach of refusal to engage in dialogue and for the sake of performing inappropriate public displays, as seen last term in their decision to protest against Yiftah Curiel’s attendance at the Cambridge Union.” *Additional reporting by Clara van Wel.*

Cambridge undergrad acquitted of rape

Joe Robinson

Senior News Editor

A Cambridge undergraduate was acquitted of a rape charge on Wednesday

day after the jury took more than nine hours to reach a verdict.

21-year-old Prithvi Sridhar, who studied engineering for two years at Queens’ College before intermitting last year, had been accused of raping

another student in her room.

The prosecution had claimed that Sridhar met the complainant on a night out in 2014 and that, after accompanying her back home in a taxi, he had taken off her clothes and had

sex with her without her consent.

Providing evidence via video-link, the complainant recounted that she remembered “being in a group” and that “a lot of people were dancing together”. She added: “When we got back I said goodbye. But he said no, I’m coming with you.”

The complainant alleged that, once upstairs, Sridhar began kissing her, leaving a number of love bites on her neck, and proceeded to rape her.

Earlier in the week, a number of individuals connected to Sridhar testified to his good character.

His godfather, 48-year-old Sian Gopinath, said: “Nothing has ever caused me concern in regards to his interaction with women. He went to the same school as my daughter.”

“

HE CAN NOW GET BACK ON TRACK

One of his friends described how she had been sexually assaulted in 2014, an event to which Sridhar was the only witness, and which reportedly left him “completely shocked”.

She added: “He knew it was wrong and understood how I felt. This made me think he had a good moral compass.”

Speaking after the acquittal was handed down, Sridhar’s father said: “We are all extremely relieved and we are very happy. His life could have been ruined by this allegation but we’re glad

he can now get back on track.”

A statement released by the family stated: “Prithvi Sridhar and his family are grateful today for the jury’s verdict clearing his name of these false allegations.”

It added: “Prithvi would like to thank the jury for their careful consideration of the evidence and fair deliberation in this trial; his family and friends who have supported him throughout these difficult times; Queens’ College who have supported him throughout the proceedings and his defence team from MPR Solicitors and Joe Stone QC.”

The family told *Cambridge News* that Sridhar was looking forward to returning to Queens’ College and completing his degree.

Following Sridhar’s acquittal, the Senior Tutor of Queens’ College sent an email to college members, informing them that: “Mr Prithvi Sridhar has been found not guilty by the court following his trial for a serious sexual offence.”

“He is not resident in College and he will not [be] studying at Cambridge this academical year. For legal reasons, it is not appropriate for the College to comment on the trial.”

“The College takes the welfare of its students very seriously and we encourage you to contact the Student Support Team or your Graduate Tutor if you have any concerns about this, or any related matters.”

“Please be aware that comment about Mr Sridhar...may risk defamation. Please also note that persons who are alleged to be victims of sexual offences are legally entitled to lifelong anonymity.”

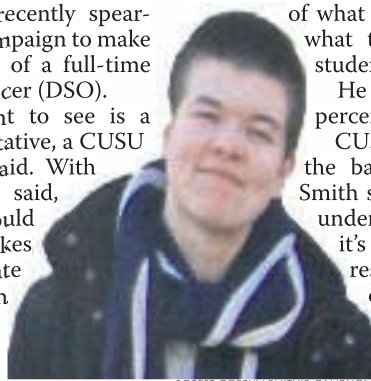
CUSU Elections: Meet the candidates

With elections kicking off this week, *Varsity* spoke to the five people who think they have what it takes to become CUSU President. Voting will run from 1st–3rd March. Louis Ashworth & Anna Menin report.

Robert Corbyn-Smith

Robert Corbyn-Smith is a third-year studying history and philosophy of science at Homerton. He is one of the officers of the Disabled Students' Campaign (DSC), which recently spearheaded a successful campaign to make CUSU create the role of a full-time Disabled Students' Officer (DSO).

"What I really want to see is a CUSU that is representative, a CUSU that is effective," he said. With him as president, he said, the students' union would be "one that actually takes account of graduate needs and works with the Graduate Union, and that collaborates much more closely



with the autonomous campaigns".

A key part of his efforts will be looking for "increased funding" to allow CUSU to "really get to the heart of what students want and what they need from a students' union".

He criticised what he perceived as inertia.

CUSU is "often is on the back foot," Corbyn-Smith said, adding: "that's understandable because it's seriously under-resourced and everyone there is really overworked, but it's not functioning properly; it's a

bit broken".

"It's not being relevant to students and it's not hearing what they say."

CUSU Council is an area where Corbyn-Smith wishes to see changes. He said about the current system: "we spend a lot of time quibbling over punctuation or debating specific words, and it's really unproductive." He suggested that an online platform for constructing policy could be helpful.

Corbyn-Smith cited his lengthy experience with CUSU – which included working as Transport & Safety Officer in the now-defunct Welfare Part-Time Executive.

"I've been involved in CUSU since my first year...I think I know it really well, but at the same time I'm not

afraid to criticise it."

Varsity asked him about the recent DSO referendum.

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I'M NOT AFRAID TO
MAKE CHANGES

"We smashed it," he said.

"My term [in the DSC] is now coming to an end," he said, "and my biggest achievement there was the referendum...that taught me a lot about how to reach students and not being afraid

to do something".

"I'm not afraid to make changes...to go out there and put everything into it anyway."

The role of the autonomous campaigns is very close to his heart.

"I want to see much greater collaboration. Autonomous campaigns don't feel like a part of CUSU in a lot of ways, and I feel like it's time they were brought in and that their concerns are listened to."

"I want to see things changed," he said. "Practical things improved, and the structures improved."

Ultimately, he summed up his drive to re-engage the student population.

"CUSU is supposed to be a students' union for us."

Amatey Doku

Amatey Doku is a sociology finalist, and was Jesus's student union President until the end of last term. Last week, he was mentioned in a *Varsity* article which was picked up in the *Guardian*, regarding Jesus College Students' Union's vote to repatriate Jesus College's Benin Bronze cockerel to Nigeria.

His campaign seeks to bring CUSU closer to the students it is designed to represent, while seeking to maintain the power of JCRs and MCRs, which he sees as the "number one port of call" for students.

"Fundamentally," he told *Varsity*, "my vision is for a CUSU that is in touch with students a lot more, but that supports JCRs...JCRs are the most important thing for students if there are issues with the college or with the university."

Asked what the role of the students' union would be if more power were handed to JCRs, he said: "for me, I see the role of CUSU on the one hand as getting on with representatives at the top levels" – getting into committees and facilitating negotiations.

"In relation to JCRs, it's about say-

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CUSU HAS A LOT OF
CHALLENGES

ing 'we are completely at your disposal'; JCRs need to feel like they have complete support from the top."

"I also recognise," he added, "the

fact that every college has different issues, and that's also something that needs to be taken into account...that is fundamentally the vision behind this campaign".

Varsity asked him if this process of devolution would mean he would lead a less political CUSU.

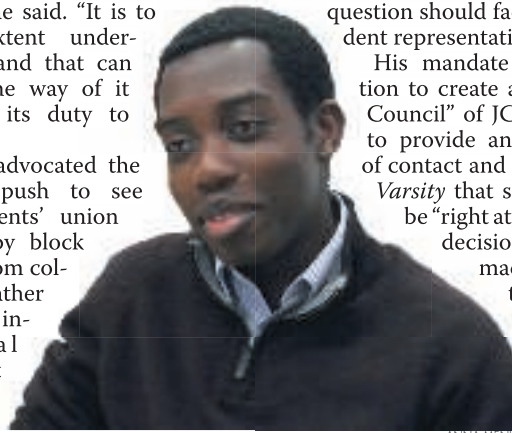
"If it's in the best interests of students to speak out," he said, citing the scrapping of maintenance grants as an example, "then we'll do that, whether it's political or not." He described supporting the continued political work of the autonomous campaigns as "important", and said that they should be "given the freedom to continue doing what they're doing".

He defended CUSU's role as a political body, saying any issue with which students have a problem "needs to be tackled".

Despite the support he showed for some elements of current CUSU practice, he also flagged up several issues which he perceived.

"CUSU has a lot of challenges," he said. "It is to some extent underfunded, and that can get in the way of it fulfilling its duty to students".

Doku advocated the current push to see the students' union funded by block grants from colleges, rather than by individual student contributions.



"I do think that CUSU being left to the markets in this kind of way is problematic," he said, "especially if more colleges go: 'well, are we getting value for money? I don't think that question should factor at all into student representation'."

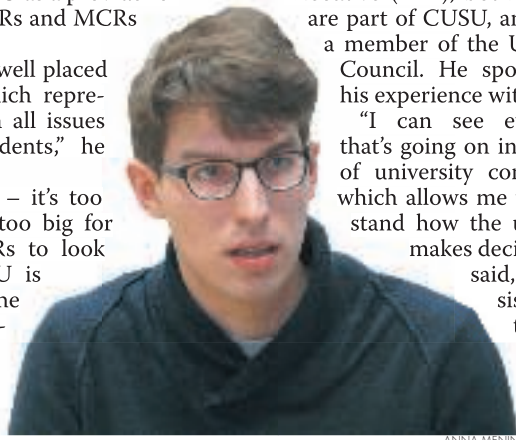
His mandate states his intention to create a "Vice-President's Council" of JCR representatives, to provide an immediate point of contact and oversight. He told *Varsity* that such a body would be "right at the heart of CUSU decision making". He also made a commitment to "meet every JCR president every term".

Cornelius Roemer

Cornelius Roemer is a fourth-year physicist, who last month ended his tenure as Trinity College Students' Union's (TCSU) President. He is a prominent voice at CUSU council, and is involved with several committees. He envisions CUSU as a provider of services which JCRs and MCRs cannot.

"CUSU is very well placed to be a body which represents students on all issues which affect students," he told *Varsity*.

"Look at sport – it's too big for colleges, too big for facilities and JCRs to look at...I think CUSU is best placed to do the broad representation of students". He drove home his emphasis on sport further:



"In a way there's no overall representative for something like sports – there's no one who looks at the overall student views".

Roemer currently sits on the Union Development Team and Part-time Executive (PTE), both of which are part of CUSU, and in also a member of the University Council. He spoke about his experience with them.

"I can see everything that's going on in all kinds of university committees, which allows me to understand how the university makes decisions," he said, emphasising that this gave him a breadth of under-

standing outside of "one niche". He expressed frustration with the limitation of his current involvement, however, saying that on the PTE he didn't "have any actual power to make change".

When asked whether his current positions would limit his willingness to effect change, he said his presidency would be "a little bit like a revolution". "I'm very inclined to change things," he said, adding that "there is a lot of potential for improvement".

"I think CUSU is a big bureaucracy with a limited output, and that definitely needs to change."

Varsity questioned Roemer on his involvement with the recent referendum to create a Disabled Students' Officer (DSO), which resulted in a landslide vote in favour. Roemer, though he did not formally declare for either side of the campaign, was one of the few people to publically speak out in any way advocating the 'No' side

of the referendum. When asked about this, Roemer was ambivalent.

"I don't think I was a 'No' person," he said.

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A LITTLE BIT LIKE A
REVOLUTION

He spoke about his role within the Union Development Team, who are currently working on the constitutional changes needed to create the role of DSO.

"I'm trying to make sure the Disabled Students' Officer will be implemented...there are surprising constitutional problems arising for trying to do this."

Varsity asked him whether his focus on detail and practical issues would mean that he would hesitate from participating in CUSU's traditional political efforts.

"People feel like CUSU is representing opinions which are not theirs. They don't feel represented," he said. "Being more practically orientated, trying to find solutions to problems, helps, and is what CUSU needs."

"I see myself as more of an apolitical leader."

He mentioned frustration with what he perceived as slow-footedness on the part of CUSU during the debate over Cambridge County Council's proposed street-light switch off which emerged at the end of last year, when TCSU launched a petition.

"When the streetlights issue came up, it was clear that there was a broad consensus, yet CUSU for some reason seemed to have missed the train."

Angus Satow

Angus Satow is a second-year language student, and Vice-President of Magdalene College's JCR. He is perhaps best known for his involvement with Cambridge Zero Carbon, at which he is the Campaigns Officer. His campaign focuses upon liberation and welfare, but is also unapologetically political.

"My vision is many-fold," he told *Varsity*, "It's one which puts student experiences first."

He spoke about his drive for popular engagement, saying: "the idea is that we prioritise students well-being rather than their work".

Satow highlighted problems with the university's Counselling Service. He described waiting times as "atrocious", and said one person he spoke to had to wait "over half a term to get from first contact to an actual appointment".

"That is not good enough," he said.

Satow's campaign is policy-focused, and in many aspects more radical than that of the other contenders.

He spoke about a drive towards "making the curricula less pale, male and stale", and pushing on issues such as "divestment and higher education" nationally. He also mentioned "issues such as decolonising and removing the dominance of masculinity," saying that "these are things that only a push from CUSU and dedicated, full-time sabbatical officers can achieve."

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IT'S GOOD THAT PEOPLE
STAND UP TO AUTHORITY

"A CUSU that engages is definitely my ambition," he said.

Previously its Green & Ethical officer, Satow's Vice-Presidential profile on Magdalene JCR's site states that he will be "campaigning on environmental issues elsewhere".

He was involved in a protest last year, reported by *Varsity*, which involved hanging banners demanding university divestment from Clare bridge. As a result, he was deaned by Magdalene, and fined by Clare. *Varsity* asked him whether this incident cause trouble with the university in the future.

"I'm standing on these policies," he said. "I'm not standing on my name or my personality."

"It's good that people stand up to authority," he said, "and it's good that we fight strongly for the future which we want to see".

"Standing on a bridge for half an hour was hardly the most radical thing that anyone's ever done."

Satow said he believed the university would recognise his mandate.

"I don't worry too much about whether I'm someone they think they can do business with...they will do business with me."

Beyond his political goals, he sees CUSU as best suited for

"continuity" to college unions.

"I definitely think CUSU can be a lot better in working with JCRs and MCRs," he said. As part of this, he seeks to develop CUSU's online presence.

"Often people come into new roles and ask the same questions as the person before," he said, going on to advocate the role CUSU could play in helping committees handover.

Among other policies, he advocates the provision of prayer rooms at every faculty, and for an expansion of the university's harassment policy.

"A lot of Cambridge needs to

change," he said. He spoke about the experience of BME students, and said that Cambridge "is not necessarily a welcoming place after entry".

Satow, who was highly optimistic about his election prospects, nonetheless acknowledged that an overtly political platform might not appeal to all voters.

"You have to recognise that you can't represent everyone all of the time," he said, adding: "There will be some that disagree, and that's fair enough – I can't be all things to all people"

"If we all get engaged, and people give me a mandate, then there's a lot that can be changed."



TOM FREEMAN

John Sime

John Sime is a Maths finalist at Emmanuel. He has never held any position on a JCR, although he ran unsuccessfully for the position of Emmanuel College Students' Union President last year.

He told *Varsity* that his campaign aims to provide "what I believe the majority of the students actually want", which, he claims, is "putting more value on freedom of speech, particularly with respect to no-platforming".

"Who wouldn't want to listen to a talk by Germaine Greer, or Tim Hunt, or Nigel Farage, even if it's just to challenge their views?", he added.

He cited the example of what he alleged was CUSU's safe space policy being "misused to avoid answering a question" at the second CUSU Council meeting of this term.

Varsity asked whether he thought his lack of experience on any JCR or MCR might hurt him in the election.

"I think it will be used against me, for sure," he said.

However, he claimed that "for the past few years we've essentially had the same people being president, being elected, and really nothing has changed".

"People should perhaps vote for the non-establishment candidate if they want to see that change," he added.

"Certainly, something I am bringing is an alternative to people to choose from, rather than the same old, same old. I think diversity of choice is a very important thing."

Asked by *Varsity* about CUSU's autonomous campaigns, he claimed that the recent "drug ring scandal" concerning the WomCam's Facebook group "highlighted a fundamental problem" with CUSU's interaction with the campaigns.

He added that "because these campaigns are free to do as they wish

by nature of their being autonomous, they also hold the CUSU name, so when they act irresponsibly, CUSU gets all the blame for it even though they had nothing to do with what was going on".

He argued that "the only logical solution" to this is "having the campaigns either choosing to be autonomous, and having the benefits that are associated to that, or hold the CUSU name and being affiliated".

However, he denied that he would consider disaffiliating autonomous campaigns if they no-platformed

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SOMETHING I AM BRINGING IS
AN ALTERNATIVE FOR PEOPLE
TO CHOOSE FROM

speakers, stating: "If somebody is successfully no-platformed, I would hold an alternative venue for these speakers to do their event, in the original format of the original event."

He said that his approach is to "make no-platforming irrelevant" by providing "an alternative venue" when no-platforming occurs.

He spoke about how he wants "CUSU to become more engaged with the general populous at Cambridge".

"I would make a step in that direction," he added. "What I'm proposing is end-of-term music concerts."

He claimed that there was a need

for more "inter-college mingling", and that: "I believe there is a role for CUSU in that aspect."

Asked by *Varsity* about whether CUSU should take a political stance on issues, John claimed: "The role of CUSU president isn't to be a dictator...I'm not going to mandate that certain things should be done or not done."

However, he added: "My personal stance on that sort of issue is [that] I'm

very against classism, and so I'm very for greater access opportunities."

"I think CUSU does a fairly good job with access...I wouldn't suggest any radical change to that," he continued.

Asked then about whether he believed classism is a big problem in Cambridge, Sime replied: "Not compared to The Other Place. My experience is that we have a good proportion of state school-educated students, considering it's Cambridge, right? You

would expect in the model that we have that you'd have a disproportionate number of people coming from public schools, but I think we do fairly well on that."

"Generally speaking, I think radical change should be reserved for times when it's sorely needed, which is why I'm running to address the problem that I stated – because it is sorely needed...with access, a radical change could do more harm than good."

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Cambridge VC: Brexit would 'undermine UK's position'

Harry Curtis

Deputy News Editor

Cambridge's Vice-Chancellor Professor Sir Leszek Borysiewicz has signed a letter saying that Brexit will "undermine the UK's position as a global leader in science and the arts".

He was among 103 signatories of a letter published in last week's *Sunday Times* as Vice-Chancellors of many of the UK's universities waded into the debate over the UK's future relationship with Europe. The letter contends that "Brexit will cost universities valuable education alliances", and echoes many of the arguments that Cambridge for Europe Students are putting forward. In it, university leaders say that membership of the EU means British universities "are better able to collaborate with partners across Europe to carry out cutting-edge research, from medical and healthcare advances to new materials, products and services."

They also argue that EU membership makes the UK "a more attractive destination for global talent" and that a British withdrawal from the EU would "mean cutting [UK universities] off from established networks." The letter allies universities with ministers whose portfolios encompass higher education in the upcoming fight for the UK to remain inside the EU.

Universities minister Jo Johnson and Business Secretary Sajid Javid will both be campaigning for the country to retain its membership.

The plea was also co-signed by Dame Julia Goodfellow, President of Universities UK, who are leading the pro-EU Universities for Europe

campaign, who calculate that students from other EU nations are worth £2.27 billion to the UK economy and support 19,000 British jobs.

The EU's Erasmus student exchange programme is also invoked by the Universities for Europe campaign, who claim that "students who did an Erasmus placement have been shown to be 50 per cent less likely to experience long-term unemployment."

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**BREXIT WILL COST
UNIVERSITIES VALUABLE
EDUCATION ALLIANCES**

They also stress the EU's importance for academic research, calculating that 15 per cent of academic staff at British universities are from other EU nations and "research with international collaborators has nearly 50 per cent more impact than research done at a national level." Borysiewicz has cautioned against leaving the EU in the past. At an event at Downing College in 2015, the Vice-Chancellor summarised his stance on the issue, saying "I'd rather we stay in the boat, trying to shape and to lead research policy in Europe, than to stay on the side-lines picking up scraps."

The EU Commission's Horizon 2020 programme, which provides funding for research and innovation, was cited as part of a framework that enables institutions to tackle "global problems". According to Borysiewicz, 17 per cent

of the university's research income in the year prior to the event at Downing College – a sum of £68 million – had come from Horizon 2020.

He has also previously stressed the collaboration that the EU facilitates, giving the example of the InnoLife Knowledge and Innovation Community, a €2.1 billion project that focuses on the impact of ageing populations and which includes 144 companies, research institutions, and universities including Cambridge. Borysiewicz claims that the scale of that project is "exactly what is needed if we are to overcome society's grand challenges. Put simply, we cannot access the talent, develop the infrastructure or provide the funding at a national level."

Elsewhere on Monday, students campaigning for the UK to remain a member of the European Union launched Cambridge for Europe Students, billed by founding member Davide Martino as "the student movement supporting the local IN campaign. I was particularly happy to see such a diverse crowd, in terms of age, geographical provenance within and without the UK, gender, ethnicity," he went on, saying it was "reassuring" that they didn't just appeal to the "older and more predominantly male demographics" that he claims tends to be the case for anti-EU campaigns.

The event in King's College Bar came after David Cameron's announcement that Britain will vote on whether or not it will continue to be a member of the EU in a referendum on 23rd June. Expounding on the campaign's arguments, Martino said that "we, as students, benefit from the EU



Pro-EU students launched their campaign on Monday

every day. About 12 per cent of uni research funding comes directly from the EU, with additional money being poured into Jean Monnet Chairs, Erasmus Exchange Programs and the like." He also extolled the EU's freedom of movement provisions, which allow Cambridge "to attract the very best brains around" and its role in facilitating "academic cooperation across boundaries."

The launch of the campaign also opens up the prospect of an ongoing public debate among students on both sides of the referendum issue, Cambridge for Europe Students saying they are already organising public debates against the Eurosceptic student movement in Cambridge. In a statement to *Varsity*, students campaigning under the banner of the Cambridge Brexit Campaign have already accused

the Remain campaign of presenting an "overarching false narrative" and said they "look forward to engaging with them in a debate."

The campaign say they want "to present a diverse but united Eurosceptic voice" and have hosted talks by Kelvin Hopkins and Douglas Carswell, MPs from the Labour Party and UKIP respectively.

They went on to lay out their argument for Brexit, saying: "As the world's fifth largest economy, speakers of the world's language, and key NATO member with extensive diplomatic links all over the world, home to world-class universities and international cities, Britain is easily capable of surviving outside of the overbearingly bureaucratic, aggressively expansionist and fundamentally undemocratic European Union."

Highly academic schools don't guarantee Oxbridge offers, according to new advice

Kaya Wong

Senior News Correspondent

The *Independent School Entrance Guide*, recently published by the Parent Brief, has advised parents against sending their children to highly academic schools, as competing against their equally smart classmates could hinder their child's chances of getting into either Oxford or Cambridge.

Allegedly, due to admissions quotas at different colleges that prevent a college from accepting too many students from the same secondary school, it is advised that parents should look into schools that suit their child's academic ability, instead of aiming for the most

academically rigorous.

"The schools on the top of the league tables have selected their cohort as potential Oxbridge candidates all along. In some schools, the majority apply to Oxbridge and each applicant will have the marks and the ability to succeed there. But there are limits to the numbers that can reasonably be taken from any single school," wrote Victoria Barker, editor of the Parent Brief.

Aside from the practical concerns regarding whether the school from which you apply will affect your chances of admission to Oxbridge, Barker also pointed out that the academic pressure at highly selective schools could be detrimental to the mental health of students, proving counter-productive to their learning.

"A highly selective school will know that it can do little to improve its Oxbridge numbers, so it may provide less help to its Oxbridge applicants than the schools eager to improve their Oxbridge numbers. Indeed, knowing that each Oxbridge college will likely take only one child from the school in a given field, the school may be reluctant to support too many applications."

She added: "When it comes to university admissions, the pupils of the most selective schools are competing against each other for entry to the top universities – and this can be an unpleasant experience for a child who is not as accomplished as their friends."

Despite the fact that the Head of Admissions at the University of Oxford had previously stated that an applicant from a low-performing school or disadvantaged home would "more likely be shortlisted for an interview", a spokesperson from the university has denied the existence of a quota system. He said: "Colleges do not operate a quota system by school. Every application to Oxford is assessed individually on academic ability and potential alone." However, Clarissa Farr, High Mistress of St Paul's Girls' School, said: "Schools will advise their students individually and spread candidates across the colleges – this needn't disadvantage anyone as there is a range of possibilities."

Alice Phillips, Headmistress of St Catherine's, Bramley, also said that the school assists Oxbridge applicants in

choosing colleges to maximise chances of admission.

She said: "We encourage girls to talk openly with their tutors about their long list of colleges and to know that if they were to choose the same college as another person from the school it just might have an impact, and the more so if the subject was the same, but we do not advise hedging bets in order to get in in the first place."

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**IN THE VERY SELECTIVE
SCHOOLS, EVERYONE IS
SUPER BRIGHT**

"We have occasionally advised those who have no preference to put in an open application but that is very rare."

Speaking to *Varsity*, an undergraduate who studied at Brighton College, which was ranked as the fifth-best independent school in the UK last year for A-Level results, said that the school was strategic in sending applicants.

"The number of Oxbridge offers is such an important number for them. They try to maintain the image of being the school for Oxbridge applicants. They didn't force you to apply, of course, but they'd say, you have five UCAS choices, put an Oxbridge college in there somewhere!"

"They would mark down who's

applying for what and to which college, and if there were clashes, they'd tell you," he said.

"More like they'd tell the ones who are less likely to get in [to change their choice of college]!" his friend added, also an undergraduate reading Natural Sciences who had previously studied at Brighton College. Regarding the school's preparation for Oxbridge applications, he said: "If you were an Oxbridge applicant, you handed in your personal statement earlier. They would read it, screen the material you'd written, and basically polish it for you."

"If they felt you had a higher chance of getting in, they'd give you more support in writing it. Mock interviews and interview preparation was so intense. For people that have a chance of getting in, [the school] makes sure they get in. At the end of Year 12, the ones who were better academically had to attend some kind of Oxbridge class each week."

"You didn't have to go, but there was [a class] for every subject. Basically, they made you do as much work and learn as much as possible."

Nicholas Oulton, who is the Managing Director at Gresham Books, of which the Parent Brief is a subsidiary, said: "In the very selective schools, everyone is super bright, they can't all get into Oxford and Cambridge and therefore there is a feeling that if you're at that school, there must be some degree to which the school has to prioritise top star pupils."

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Experts puzzled over motives for Giulio Regeni murder

Daniel Gayne

Senior News Correspondent

Experts remain perplexed as to the motives behind the death of Cambridge PhD student Giulio Regeni, as the Egyptian investigation refuses to look into accusations of security service complicity.

While many in the Egyptian and Italian media have insinuated foul play on behalf of the Egyptian security services, the Egyptian government has emphatically rejected these claims, suggesting criminal motives may have been at play.

For experts who study human rights in Egypt, Regeni's injuries bear the hallmarks of an extrajudicial killing at the hands of the security services.

But this case is puzzling because it is the first time the victim was a foreign academic. Usually, one could expect the state to harass or deport such an individual, but the foreign passport should have protected him physically.

Rumours have surfaced in the Italian media suggesting that Regeni may have been gathering information for the Italian intelligence agency, with journalists citing the historical ties between universities and intelligence, as well as Regeni's brief time at British-American security consultancy Oxford Analytica.

But while this might explain extraordinary action by the Egyptian state, the Regeni family have called such suggestions offensive to his memory.

An explanation suggested by Marina

Calculi, a Fulbright scholar at the George Washington University who has worked in the region, is that it was simply an irredeemable mistake.

"The case of Giulio is strange because he was [apparently] in detention for days," Calculi said. "It could be that somehow he was taken and detained and tortured in this kind of anti-foreigner, anti-researcher hysteria and perhaps they crossed a line and could not come back."

"You cannot just release a foreigner that has been tortured, because you are exposing to the world what you are doing inside your prisons."

Speaking to Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera*, the Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry dismissed the idea, calling the suggestions of complicity merely "judgments, accusations and insinuations, unjustified and without proof."

Instead, the investigation is largely being focused on Regeni's close friends and contacts, with the security forces mainly questioning these people, in at least one case without a lawyer.

The Interior Ministry has said that their investigation pointed towards several possibilities, including murder as an act of revenge, or other criminal motives, noting: "the Italian had many relationships with people near where he lives and where he studied."

Though the nature and violence of Regeni's injuries seem to make personal disagreement an unlikely cause, there is little chance of the security services, who are themselves tasked with drawing up a list of suspects, investigating one of their own.

Safe spaces and no-platforming products of 'snowflake generation' says Whitehall adviser

Siyang Wei

Senior News Correspondent

Tom Bennett, a school behaviour expert hired by the Department of Education to improve behavioural standards in UK schools, has criticised "classroom intolerance" which he believes has led to the rise of a "snowflake generation".

Speaking at a conference on free speech, he said that debates on "controversial" topics such as atheism and abortion should be had in the classroom rather than being banned simply because they are offensive.

He said: "We need to help children develop to become more robust to understand ideas that are contrary to their own by role modelling."

"Sometimes we have children saying some extreme views. Children from very religious backgrounds saying things like homosexuals should be put in prison."

"That's as extreme a view as you could get in a liberal democracy. Rather than just saying you're not allowed to say that in the classroom, [I would] ask what other people think, why do they think it's wrong and so on."

He added that this is something currently lacking in primary and secondary education, in his view lending policies such as "no-platforming" and "safe spaces" greater popularity.

"Help them go to university and encourage children not to be scared that other people will disagree with them."

"[With] generation snowflake, sometimes, there is an element of truth that children are a little bit inoculated perhaps against the harsher realities of the world. And then when they go to university they might then encounter a truth that may overwhelm them."

"No wonder why they are seeking safe spaces, because they can't handle that truth."

“

HELP CHILDREN DEVELOP TO BECOME MORE ROBUST

No-platforming and safe spaces have become popular subject matters not just on university campuses in general, but at the University of Cambridge in particular.

Last year, CUSU LGBT+ and the Women's Campaign opposed the invitation of Germaine Greer to speak at the Union, in line with many similar protests at other universities.

In October, disagreement with the Union's invitation to Julian Assange led to a referendum over whether he should be allowed to speak.

However, speaking to *Varsity*, CUSU's Women's Officer Charlotte Chorley disagreed with the framing of policies such as no-platforming as an inhibition to free speech.

She said: "It is disingenuous to view no-platforming as a lack of engagement, or to frame it as the

hypersensitivity of those who want to be sheltered from reality.

"No-platforming is, actually, an incredibly visceral engagement with reality."

"We live in a society where we are expected to listen to everything as if hearing such things, or arguing them, will somehow prove to us what we knew all along: that discrimination, hate and oppression run vividly throughout our daily lives."

"No-platforming is only ever invoked against those who already have the privilege of platforms; those speakers will still be able to receive airtime, attend events, and continue espousing their views."

"It is not an act of silencing, but rather a statement by those who do not receive that same privilege."



Assange's Union invitation caused controversy



**Artwork by
Jake Howlett**

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough
   **Road Safety
Partnership**

**The College
of West Anglia** 

News in Brief

18-METRE LETTER

Addie's junior docs hand letter to government

An 18-metre-long letter written by Dr Katy Shorttle, a trainee GP at Addenbrooke's Hospital in Cambridge, was signed by more than 3,500 junior doctors during a march in London on 6th February. It was delivered to the Department of Health on Wednesday in protest at the new junior doctors' contracts set to be imposed this summer.

CINDIES BRAWL

Man attacked while phoning police at Cindies

A man told Cambridge Crown Court that he was hit in the back of the head with a weapon while he was on the phone trying to contact the police to deal with a brawl in the city centre.

Nawaf Alhumaydani, 23, of Shelley Road, Chemsford, said he sustained a wound that did not heal for two weeks after the incident in which he was hit in the back of the head with a belt.

CAMCRAG EN ROUTE TO CALAIS

Students visiting refugee camps this weekend

This Saturday, another convoy of volunteers from Cambridge Calais Refugee Action Group (CamCRAG) will pile into cars laden with donations and head across the Channel to lend their help to refugees living in camps in Calais and Dunkirk. CamCRAG has appealed to members of the public to lend their time and to donate items that may alleviate the refugees' plight.

7.7 PER CENT EMPLOYMENT BOOST IN 2014/15

Cambridge sees massive growth

New figures reveal that the 22,000 companies registered within 20 miles of Cambridge enjoyed a 7.7 per cent increase in turnover, which now stands at £33 billion, and a 7.7 per cent increase in employment. The figures do not include AstraZeneca, whose local employment data is not reported.

In 2014/15, the fastest-growing sectors were construction and utilities and property and finance, where employment grew by 23 per cent and 18.5 per cent respectively.

By contrast, computing, life sciences research services and high-tech manufacturing, which make up 30 per cent of employment, grew steadily over the last four years, with a compound growth rate of turnover of over 7.9 per cent per annum.



The Week in Numbers

5

The number of candidates, all male, running for the CUSU Presidency in this year's election

£1.5m

Donation received by St Edmund's College from the Okinaga family to fund its College Tower

47

Percentage of students who find their workload "manageable and healthy", according to the Big Cambridge Survey

'BIOLOGICALLY PLAUSIBLE'

Cambridge academic warns of talcum powder cancer link

Talcum powder may raise the risk of women getting ovarian cancer, a Cambridge academic has warned.

Paul Pharoah, Reader in Cancer Epidemiology, has said that it is "biologically plausible" that grains of talcum powder could enter the fallopian tubes and cause ovarian inflammation which could lead to the disease. Though he insisted that the risk was small, Pharoah said that the powder "more likely than not" raised the chance of ovarian cancer.

THE FORCE AWAKENS

Mark Hamill in Cambridge this Saturday

Mark Hamill, best known for playing Jedi knight Luke Skywalker in the *Star Wars* franchise, will be appearing at the Cambridge Union Society this weekend in an event the society anticipates will enjoy a "high expected turnout".

The actor, writer and director, who recently reprised his role as Skywalker for 2015's *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* and is currently filming the series' eighth instalment, will take part in a Q&A session.



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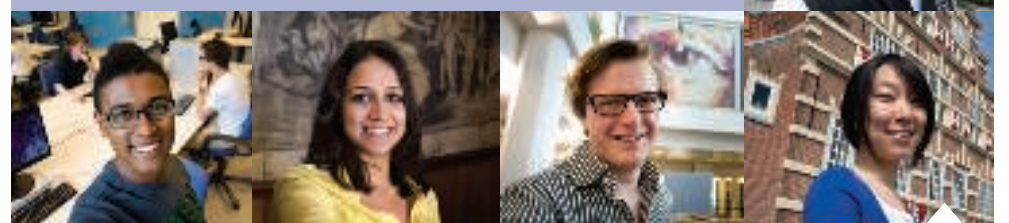
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Biorobotic bladders: breakthrough treatment for spinal injury

Michael Baumgartner
Science Correspondent

Believe it or not, we are electrical creatures. Each and every living cell in your body is electrically active. The sodium-potassium pump, which you may remember from secondary school biology, pumps sodium ions out of the cell and potassium ions in, creating a difference in charge across the cell membrane. Neurons exploit these differences in charge and ion concentrations to rapidly carry signals down the length of their cell bodies and trigger the release of chemical messengers.

Given the importance of electricity in such varied and important biological functions, clinicians have long hoped to use it for therapeutic applications. Some of this research is hair-raisingly ambitious, even borderline sci-fi. Take, for example, the brain-computer interface. The principle is straightforward: the brain transmits specific information – such as to reach forward and grab a water bottle – via a specific pattern of electrical signals. Therefore, it ought to be possible to record electrical activity in the brain, pick out patterns in the signal, and convey those patterns as instructions to a computer. Combine such an interface with sophisticated robotics and then people who suffered spinal cord injuries or amputations could control a new, prosthetic limb via thought.

Research in this field is progressing but, predictably, has a long way to go. While interning in Florida, my lab supervisor strapped me into a wildly expensive tangle of electrodes and amplifiers. I typed on a computer directly from my mind... but it took me five minutes to spell 'ice cream.' While



Loss of bladder control is an unfairly neglected condition

many moon-shot projects are trucking along, others – such as the Cambridge researchers led by Professor James Fawcett – aim to use such biorobotics to solve pressing medical issues in the here and now.

This group set about refining a treatment for one often overlooked symptom of spinal cord injury: the loss of bladder control. The brainstem typically regulates urination; injury to the spinal cord, however, can sever the nerves linking the brain stem and bladder. People with spinal cord injury therefore have to live with the unpleasantness of frequent involuntary urination. Minor as this seems in the grand scheme of spinal cord injury, these patients list regaining bladder control as one of their chief desires.

Current therapies leave a lot to be desired. The most common treatment is to use botulinum toxin to paralyse the bladder so that it can then be drained with a catheter. A more elegant solution is the Finetech-Brindley Sacral Anterior Root Stimulator, a prosthetic surgically implanted within the pelvis. This device connects to the nerves linking the spinal cord to the bladder and, when the patient presses

a button, stimulates the nerves in such a way as to cause urination, effectively returning voluntary urination to the individual's control. In order to prevent involuntary urination, however, surgeons must sever nerves in the pelvis necessary for, among other things, erections and vaginal lubrication.

Many patients are understandably put off by such complications. Fawcett and his colleagues have tested in animals an improvement to this system which eliminates the need to sever those nerves. Instead of cutting the nerves, the new device monitors the electrical activity of these nerves, which carries information on the fullness of the bladder back to the spinal cord.

By listening in on this flow of information, the device can stimulate the nerves to prevent unwanted urination, detect when the bladder is full, and inform the user when bladder voiding is necessary. The group's work, which has been published in the prestigious *Science Translational Medicine* journal, demonstrates that technologies as far-fetched as biological-computer interfaces will soon benefit human beings in the present.

Taking black holes to the next dimension

William Dorrell
Science Correspondent

Einstein's theory of relativity is 100 years old this year. It has been placed under scrutiny like no theory before it and passed with flying colours. In the most impressive of these tests, two ultra-high accuracy aluminium ion clocks were installed one foot vertically above the other.

Relativity predicts that the higher clock, experiencing less gravity, will run slightly faster. This tiny difference was experimentally observed and amounted to one part in 1,016, or for every 10,000,000,000,000,000 ticks of one clock the other lost a tick. However, researchers at Cambridge's Department of Applied Mathematics and Theoretical Physics (DAMTP) have shown that if you allow our four-dimensional world (three spatial dimensions plus time) to extend to five, then black holes can be imagined that 'break' Einstein theory.

Einstein's theory in part predicts that mass deforms space-time (the four-dimensional space we live in) and that this deformation is what causes gravity. If the ditch in space-time from the massive object descends to infinity, then even light cannot escape and a black hole is formed. This point at which space-time is deformed to infinity is called a singularity, and the Cosmic Censorship Conjecture claims that since nothing can escape the black hole's gravity, observing them is impossible. Black holes are hidden behind their 'event horizon' – the boundary beyond which light cannot escape.

However, a theoretically possible five-dimensional black hole shaped in a very thin ring breaks this, leaving an observable singularity which would

shatter relativity. The black hole in question is a spinning ring that warps and bulges, much like water droplets separating in a stream of water, until the connection between the bulges on the ring gets thinner and thinner. Most black holes collapse into a sphere which would enclose the singularity, but when the ring is sufficiently thin, the singularity is naked to our observation.

"The better we get at simulating Einstein's theory of gravity in higher dimensions, the easier it will be for us to help with advancing new computational techniques – we're pushing the limits of what you can do on a computer when it comes to Einstein's theory," said Saran Tunyasuvunakool, co-author of the paper and a PhD student at DAMTP. "But if cosmic censorship doesn't hold in higher dimensions, then maybe we need to look at what's so special about a four-dimensional universe that means it does hold."

The concept of extra dimensions has long been a possibility. If you imagine a world of flatlanders who effectively live on a piece of paper, they could go happily about their two-dimensional lives without any concept of what the third dimension means. Similarly, the world could be a much higher multidimensional place of which we would have no understanding beyond the three spatial dimensions we experience.

However, where our imagination breaks off, the limit of physical intuition at the third dimension, the maths keep running and predicting phenomena such as this five-dimensional black hole. Whether this represents a closer image of 'reality' is another question altogether: one that research like this makes all the more pertinent.

Fired together, wired together: romance in the brain



NEUROPOP
WITH
JOY
THOMPSON

Last term, my lab went to the Corpus Playroom to see *The Effect*. This was ideal entertainment for our group of researchers, being a mixture of romance, drama, and neurobiology. Two people are enrolled in a clinical trial of a new antidepressant and fall passionately in love – but are their

feelings real, or just a side effect of altered brain activity?

The play's answer was, predictably, the former. More generally, though, implying that 'mere' biochemistry has nothing to do with true love rather misses the point. There's a joke about a sensitive neuroscientist who got engaged: she stuck her head in a brain scanner and presented the results at the altar, saying "I do, and here's proof!" (The point being, of course, that for neuroscientists, measurable changes in brain activity or hormones are as real as you can get.) Finding out whether love has a neurological basis should not devalue our experiences of romance, and as a sensitive neuroscientist myself, I'm honour-bound to suggest that it actually enriches them.

Jokes aside, do our brains really light up when we're in the throes of a new romance? According to functional MRI studies, they do. Some of the best-known work was done in 2005 by Helen Fisher and colleagues, and involved university students who had recently fallen in love. Fisher's team collected brain scans while each student contemplated photographs of their beloved, then com-

pared them to scans taken while the students looked at pictures of neutral acquaintances. The major brain areas with increased romantic activity were part of the brain's reward system, a set of interconnected regions that help us recognise and pursue pleasurable stimuli.

'Pleasurable stimulus' might not be a poetical description of one's new-found fleet-footed, tall, dark, handsome love interest, but it is somewhat accurate. It also helps explain why new romances can border on obsession, and why break-ups hurt so much: since the brain circuitry overlaps with neural mechanisms controlling addiction, depriving someone of their romantic 'reward' effectively puts them through devastating withdrawal symptoms. This doesn't mean love should be treated like alcoholism – notwithstanding the 2012 *Science* paper showing that sexually deprived male flies consume more alcohol than satiated ones! Instead, this knowledge could make us more forgiving of others who can't stop talking about their amazing new partners (even if we are sick of hearing about them). More seriously, understanding the mechanics of love and rejection could also help protect

potential victims of jealousy, abuse, or crimes of passion.

No discussion of romantic chemistry would be complete without oxytocin – touted as the 'cuddle chemical' – and vasopressin. These hormones came to fame through early studies on monogamous rodents called prairie voles. In these animals, activity in brain regions detecting oxytocin (for females) or vasopressin (males) goes up after mating and predicts how faithful a pair will be; blocking oxytocin or vasopressin increases promiscuity. In humans, oxytocin is implicated in both maternal and romantic bonding, but its precise role is less clear.

Unfortunately, the media frenzy over oxytocin also has a dark side. Some is exaggeration: if we believe the headlines, a squirt of oxytocin spray cures everything from marital breakdown to anorexia. Some is dishonest: abstinence-only sex educators sometimes misquote data 'proving' that women should save their oxytocin response for marriage, lest they be irreversibly traumatised by pair-bonding with too many people. This ignores oxytocin's inconvenient habit of showing up in all kinds of human interactions

unrelated to sex or childrearing, including non-romantic touch, and all kinds of emotions, such as fear and envy. The lesson? Love is scientifically complicated; cherry-picking data is bad science.

At this point, die-hard romantics will probably complain that brain scans and biochemistry take all the mystery out of love. Pragmatists might counter that mystery is damnably unhelpful when deciding whether to spend the rest of your life with that special someone. Now, if you'll excuse me, I've got a hot date with my boyfriend and an MRI scanner.



VARSITY INTRODUCING

Georgie Henley

Since starring as Lucy Pevensie in the award-winning *The Chronicles of Narnia* films, Georgie Henley has undertaken an English degree at Clare College, acted in both student theatre and onscreen, and directed her own film, *Tide*, which is due to be completed later this year.

What are your best memories of filming the *Narnia* series? Are you still in touch with the other cast members?

I was really young when I started filming, so when I remember it, it's like this weird line between reality and dream. The best day I can remember was turning nine on set, because we were filming in New Zealand and I'd been away from my family for about two months; my mum had been with me, but my dad and sisters flew out on my birthday. We had a special cake and the production assistants decorated my trailer, it was like crazy fantasy stuff. In terms of keeping in touch, we're all doing different things but, whenever we can see each other, we do. We spent so much time together that we genuinely are so close. It's great, I love them so much.

How do you feel looking back at the films, and seeing a snapshot of your younger self preserved?

Anyone who's a youngest child will know that there's always fewer home videos of you, so we make jokes that my home videos are the *Narnia* films. My grandma loves watching the films and my parents normally flick on the first one at Christmas whilst they're decorating the tree or something. I can't really watch them for a long time, but I can watch them for a bit because I look so young in them that it doesn't really feel like I'm watching myself; it's more a like a version of myself. There's definitely an image of me imprinted in people's brains, which is weird to think about.

Did you grow up reading the *Narnia* books, and would you consider acting in fantasy again?

We read the *Narnia* series in school and I would get annoyed because I'd have read on ahead at home and then everything would be repeated in class when we read it together. I'll read anything now, I'm into American modernism which my dissertations are on, but I'm looking forward to reading for pleasure again. There's so much reading for your degree that you can't just read that F. Scott Fitzgerald novel you always wanted to. As for acting, I auditioned for *Narnia* when I was seven and finished when I was 15: when you've been part of something for so long you do worry about getting



travelling the world and met so many amazing people. Getting into Cambridge was a really big achievement for me because I've had to juggle studying and work commitments, and making the decision to go to university meant that I could only do projects I really wanted to do. I decided that for the three years I'm at Cambridge I want to focus on experimentation, especially with theatre, and take time out of professional work.

What have been your highlights of the Cambridge theatre scene?

I've done a really crazy mix of stuff.

In my first year I played Hecuba in *The Trojan Women* and a gender-ambiguous alcoholic chaplain in *A Clockwork Orange* within two weeks: that's the kind of freedom we have here to express different ideas. *Skylight* was great because, considering it was put together so quickly and acting on stage for two hours was such a big responsibility, we didn't expect the amazing reaction we got. I get so nervous when I'm acting, but I find that when I'm onstage I completely forget my nerves. In film there's the sense of 'it's forever', which is also terrifying; I can't really work out whether I prefer acting for theatre or film, but there are definitely different pressures.

You're now working on your own film, *Tide*; can you tell us a bit about

that? What inspired you?

Tide follows two young women as they go about their daily lives: the relationship between them is very ambiguous, you're not really sure who's caring for who and whether they're in love or just friends. It's quite difficult to explain because it's very visual, but above all it's about dealing with the absence of the one person in your life that you rely on. We shot it last summer, and we're now editing it, which is really exciting and it feels like everything is coming together. I actually had the idea about five years ago when I went to this beach in Lytham, St Anne's, and since then the idea's changed dramatically, but always stuck with me. There's so much talent in Cambridge and so many resources that I wanted to make the most of, that I thought why not?

Have you always wanted to be an actor? What are your plans for the future?

I have always wanted to since seeing my older sister acting, singing and dancing, and *Narnia* gave me the opportunity to see that I could make it a career. I want to continue acting, but also being given the freedom to write and direct in Cambridge has been amazing and made me realise that it is something I want to pursue.

It's difficult for women to be taken seriously in the industry, so you just have to put yourself out there and believe in your work. You have to convey that you have a story and a message, and that's what I want to do: whether I'm acting, writing or directing, I want to tell stories that wouldn't otherwise be told.

Georgie was talking to Joanna Taylor

Charlotte Proudman: we 'should embrace' the 'angry feminist'

Alice Chilcott talks LinkedIn, law and lad culture with the Cambridge PhD student turned women's rights campaigner

Last September, Charlotte Proudman was catapulted into the public eye when her tweet accusing a male lawyer of sexism went viral. Alexander Carter-Silk commented on her "stunning" LinkedIn profile picture with the acknowledgement that "this is probably horrendously politically incorrect". Proudman's response picked apart his remarks with surgical precision. She wrote: "I am on LinkedIn... not to be approached about my physical appearance or objectified by sexist men." She then tweeted a screenshot of the entire exchange.

Swinging on a deskchair in the *Varsity* offices, Proudman still seems genuinely surprised by the public reaction. It wasn't, she tells me, a case of the straw that broke the camel's back. Rather, it was part of an ongoing attempt to resist everyday instances of sexism in an industry which, according to Proudman, is still overwhelmingly male-dominated. "I would be surprised if any woman lawyer has not experienced sexism personally. I certainly had, but I always make a point of attempting to challenge sexism wherever I see it or experience it.

"That was no different, really, to any other attempts of challenging sexism I had encountered. I never expected it to go as viral as it did."

At the time, Proudman's tweet attracted a mixed response from the media and judicial establishments. She dealt with the backlash, she tells

me, by placing her experiences within the wider perspective of the feminist movement. "What I tended to do was focus on the real struggle here... speaking out against sexism within the workplace, and listening to other women who shared their own stories with me." I ask her if, in retrospect, she would go back and change her decision to send the message, to share the photo. "No," she says flatly. It seems to be a question she's used to.

A Sociology PhD candidate at Cambridge, she has also spoken out against the upper-class 'lad culture' fostered by exclusive societies such as the male-only Pitt Club, and the Magdalene Wyverns, whose notorious jelly-wrestling spectacle was banned last year. Proudman, who studied for her undergraduate degree at Keele University, says this culture is significantly more endemic at the so-called 'elite' universities, where a privileged few form ties to the exclusion of women, the lower classes, and racial and religious minorities. It's a theme that resurfaces in Proudman's analysis of the legal profession. "Men feel more comfortable interviewing other men who mirror their own background," Proudman insists. "They go to the same gentleman's club, they went to the same public school, they went to the same university – and women are constantly seen as 'different'."

Why, then, are female students complicit in such activities? "I can

understand," she says, hesitantly, "why women accept those invitations. It's much easier to side with power, through patriarchy, than it is to side with the powerless minority. But, ultimately, I think it has to be recognised that the power that they do have in going along is nowhere near comparable to the status that the men have in these societies.

"They still remain second-class citizens... all they're doing is perpetuating the idea that a woman's role is [to be] there for objectification."

It is inconvenient for Proudman's critics that very little about her matches the stereotype of the shrieking, haranguing man-hater that they seem so keen to perpetuate. She has a low, gentle voice, and the eloquence to match the urgency of the message she is trying to convey. She's never heard of Cuntry Living, and is cautiously enthusiastic about the participation of men in feminist discourses. At the same time, she does not wish to shy away from the image of

the 'angry feminist'. "In a society where you're constantly facing sexism on an everyday basis, to get angry about that – to be strident in your feminism – is completely justifiable.

"We shouldn't accept those types of criticisms that are levelled against us – or if we do, we should embrace them."

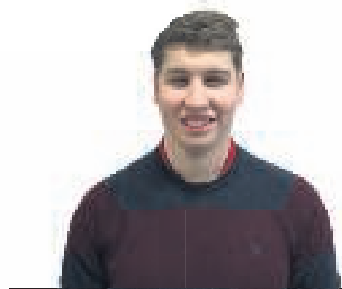
Proudman went into law to change women's lives, she says – but disenchantment with what she terms the "institutional sexism" of the legal profession itself set in quickly.

She criticises the recent suggestion of Supreme Court Justice Sumption that a rush for gender equality would destabilise the judicial system. "Women have been told this, continually, for 50 years, 100 years, 150 years – just be patient and wait. Well, if women continue to wait, in a system infused by sexism, where men have the power to promote women, they will be waiting in biblical proportion. "When it



Comment

Jesus cockerel row: idealism gets in the way of good



Connor MacDonald

The response of activists in the Nigerian art debate does not help resolve historical tensions

On Thursday last week, Jesus College Student Union passed an historic resolution to return the bronze cockerel, or 'okukor' to Nigeria, the country from which it was taken in 1897, after the British had set the city of Benin ablaze. The actions of the JCSU in pursuing this matter are nothing short of commendable; in a place like Cambridge, achieving change takes about as long as it does a snail to run a marathon.

Those involved in the decision also provided a perfect example of how to achieve cultural change properly. Unlike the now infamous 'Rhodes Must Fall' campaign, which demonstrated as much delicacy as a bull in a China shop, the students of Jesus College participated in a wide-ranging discussion with various stakeholders. Unlike Rhodes Must Fall, whose leaders saw fit to condemn anyone from fellow students to the country of France for perceived white supremacy, the campaign to remove the cockerel has clearly been conducted with some modicum of respect. What is more, the fact that consultations are still ongoing to draft an even more powerful proposal is a testament to the patience and good will of the campaigners. It's no surprise that the motion to repatriate the cockerel passed nearly unanimously.

However, there are also those who, throughout this process, let the perfect be the enemy of the good. In

particular, some spoke about how the proposal to remove the statue was "unprofessional" and turned the "massacre of people into a joke". Ironically, the person spouting these words supported the repatriation of the cockerel. Perhaps most bizarre is the fact that some criticised Jesus College for claiming that it was up to Jesus College to remove the okukor, as if that right belonged to somebody else. Again, everyone in the room was in agreement that the okukor needed to be returned. In one of the evening's sillier moments, the fact that some considered returning the statue the "moral thing to do" was condemned as "paternal narration". Again... you know what I'm going to say.



THE VAST MAJORITY OF US ARE MOTIVATED BY SOME FORM OF IDEALISM

What this episode demonstrates is that too often students and campaigners find their causes riven with ideological disputes that miss the bigger picture. Why was it not possible to simply come to a consensus about the necessity of moving the cockerel, and move on? Instead we may have a

process that drags on, and achieves little, only to return to the central agreement a month from now; all the while the cockerel spends longer away from its rightful home. In sum, there will be many words said and much ink spilt only to return to the underlying consensus – it is an exercise in intellectual futility. While the decision around returning a statue to its rightful home may seem minor – though, nevertheless, a just cause – this episode perhaps points to a broader and nefarious trend within student activism. In many social movements over the last decade driven by students, too often have we been concerned with ideological or moral purity over actually achieving change. Take Occupy Wall Street, for example; in perhaps one of the most absurd moments in recent activist history, John Lewis was prevented from addressing Occupy Atlanta.

For those who are wondering, no, not the John Lewis who sells overpriced clothes, the John Lewis who marched with Martin Luther King Jr. for civil rights. Because the activists in Atlanta believed that to let John Lewis speak would be implying that he was more important than other individuals – the direct quote being 'no individual is inherently more valuable than any other' – they denied him a platform to address the assembly. Instead, Lewis was whisked away to another meeting, and Occupy lost a

passionate advocate.

It is precisely this kind of ideological purity that repeatedly prevents activists from being effective. If Occupy had actually been effective in courting congressional and public support, instead of driving them away, perhaps we would be having a real conversation about income inequality. Now, we are left with a carnival of a presidential election cycle. Bernie Sanders himself, a man who has done more than most to address issues of urban poverty, found himself interrupted at a rally by Black Lives Matter activists. Forgive me for being naive, but isn't it the worst strategy in the playbook to attack one's allies?

Instead of developing a consensus around common causes, activists see fit to divide themselves around symbolic issues, such as the wording of a proposal to repatriate stolen art. This is particularly problematic for students like ourselves. Regardless of our political persuasion, I think the vast majority of us are motivated by some form of idealism, a desire to change things for the better. However, it takes time and it takes patience; it is not enough to scream from the rooftops or toil over the perfect wording for a resolution. What we need to change the world is solidarity, compromise and consensus. After all, Jesus College didn't repatriate the okukor by being loud and obnoxious: they did it by being quiet, patient, and united.

Sex ed is important – let's not leave it to chance



Sarah Wilson

The bad romantic and sexual habits that we pick up in our teenage years stay with us

David Cameron has blocked a recent proposal to implement compulsory sex education across schools in Britain, in a move that will undoubtedly maintain its already dire state. Schools that do provide some form of PSHE or sex education find it generally satisfactory to whisk students through crude PowerPoint presentations of STIs and brief demonstrations of how to put a condom on, while academies and faith schools are at leisure to pick and choose what parts they want to include. It is a commonality across the country that where such teaching exists, it is non-standardised and patchy, and this latest move by Cameron betrays both outdated squeamishness on the subject and an attitude of ambivalence, dismissing support and guidance for teenage sexual relationships as superfluous.

Of course, standing on the precipice of my twenties and looking back, there is much about my own early experiences in this area that seem more funny than severe. 'Love' was a word that cropped up in every Facebook conversation, and even came in digital form to gift people on Bebo social cred. Courtship in Year 8 was conducted by drawing in biro on each other's hands, and a middle man approaching you in the social area with the golden refrain: 'my mate fancies you'. Love was a concept bandied around

freely, as relationships were born and broken over things as petty as emojis on MSN. For the most part, this behaviour was harmless. However, I found that this sheen of excitement began to rub off as one got older and things became more 'serious'.

Suddenly, any sexual behaviour came under scrutiny by a sporadic set of rules determined by peers whose knowledge was no less pretended than your own: have too many sexual encounters and you're a slut, don't put out and you're a prude.

These are all tired stereotypes that remain relevant even to adult behaviour today. However, widespread misinformation and lack of guidance doesn't only culminate in the kind of spiteful attacks I was witness to (a trauma in itself). More dangerously, a space begins to open up for toxic, damaging relationships to thrive unchecked.

In an experience common to classrooms across the country, my sex education classes provided me with just this: sex is always a penis in a vagina; only men derive pleasure from sex (and it's over when he finishes) and sex always carries a high risk of pregnancy and STIs. A friend told me the other day that she didn't know the female orgasm existed until almost two years of being sexually active. On the relationship side of things, there was not a whisper about consent and

respect, just the pervasive spectre of the school nurse, whose only advice existed in the form of innumerable free condoms. With this total negligence to deliver thorough information, young people are being left to form their own conclusions about how a 'normal' sexual and romantic relationship should function.

When I started going out with my first boyfriend, this meant I had no point of reference whatsoever – school had failed, my parents were splitting up at the time and I was one of the first of my friends to have a steady relationship. The non-parallel of romantic relationships existed to me in fictional forms like *The Notebook*, in which Ryan Gosling's character threatens to kill himself if Rachel McAdams's character does not agree to go out with him. Charming. This provided the perfect environment for the following year and a half of our relationship to appear entirely within the realm of normal as, like so many others, I relied on misleading advice I'd absorbed along the way from a plethora of questionable sources.

To start, his obsessive clinginess meant that I sometimes pretended to stay with a friend so I could be alone – but this to me was a facet of being in love. Persistent 'jokes' about how revealing my clothing was, and a stream of check-up texts whenever I went out, was an example of male

jealousy. He cut off all of his friends to spend time with me, and manipulated me into agreeing with his opinions. When I discovered I didn't enjoy having sex, I assumed it was because I was female and wasn't supposed to enjoy it. Yet for the duration of the relationship, I couldn't point to why I felt so uneasy and upset, putting it down to a fault of my own and naturalising behaviour that would be considered abusive in adult terms.

Of course, teenage relationships are different to their adult counterparts, and I don't suggest that they should always be treated in the same manner. But at the same time, the romantic and sexual relationships we have in our teenage years do not exist in a vacuum, and deserve to be considered more seriously.

For some, they go on to set a precedent for later life, and for others can incur lasting emotional or physical damage, in the same way that adult relationships can. Learning from mistakes is an important part of development in this period, but unhealthy relationships and sexual encounters should not have to be a rite of passage, as they are for so many in Britain.

As long as the current system stays the same, teenagers will continue to needlessly tolerate misinformed attitudes towards sex and sexuality, as well as detrimental, dangerous behaviour in relationships.



BEN WATERS

Anti-Semitism is flourishing in the student Left



Noa Lessof Gendler

The Left and Judaism have so much in common – let's not throw that away

This is a well-worn subject in other parts of the country, but in Cambridge I don't feel we've really talked about it. So I'm throwing in my two cents' worth, more in the hope that this will reach a new audience than because I think I have anything new to say.

Anti-Semitism exists on the student Left. I know this for a fact because I experience it and many other Jewish students experience it. We feel it in the word 'Zio', flung around in left-wing groups, in the assumptions made about our political views and financial situation based on our heritage, and in the raised eyebrows when we define ourselves as an ethnic minority. But most of all, we feel it in the stark denial of the existence of anti-Semitism itself. When student journalists tell their audiences that "anti-Semitism is a tired old accusation from Zionists" and the article gets 486 shares, I start to feel vulnerable. When a friend posts an article about an anti-Semitic attack on a liberation-themed Facebook group and the overwhelming response is "discrimination against Jews isn't discrimination", I feel vulnerable. When I lie about my summer holidays rather than telling someone I was in Israel visiting family, it's because I feel vulnerable. When there's an anti-Semitic attack at a JSoc Friday night dinner and the student media fails to report it, we all feel vulnerable. And then

we feel vulnerable telling people that extra security has been provided for us because we expect people to tell us that that's an example of our privilege rather than a sign of our weakness.

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I STRONGLY RECOMMEND THAT THE STUDENT LEFT SORTS ITSELF OUT

The thing is, I shouldn't have to give a list of true accounts to convince anyone that anti-Semitism is alive and going strong. Let me remind you of one of the core rules in liberation politics: you do not question other people's lived experiences. You do not say to anyone "You're crying wolf". You do not tell them that they're imagining their oppression. You do not tell them they're making it up or that they should consider their privilege. You do not make it their fault. So when we, Jewish students en masse, say that we find the student Left a threatening place to be right now, we expect the student Left, in accordance with its own principles, to take us seriously and do something about it.

I strongly recommend that the student Left sorts itself out, because it's losing an awful lot of dedicated

campaigners due to the hostility they feel. Many of the Jewish students calling out left-wing groups at the moment are left-wing themselves – we also struggled to get Labour elected last year, volunteer to help refugees in Calais, and argue bitterly with our close friends and relatives about the need to end the occupation in Gaza and the West Bank. On so many issues, we are on the same side, and we want to support and engage with these campaigns. The problem – the denial that there is a threat to our well-being in these movements, rather than a sincere attempt to fix it – makes me want to disengage with student politics entirely. And if I try and get involved, and then hear the word 'Zio' being used in Women's Forum, as I have, it makes me feel more unwelcome than you could possibly know. It reminded me of the feeling I got when someone casually called someone a "fucking Jew" in front of me without knowing that I myself am, in fact, a fucking Jew.

I'm Jewish, but that doesn't mean I'm a Tory. I'm Jewish, but that doesn't mean I have Palestinian blood on my hands, and as such I shouldn't have to feel nervous about conversations in Hall when an Israeli speaker visits the Union or during Israeli Apartheid Week, when Facebook becomes a violent and aggressive space. I've tried to keep this as far away

from any discussion of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For the record, most of the time I'm a liberal Zionist, and I believe in a two-state solution according to the pre-1967 borders with complete dismantlement of the Israeli settlements. I hope for the development of an economic partnership between the two countries to foster interdependence and, hopefully, peace. The rest of the time I despair at Israel's recent and current administrations for their significant part in continuing a conflict that does no service to its moral integrity or the principles of my religion.

But I don't think my views on Israel are necessarily relevant, because I believe that it is possible to separate anti-Semitism from anti-Zionism. I just don't think that people are very good at doing that at the moment, and if anyone would like to know how or why, all they have to do is listen up. Throughout the Jewish community debates are being held over how we address this current wave of hatred from the Left, and as with all other oppressed groups, you just have to open your minds to our narrative, offer your friendship, and reform your spaces so that they don't feel so hostile. If the student Left can do that, and demonstrate that it really isn't anti-Semitic at the core, then we can engage with a political movement which shares so many of the values that Judaism itself upholds.

Who's afraid of the big bad feminist?

**Emily
Bailey-Page**



We must continue to support the representation of women in college roles

In Cambridge, the imminent arrival of spring is heralded not by conventional images of exuberant daffodils and stumbling baby animals. Instead, many of us must content ourselves with the festival of nervous sweat, stammering speeches and disconcertingly adept use of Photoshop that signifies the annual election of our JCR committees. Successful candidates emerge blinking in the bright light of their own optimism; the rest of college delights in having new people to drunkenly berate.

Aside from discussions on rent negotiations, kitchen fixed charges and bops threatened by miscellaneous bodily fluids, elections provide a rare insight into what your college thinks. So it was disappointing after a constitutional referendum just before Corpus's elections that literally the only amendment out of seven voted down was the proposed change of Gender Equalities officer to Women and Non-Binary officer. This would essentially have meant only female or non-binary students could run and vote for the role, whereas currently students of any gender can do so.

Before I go on, I think it's important to mention that I fully support our outgoing and incoming Gender Equalities officers. Since its introduction, great things have been done with the role and I'm sure this will continue. However, this constitutional arrangement not only creates unnecessary practical difficulties for anyone occupying the position, but perpetuates

unhelpful and frankly mistaken attitudes to female and non-binary rights among the student population. Even if you reject feminism completely, logically, it just doesn't make sense.

At Corpus, as at many other colleges, our officers for BME, LGBT+ and international students must constitutionally belong to the group they represent, and only students of each respective group may vote for them. So why the difference with Gender Equalities? One argument is that feminism helps men too (!), a fully accurate but nonetheless tiring refrain from your local neighbourhood male 'feminist', who can't help feeling like nothing in this world will ever be valuable unless some man somewhere is gaining some sort of tangible benefit from it. Society as a whole will also, as it happens, benefit from the eradication of homophobia and structural racial inequality. But you don't see me, a thoroughly and comprehensively white woman, running for Ethnic Minorities officer because I picked up Malcolm X's autobiography one time.

Yes, it's true, the candidates for and occupants of this relatively new position have so far only been female. Surely it's highly unlikely that a man would run for the position, so it's just a pragmatic way of avoiding controversy in a cultural climate which often seems to hysterically equate feminism with the tyranny of a Stalinist regime? Perhaps – but this isn't just a question of abstract, ideological justice. This constitutional set-up has the potential

to cause real, practical difficulties.

Election makes you accountable to all those who voted for you. So being accountable to the whole student body is inconsistent with the role of representing and defending a distinct group of students within that body. By no means am I suggesting that we live in some anarchic world where the interests of male, female and non-binary students are always separate, but the reality is that female and non-binary students continue to face comparative disadvantage in many areas of Cambridge life on the basis of their gender. This group needs specific representation.

Yet in this set-up Gender Equalities officers are accountable to men too. Call me a radical militant, but I don't think you can ever truly and fully represent a group of which you are not a part. Unless you lack the maturity to not take everything personally, it should be obvious that this is not an attack or an act of exclusion. People always accuse feminists of being too sensitive, but I've never seen anything nearly as fragile as a white man's ego upon being told that feminism isn't actually all about him.

Don't get me wrong. Some of my best friends are white men for goodness' sake. I'm writing this column not with the intention of stirring up intra-college politics – as I say, those involved have managed to handle the role very well. Why do we have this particular compulsion to constantly reassure men that the simple act of

protecting women's rights and wellbeing is not intended as a threat to them? A BME officer is not an anti-white position. The existence of an LGBT+ officer is not the covert sign of an all-out war against the heterosexuals.

Men do have a lot to gain from feminism – this is a result of the way that we always conceptualise genders against one another. Yet we must not forget that difficulties for men come about because the worse thing in the world is for them to be seen as remotely akin to female. Being female is the ultimate source of denigration, and from this conception springs a violence that manifests itself in the biggest and smallest ways, from one in two female students at Cambridge feeling that their mental health has had a negative impact on their work (compared with one in three men), to the degree courses like my own which see women achieve only 8.7 per cent of Firsts in Part I despite comprising 49.5 per cent of the year. If we agree that gender equality is an issue to tackle, we accept that there is universal and systematic gender inequality.

Ultimately, this means that women and non-binary students experience unique disadvantages. Let's also not forget that Corpus was one of the last colleges to accept female undergraduates, in 1983, well within the scope of many academics' careers. It's time we stop ferociously back-peddling and allowed female and non-binary students the representation they deserve across the board.

Head space

In her seventh weekly column, *Rhiannon Shaw* talks about the importance of friendship for mental wellbeing



Rhiannon Shaw

I was a lonely child – but before you get your hankies out, I should explain that this was almost completely by choice. At lunchtime at my first primary school, I used to walk around by myself because I thought playing Mummies and Daddies was so passé. I preferred to make up stories about werewolves and secret castles. I still think of myself sometimes as a tubby seven-year-old, plodding about with my head in the clouds.

Then, one day, I got over the love of my own company and began to make friends. First one, then two, then lots, whom I love very much. I hope we all end up in the same old folks' home, complaining that the music isn't what it used to be and that our grandkids never send us a hologram on our birthday. Friends are great, because you can eat lunch with them and go with them to the disco. Plus, they will almost always tell you if you have food on your face. I like their attitude.

However, for this next bit, I'm going to have to leave my facetiousness behind, because my friends have been

incredible and continue to be incredible every single day of my bizarre and inconsistent existence. To watch someone you love disappear behind a cloud of mental illness is harrowing. To know that you can only do so much to help them is perhaps even worse.

I don't think there's a perfect way to be friends with someone who is mentally ill, anymore than I believe there is a perfect way to 'treat' mental illness in general. Every person is different and I'd be lying if I said that I have been a failproof friend to everyone in need of my help – mainly because I'm very human, but also because I'm a bit of a wet fish. But I have learnt some things, so bear with me here.

One of the hardest things to realise when your friend becomes ill is that they may not take to your brand of treatment. You can't make them wake up every morning and say 10 nice things about themselves while looking in a mirror and listening to Christina Aguilera's 'Beautiful'. You can ask if they've tried anti-depressants, but if they'd rather treat themselves with St John's wort and daily jogs you should let them. On the other hand, if your friend is refusing to get treatment and is putting their life at risk through their behaviour, you should tell someone who can help them; a charity like Mind or Student Minds often provide links and contact details. You can strike a balance between being involved in their welfare and allowing them the freedom to treat their illness however they please.

You can show your support in multiple ways. Shortly after my dad

died and I entered into a long bout of depression, my friends bought me friendship bracelets and assured me this meant I could depend on them. In Year 13, one of my close friends became very ill. I took a bus across town and went with her to the GP – she didn't want to involve her parents, but she didn't want to be alone. Before the appointment we ran through exactly what we were going to say and, afterwards, we went to the corner shop to buy chocolate.

During Easter term last year, I had one friend I was very dependent on. We would sit and watch YouTube videos together, because I didn't want to leave my room. We didn't need to do

anything more extreme than that because it was just nice to know I wasn't alone. Even when he left, it didn't matter that I was left by myself, because I had the assurance that somebody cared. And sometimes your friend will have to be alone – on a long train journey, during a long sleepless night, on their way to a counselling appointment. If you remind them, in small ways, that you're on their side, they'll be able to focus on getting better.

My penultimate word of advice might sound very negative, but know this – illness can change that person you love into someone you can't stand, someone who brings you more pain than happiness. Don't be afraid to be

honest with them, and with yourself, if this happens. Most illnesses don't last forever and, sometimes, anxiety and depression can warp your perception so that you don't realise that you're behaving like a complete twat – trust me, I've been there.

Finally, know that you're surprisingly loved. A few nights ago I went out for a drink with a friend. He told me that becoming my friend was the highlight of his second year. I was gobsmacked of course, because last year I was depressed and about as interesting as a cheddar cheese sandwich. But he loved me anyway.

I guess the lonely tubby kid is doing okay.



That time of year again: May Ball hype begins anew



Sarah Doré

Are May Balls and the culture which surrounds them justifiably decadent?

May Week is uncontestedly one of the highlights of being a student at Cambridge. We suffer a whole year of rambling lectures, stressful supervisions (in which you attempt to pretend that you did actually read the whole of Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* in three days, and didn't just read the Wikipedia entry) and, finally, the horror of exam term.

For many of us, the driving force behind struggling through those agonising last few weeks of Easter term is the promise of May Week. There are so many things to look forward to, with the end of exams being only one of them. Cambridge is a beautiful, incredible place, and having time to explore it and really enjoy being here without the stress of work is an amazing experience. Nevertheless, the highlights of May Week are the balls.

The balls are touted as the height of elegance and decadence. They are lavish parties that stretch on until the sun rises, with as much food and drink as you can consume. They are bastions of music, dancing, comedy and various amusements. As such, the hype surrounding the balls starts early. Tickets are generally released in February or March, but the search begins long before then as students seek to snag tickets to the most lavish balls.

The whole culture surrounding procuring tickets can feel like a political

minefield at times, strewn with who-knows-who and what you can offer to trade. Last year, I engaged in a complicated swap that saw my boyfriend and I attending Trinity May Ball in return for me painstakingly doling out John's tickets to multiple friends. Sometimes – despite the best efforts of the May Ball committees – the prices can skyrocket, with a pair of tickets for John's May Ball selling at last week's launch party for over £700 (although the money was donated wholly to charity).

All of this begs the question: can the balls themselves be worth such extortionate amounts of money? Of course, ticket prices vary, with smaller balls selling tickets for below £100. The biggest balls, however, routinely charge over £300 for a pair of tickets, with Trinity charging each Trinitarian £165 for this year's ball. Can such expense be justified?

On the face of it, the price does seem outrageous. Friends from home have balked at having the other half of my John's ticket, saying that they simply couldn't afford to come. As a frugal person myself, I find it difficult to part with such a large sum of money for one night. And yet, students in Cambridge do this every year, spending hundreds of pounds to attend the balls.

It would be easy to dismiss the huge amount of money that we spend on May Balls as obscene, and leave it at that. However, I believe that balls are

an important part of the Cambridge experience. That does not mean, however, that you have to spend a huge amount of money to have fun.

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THE CULTURE SURROUNDING PROCURING TICKETS CAN FEEL LIKE A POLITICAL MINEFIELD

In my time here, I have attended John's (twice), Trinity, Fitzwilliam Winter Ball, and worked at the Selwyn May Ball. Of these, one of my favourites was Fitz Winter Ball, which I attended in my second year. It was freezing cold, I had a broken wrist at the time, and it was much smaller than a regular May Ball. And yet, the tickets were cheap, the entertainment was good and the headline act (The Hoosiers) was better than some I have seen at the bigger balls.

What really made it one of the better balls that I have been to, however, was that I went with a group of friends that I care about. What made the evening special wasn't the cocktails and stone-baked pizza – although they were delicious – but having my friend rush to do my hair in the 10 minutes we ended up having to get ready, sipping

hot chocolate in the queue and trying to persuade my male friends to partake in the burlesque lesson later in the night.

Some of the best fun can also be had at balls when you pay nothing. Many Cambridge balls allow students to work half the night and enjoy the other half, offering an affordable way to enjoy the festivities. Having worked at a ball myself, it really can be a hugely enjoyable experience. I worked for the entirety of Selwyn May Ball (a 12-hour shift in total) and immensely enjoyed it. I got to meet some other great workers, I was asked out by two guests while manning the cheese stand, and I staggered home the next morning exhausted but still happy to have been involved with the beauty and fun of the night.

May Balls are what you make of them. The culture surrounding them can be too hyped sometimes, and that can make the whole thing feel pretentious and over the top. Yes, there is something incredible about punts full of ice and beer. And yes, there is something exciting about securing tickets to the most prestigious ball and then looking for the perfect dress to wear on the night.

What makes May Balls really special, however, is the chance to spend a whole night with your Cambridge friends, making memories that will last a lifetime.



Miranda Slade

On Self-Love by Miranda Slade

To centre a piece on 'self-love' feels slightly juvenile, a little irreverent, and undeniably tongue-in-cheek. Of course I am all of these things. I have never, and will never, claim to be otherwise. But that this is the case elucidates my point, which is that low self-esteem has become far too commonly accepted and appreciated by everyone around us, to the extent that 'self-love' becomes a joke.

In popular culture, Justin Bieber uses 'You should go and love yourself' as an insult, while One Direction tell you that your most beautiful feature is that 'you don't know you're beautiful'. A logical rendering of these arguments is that to love yourself is degrading while to be insecure is to be desirable. Heaven forbid you retain any sense of self-worth unless Harry Styles has approved it first.

If only the kind of self-love I am grasping for here were as easily packaged as the sort you can buy at Ann Summers, requiring only AAA batteries to reach rampant rapture. Unfortunately self-love doesn't sell quite so well as capitalising on

insecurity, so instead we are at the mercy of adverts that ask us if we are beaming like the 'beach body ready' models staring back at us, or whether we are as happy as the couple that have just upgraded their broadband provider. It only sells products to some, but everyone buys the message that we are not as happy as the beautiful people in the adverts.

So we look for the things that differentiate us from them and, subsequently, we become torturously insecure. To talk about self-love feels wildly aspirational in a culture that strives toward self-acceptance, with many falling short of even that. To love yourself, or even to display a vague sense of satisfaction, is hard.

I feel that before I go any further in trying to talk with more sincerity about a subject I relate to intimately, I need to confront the fact that it may sound like I'm talking about masturbation. Not as unintentional as you may assume (all rise for a haphazard prose style and digressive routes through an argument), I believe there is some value in this confusion.

If our understanding of self-love

is confined to it being a euphemism for masturbating there is something wrong. In doing so we narrow the ways in which one has the capacity to love their self. It cannot be the end of the relationship.

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WHY DOES IT STOP AT ORGASM? WHY AREN'T I TAKING ME FOR BREAKFAST?

The fact is that we are all in relationships with ourselves. This relationship is almost impossible to view objectively, for obvious reasons. I will try to draw an example the only way I know how: an incriminating allegory of a sexual nature.

Have you ever had sex with someone who treated it like masturbation? I hope you haven't, but I have and I do not recommend it. I vaguely remember hearing some aphorism about bad sex with people who are just using a

partner 'instead of their hand'. After having reached climax (it doesn't matter if their partner has too) it's over. They will probably fall asleep on you. It will be sweaty and sticky in all the wrong ways, and you will want to leave as quickly as possible.

You don't want to be in the above scenario with yourself. I would never advise anyone to renounce their vibrator: reductive though I may be, I am no idiot. I sympathise hugely with the line from *Annie Hall* in which Alvy defends masturbating as the only time he can have sex with someone he loves. My narcissism is so pronounced that even when satiated I am left asking whether I love myself enough. Why does it stop at orgasm? Why aren't I taking me for breakfast, or texting me to ask how my day is going, or wondering if I am thinking about me?

What I am trying to put across is the complexity of the relationship we have with ourselves. To learn to love something so frustrating and unpredictable as oneself is difficult, and wherever we look there seems to be no message saying you are worthy of

love just as you are.

Self-confidence has become rare. So rare, in fact, that we resort to armouring ourselves in suits of cynicism. It makes sense. Without being too blunt about the whole thing, people can be shit. People can act carelessly, be entirely narcissistic, or simply be hurtful. After hours spent agonising about what you may have done to warrant this, cynicism becomes a way of saving face, and thus we choose to feign a sense of detachment.

Of course, I am guilty of this. And in lieu of living in a barrel on the Sidgwick Site declaring myself to be Diogenes gone mad, what else does the modern cynic do other than distrust? I consider myself a wizened cynic, but this is translated from philosophy to defence mechanism too quickly. It may seem wise to resist the temptation of lifting the smokescreen of self-deprecating humour and attempted aloofness, but in navigating the relationship between how we present ourselves and our self-worth, I may be just about ready to rescind my cynicism.



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PREVIEW: WATERSPRITE FESTIVAL

The Watersprite Festival was founded in 2010 by a group of Cambridge students to recognise and reward emerging global talent. Events run from the 4th-6th March in various venues across the city, and can be booked online on the ADC website. **Will Roberts** talks to festival director **Bernadette Schramm** about women in film, Nepalese filmmakers, and what this year's festival has to offer.

So, tell me about Watersprite.

Watersprite is an international film festival in Cambridge, run by students with a two-part initiative: one part is an international short film competition for students and the other part is a weekend full of events, workshops and panel discussions about the film industry in general.

It's been running for seven years now; is there a theme that runs through all the festivals or is every festival different?

I think all the festivals are different, but what's wonderful about this year's festival is that we're basing it more around women in the film industry. For example, both our galas have a broad focus on women both behind and in front of the camera, with producer Finola Dwyer (recent BAFTA winner for *Brooklyn*) giving a Q&A about her experience in the industry for our Opening Gala. We have had a male keynote speaker most years, so this year we wanted to emphasise that the industry is not just made up of talented men, but focus on all the women who do amazing things in cinema.

So, you said there's two parts to the festival: the film competition and the workshops. Tell me a bit about the films that have been submitted and the judging process.

This year has been really exciting, as we've had a record number of submissions, with 360 submissions from 55 different countries. All of these were then judged, firstly by online judges and then by a live judging panel in London, to make up a shortlist of four nominees for each of our awards, which range from Best Fiction to Best

Original Film Music. The Watersprite committee then brings these filmmakers together in Cambridge for the festival weekend. So, we have filmmakers coming from Rwanda, Myanmar, South Africa, and even a representative from Cuba. And the films are so interesting; a lot of them are only 15 minutes long, but you get a little snippet into what it's like to live in a different political regime.

And have you been in contact with filmmakers who have won awards at Watersprite in the past?

Will McGregor, the maker of a film called *Who's Afraid of a Water Sprite*, entered and won 'Film of the Year' at our very first competition, which inspired the name for the current festival. He went on to secure funding from the BFI in collaboration with Watersprite patrons and trustees for his first feature-length film. Since then he has directed TV shows, including Channel 4's *Misfits*, and even directed a really cool commercial for the Super Bowl. And we supported last year's Film of the Year winner Nirajan Raj Bhetwal with the aim of funding part of his film about the effect of the 2015 earthquake in his native Nepal.

It seems like the festival has quite an international scope. Is there a lot of Cambridge involvement as well?

The Cambridge involvement is really where the events kick in. For example, we have two events in particular aimed at filmmakers in Cambridge: 'Script Lab', where winners of our 'Script Lab' competition receive tailored advice on their scripts with top script developers, and 'So You Think You Can Pitch?', where you pitch your idea in under two minutes to a panel

of industry executives, with the winner bagging a free trip to Pinewood Studios.

Why should students get involved in Watersprite?

The thing that makes Watersprite unique is that it's a completely free festival; there are no submission fees for the filmmakers and all of the events are free to go to. But also you can learn so much from these industry experts in a very intimate environment, not only in terms of filmmaking, but also from a political and ethical point of view. For example, Marco Orsini is flying over from Monaco; he is the founder of the International Emerging Film Talent Association and is holding a conference at the Cannes Film Festival, and he will be giving a talk about the ethics of documentary filmmaking, having spent a lot of time in countries involved in the refugee crisis. He is a fascinating character and to be able to ask his point of view on so many topics is a really enriching experience.

And, finally, do you see Watersprite expanding in the future?

We're already doing that bit by bit. This year we've launched a new award called 'Filmmaker of the Future', in an attempt to recognise vaster filmic talents. But, if it were possible from a managerial point of view, we could expand the festival and possibly have other Watersprites popping up around the world. If we had Watersprites in other countries, and worked with foreign universities, then we could showcase the best student talent. Sundance have done it – why not us?

Watersprite is on 4th-6th March.



SARAH DORÉ

NO LAUGHING MATTER

discusses what happens when comedy goes too far

entitled to make jokes about any subject that they like, but this does not mean that they should, or that we have to give them a platform. Some of Frankie Boyle's jokes on sensitive topics – such as pornography or female masturbation – are genuinely funny. There is a reason why he is a successful comedian. However, part of this is due to the shock factor. Watching *Mock the Week*, for instance, you can clearly see that Boyle relies heavily on swearing, insults and jokes on controversial topics. None of this is bad in and of itself. The problem with this kind of offensive comedy is that it often targets the most marginalised groups in society. Take, for example, the recent controversy surrounding the 'comedian' Dapper Laughs. Dapper Laughs became famous for a series of short vines, before making the move to ITV 2 with a show entitled *Dapper Laughs: On the Pull*. In this, he set himself up as a 'dating expert', offering advice to men on how to attract women. His advice, however, was anything but helpful. Dapper's version of comedy involved harassing, insulting and belittling multiple women, often using derogatory or sexist language.

There is nothing innovative in this. It is not new, exciting or unusual to dismiss and belittle women. When Dapper Laughs insults and degrades women, he behaves in exactly the same way as the men who shout at women in the street. He is engaging in the same kind of behaviour as the drunk 'lads' in Cindies who refuse to take no for an answer. He is perpetuating a culture in which 'lads' can make whatever jokes they like about women, no matter how offensive or sexist, and it is classed as 'banter'. It is the same kind of humour that Facebook pages such as The

Lad Bible, UniLad and the Tasteless Gentlemen trade in to get the maximum number of likes and shares. Legitimising this kind of humour creates an environment where women's safety is put in jeopardy, and sexist tropes and ideas are justified.

The same argument can be made for other comedic shows in the media. *Family Guy* often toes the line between satire and offensiveness, with jokes often focused on disabilities, self-harm, ethnic minorities and paedophilia. One episode, however, highlights just how problematic such humour can be. An episode in the eighth season, entitled 'Quagmire's Dad', deals with one of the protagonists discovering and dealing with the revelation that his father is actually a trans woman and is planning to transition. The episode handles the issue appallingly, making multiple transphobic and transmisogynist comments throughout the episode. These kinds of jokes have painful and real effects for transgender people, and transgender women in particular. It is dehumanising, opening up the possibility for prejudice and even violence against trans women.

At its worst, this is what offensive comedy does; it punches down rather than up, relying on tired stereotypes about the most vulnerable in society. Good jokes either punch up or rely on other means to generate humour. So many comedians from Charlie Brooker and Cameron Esposito to Amy Poehler and Tina Fey show how funny comedy can be when it's not degrading minority groups. This is the kind of comedy we should be celebrating: smart, witty and genuinely funny. The likes of Dapper Laughs and Frankie Boyle can't compare to that.



What counts as funny, and what counts as offensive? The line can often seem to be drawn very thinly between the two, and more than one British comedian has recently become embroiled in controversy over the content of their jokes. The obvious example here is Frankie Boyle, whose joke topics have ranged from paedophilia to Katie Price's disabled son, and from pornography to Jimmy Savile. Some

of these jokes have caused widespread offence, and even demands in the media for Boyle to apologise to those he has insulted. Several of Boyle's jokes – including the infamous ones made about the Queen and Rebecca Adlington – have been investigated by the BBC to see if they breach guidelines. Is such humour acceptable? Or can comedians go too far? On the one hand, no one wants to limit free speech. Comedians are of course



VITTORIA FORLITI

OBITUARY: UMBERTO ECO

"Books are not made to be believed,
but to be subjected to inquiry..."

"When we consider a book, we mustn't ask ourselves what it says but what it means" (from *The Name of the Rose*). It is this very quest to unravel the literal, to decipher the "signs" of communication and culture, which runs through Umberto Eco's prolific career as a writer of fiction and philosophy, and as one of the foremost European intellectuals of the age. Whether he was decoding quibbles of medieval theology, Joyce's *Ulysses*, or such disparate phenomena of mass culture as Charlie Brown and Italian TV personality cults, Umberto Eco's clinical eye will not fail to continue striking readers with its un-

flinching rigour after his death at the age of 84 last week.

Umberto Eco is perhaps best known abroad for his debut novel, *The Name of the Rose* (1980). Translated into 40 languages and having sold more than 10 million copies, this is a thrilling

murder mystery set in a 14th-century monastery, where for seven (symbolic) days we follow the steps of friar William of Baskerville (the Conan Doyle allusions are never far below the surface), as he moves against the dramatic Alpine peaks with the confidence of a proto-Sherlock Holmes.

At the risk of spoiling the mystery of the title, the concept of "the name of the rose" well illustrates one of the central concerns of Eco's entire body of work: based on the verse of Bernard of Cluny's *De Contemptu Mundi* "Stat rosa pristina nomine, nomina nuda tenemus" ("Yesterday's rose remains only in name, we hold only naked names"), it is a useful cipher for understanding the lesser-known branch of critical theory that is semiotics, to which Eco dedicated the greater and self-reportedly more "serious" part of his intellectual endeavours. Essentially concerned with the study of sign dynamics and meaning, semiotic theory tacitly shapes the thinking of many major philosophers in the assumptions they make about the symbolic valence of language.

As Professor of Semiotics at the University of Bologna, some of his seminal works of philosophy include *The Open Work* (1962) and *The Role of the Reader* (1979) which, following Roland Barthes, define the "open text" as one that inherently allows

for multiple interpretations, and the delightful *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods* (1994), a collection of "wanderings" through Agatha Christie all the way to Little Red Riding Hood, about different types of reading experiences.

Alongside his active academic and journalistic career, Eco continued to write novels at once intensely scholarly and wildly popular. *Foucault's Pendulum* (1988) sketches a growing obsession with a conspiracy theory of the protagonists' own invention, involving a Knight Templar sect planning to take over the world. *Baudolino* (2000), another historical novel, is a picaresque narrative of the life of a consummate liar, and a veritable encyclopaedia of the Middle Ages. More recently, Eco displayed an interest in modern history through *The Prague Cemetery* (2010), centred on the fabrication of the anti-Semitic pamphlet *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. The novel that would sadly be his last is *Number Zero*, published in 2015, a satirical look at Mussolini's legacy and at the infamous bribery scandals of the Italian 1990s.

Umberto Eco has sometimes been criticised for writing in an overly journalistic or ostentatious style, as well as for the hype surrounding his fiction and public persona in Italy. I will certainly remember him as the venerated intellectual whose articles about the value of studying the classics our teachers used to declaim quasi-religiously in class. But, above all, Eco deserves to be remembered for what he has taught and still has to teach us about our relation to the world of symbols we inhabit. As we weave our way through our own universe of verbal and visual signs, Umberto Eco shows us that the boundary between the symbolic and the literal is often unstable, and the apparently literal and self-explanatory are often the most esoteric and arcane "signs" of them all.



ANNA'S CULINARY CORNER

As much as I love food, it has caused me its fair share of heartbreak and disappointment. Like any intense relationships, I guess, our culinary affairs have their ups and downs: we go to food for comfort, shun it when it goes cold, fantasise and indulge in its many pleasures... You get the point – I'll leave the analogy at that. I've certainly suffered a lot of food-related heartache – thankfully not yet of the literal artery clogging variety. There was my discovery of low-fat hummus that revealed that standard hummus was not the epitome of healthy eating I had envisaged but was in fact a rather calorific snack option. There was the revelation that, while flavoured yoghurts may well have some calcium in them, they're also packed with sugar, and don't get me started on the not-so-innocent Innocent smoothies. A lot of this comes down to the preaching and myths that surround all things culinary.

Curvy croissants

In fact, the latest blow didn't come in the form of yet another supposedly healthy food favourite turning out to be bad company but as a realisation of how I'd been doing it all wrong. Last week, Tesco announced that it would be discontinuing its curvy croissants and from now on selling

only the straight variety. The news has sparked something of an outrage among French chefs and bakers. However, what the culinary geniuses are aghast at is not the shape itself (the true form of the croissant is a matter of debate) but the reason behind Tesco's decision: the supermarket argues that straight croissants are easier for the British to cover in butter and jam.

The jam debate

But what's the problem with that, I hear you ask. Take a deep breath and make sure you're sitting steadily: jam and butter on croissants are a definite non non in la cuisine française. Richard Bertinet, the Bath-based French baker of Bertinet Bakery fame, seems genuinely puzzled by the butter debacle: "I don't understand that. A croissant is full of butter already," he commented to the *Guardian*. Another French chef, Jean-Christophe Novelli, was also far from pleased: "A croissant is something that you dip into a bowl of chocolate or coffee. But never in my whole life have I met someone from France who eats a croissant with jam." And with this, part of my life shattered: I'd thought the French were the sort of people who believed in the more-butter-better-pastries dogma. But instead it turns out that all the times I've been

leisurely buttering my croissants in my artfully arranged beret with Edith Piaf's dreamy tones playing in the background have been nothing but a lie. Buttered croissants, we're never ever getting back together.

Deadly bananas

It's not all disillusionment and pain, though. On the rare occasion, my food fears have turned out to be unfounded and I've been reunited with culinary ex-lovers. Most recently, this happened with bananas (nothing Freudian going on here, I promise!). Type into Google any combination of 'banana', 'safe', and 'too many', maybe throwing in 'potassium' for good measure and you'll be treated with riveting hits ranging from the blue-eyed 'Is it safe to eat four bananas a day?' to the rather more morbid 'How many bananas does it take to kill you?' (don't even mention the cyanide in apple seeds saga). Now, bananas are a solid source of potassium, which, like so many chemical elements, is essential to life but lethal in extremely high doses (cardiac arrest would be the way to go in this case). With potassium chloride featuring in US lethal injections, it's no wonder that there is so much banana-induced fear around; add to this the fact that bananas, precisely because of their potassium content, may trigger

sensors at US ports used to detect smuggled nuclear material, and suddenly banana bread won't be on the top of your dessert list anymore. I don't like to admit it, but for a long time I restricted my banana intake to one a day in an effort to avoid a premature death.

Doing your research

However, doing a clever thing called using reliable sources reveals that you'd have to munch your way through 400 bananas a day to reach levels risking cardiac arrest. Even to reach your daily recommended intake of potassium (for a healthy person, kidney disease is a different story, sorry), you need at least seven and a half bananas. So, while I may have lost my buttered and jammed-up croissants, I'm enjoying getting back together with bananas. In yoghurt, porridge, muffins, on their own – this is a culinary reunion to be celebrated.

Yes, things can get tumultuous when dealing with all the hype, paranoia and rights and wrongs that surround food. But with food, as in life, there comes a point of 'who cares?'. I've got my bananas back, and maybe one day I'll proudly top my croissants with jam and butter. Or even peanut butter. But that might be too daring for now at least.

IN BRIEF: OSCARS PICKS

Naomi Sutton on all you need to know about this year's Oscar nominations



01 ROOM

This indie drama follows the trials of Joy and her son Jack inside the shed formally known as 'room', which lies commonplace in the back yard of the man who lured her into imprisonment years before. It is effectively a snow globe with the glass blacked out, the turmoil of comprehending a life outside is exceptionally acted and directed with an immersing elegance. Stressful, engaging and manging to avoid the Anakin-curse by creating a sympathetic and multi-faceted child protagonist who isn't entirely irritating, *Room* thoroughly deserves to win.

02 SPOTLIGHT

Spotlight was almost certainly conceived with a gold-plated britannium glint in director Tom McCarthy's eye. The film checks the boxes of a dedicated array of famous actors to parade and preaching on a controversial topic, this time paedophilia in the Catholic Church. The most irritating aspect of its obvious baiting is that *Spotlight* is actually a neat and exceptional film. It lacks the visual glow of some of the other competitors but it remains story-telling at its finest. It might be damaged by the fact that it's exactly the film one would expect to win, especially given the victory of the unorthodox *Birdman* last year.

03 THE MARTIAN

Effectively a two-hour Skype call where Matt Damon never hangs up, *The Martian* is charming, exhilarating and significantly less of a migraine than comparable space flick *Interstellar*. Mark Watney, a botanist, is stranded on Mars and naturally documents his relationship with his new residence.

With a highly likeable performance from Matt Damon, and significant plot points that revolve around potatoes, *The Martian* retains a consensus of being not only an excellent film but one that stands out among the other nominees.

04 THE BIG SHORT

Banking is not always the most glamorous of topics on film, but *The Big Short* is just glossy enough to make it interesting for its runtime. Effectively a two-hour documentary, *The Big Short* follows various investors who bet 'against' the banks in predicting the housing market crash that occurred in 2008. Containing mixed performances, with the exception of Christian Bale, *The Big Short* is not quite as shocking as it would like. Solid direction and a sharp script do give it an edge, however, meaning that *The Big Short* deserves the unintentionally demeaning title of dark horse in this year's race.

05 THE REVENANT

The Revenant has momentum behind it from the BAFTAs and Golden Globes, and has the statuette to lose. It follows Hugh Glass, played by Leonardo DiCaprio who, after the infamous bear mauling, is left to fend for himself in an unforgiving glacial environment. Simple revenge storytelling at heart, *The Revenant* is a long and arduous trek, visually stunning and the antithesis to the plot-driven, intricate dialogue of films such as *Spotlight*. Like contracting chickenpox, *The Revenant* is a film that can only really be experienced once. Not quite as good as you'd expect but memorable enough to deserve to win.

06 BROOKLYN

Lacking the impact of its peers, *Brooklyn* recounts the tale of an Irish immigrant's experiences in, unsurprisingly, Brooklyn. Undoubtedly helped by not having to feign an Irish accent, an understated yet powerful performance from Saoirse Ronan makes all the difference. A film with as much gentle soul as *Brooklyn* is always a gratifying experience, if not as memorable as some of its fellow nominees.

While it lacks the lasting impression to win, it certainly carries the merits to deserve to be considered.

The Brit Awards: British artists upstaged at their own party. Another year, another February punctuated by an array of self-congratulatory awards ceremonies. On Wednesday night it was the turn of the Brits: the annual opportunity for the great and the good of the British music industry to unite for an evening of back-slapping, brown-nosing and casual racism. However, if one viewed the show with sufficiently low expectations, the uneasy combination of exciting live performances, light entertainment and touching tributes was definitely worth watching. Conventional Brits wisdom dictates that the real interest isn't to be found in the winners or nominees themselves. Particularly with regard to the British categories, 2016 was no exception. There were no surprises on a night that saw James Bay pip the excellent Jamie XX to Best British Male Solo Artist. Moreover, I'm almost embarrassed for Coldplay, whose fourth award for Best British Group came as no surprise to anyone, least of all the bands themselves.

Thankfully, the international awards were altogether more interesting. Justin Bieber's award for International Male Solo Artist was thoroughly deserved given the success of his

reinvention, even if it did come at the expense of Kendrick Lamar. It was also a delight to see Björk, and her wonderful headgear, win the corresponding female award. It's worth noting that in the international categories the nominees were far more racially diverse.

While this can in part be explained by the comparatively high profile of US artists, it's a shame that the Brits seemed more like a celebration of America's vibrant urban music scene than our own. In response to widespread criticism a Brits spokesperson said that "The artists who are honoured tend to be those who have achieved the very highest levels of chart success." This is simply not good enough. How can British BME artists achieve significant commercial success when their own industry's awards show refuses to acknowledge their existence?

Once again, the live performances were the truly memorable aspect of the show. Unfortunately, while

ALEX MISTLIN

THE BRIT AWARDS

On how British artists were upstaged at their own party

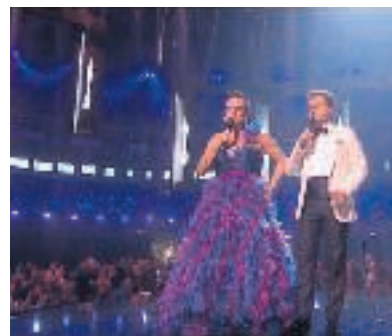
Rihanna's lighting technician deserves some credit here; her performance looked great on TV and its thoroughly modern feel supplemented the grating beat of 'Work'. Drake's sexually charged appearance during the song managed to stay just the right side of creepy and in all it was a highly successful return to our screens for Rihanna. Moreover, the decision to allow Drake's fellow Canadian artist, The Weeknd, to showcase his unique brand of dead-eyed soul on Primetime ITV was a masterstroke. His short performance of 'The Hills' was cheerily uncensored and its chorus of "I only fuck you when it's half-past five" provided the provocative edge that the night was desperately lacking.

In reality, the sole ray of light from a British perspective was the imperious Adele. In total, she won four awards: Global Success and British Female, Single and Album. No one can deny that she deserves her success. At an awards show that predominantly

exists to recognise the most commercially successful artists of the last twelve months it's no surprise to see Adele mopping up given that 25 is still sitting pretty at the top of the album chart three months after its release. It was fitting that her (heavily bleeped) acceptance speeches went uninterrupted, not only because she was so rudely cut off in 2012 but also because she is single-handedly responsible for the rude health of the British Music Industry.

The most significant portion of the night, though, were the moving (if repetitive) tributes to the late David Bowie. In particular, Gary Oldman's declaration that "the world lost a man, an artist of transcendent talent" added a touch of class to proceedings. The eulogies were followed by a medley of Bowie hits performed by the astute pairing of his backing band (who last performed together in 2004) with Lorde, who last year Bowie himself anointed "the future of music".

While her undeniable talent allowed her to do justice to an emotional rendition of 'Life on Mars', it's a shame that it added to the sense that this current generation of British artists lacks the originality to do David Bowie's legacy justice.



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Committee Applications for the Mays XXIV are Now Open!

'The Mays' is an annual anthology showcasing the best of Cambridge & Oxford's student writing, artwork and creative pursuits. This year's Editor has been appointed but there's still plenty of roles left to fill on the committee for The Mays 2016!

See below for the list of available roles and if there's a role you don't see but think you could help with? Then go ahead and drop us an application anyway. Get your applications in by Sunday 28th February at noon with a copy of your CV and a cover letter (no more than one side of A4 in PDF format).

Please provide details of the following:

- The position you're applying for
- Your previous relevant experience
- Your year, course and other commitments

Mays@varsity.co.uk

Available Positions:

- Publicity (Campaigns, stunts, hard media)
- Social Media (Management, online publicity campaigns, content)
- Events (Fundraisers, open mic, mingles, coffee and collaborate, drinks nights, book launch)
- Web Editor (Website management, creation, collaboration with design team)
- Design (Publicity artwork, book design, campaign and brand continuity)
- Arts administration (Communications, assisting the editor, organisation, ideas)

THE VARSITY CRYPTIC CROSSWORD

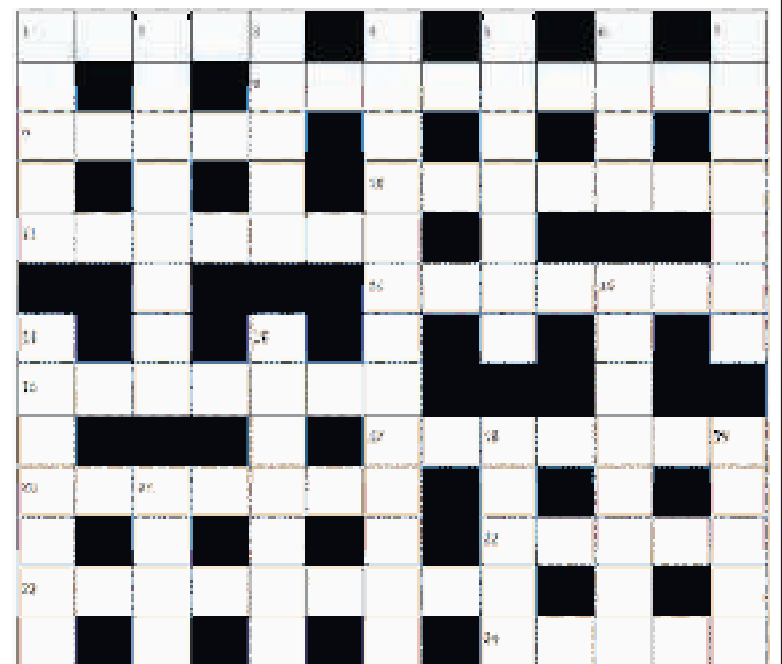
Set by Genie

Across

1. Happy British girl (5)
8. Strange drip on tie. Damnation! (9)
9. Fish in corner (5)
10. 300 Belgian bombs enclosed in container for vegetable (7)
11. Sound of King in hysterics (7)
12. Money for treats (7)
16. Analyse sporting event on the radio (7)
17. I start to blub loudly in shout for brother (7)
20. Wicked relation with arrogant aspects (7)
22. Condemn Bishop who can't walk (5)
23. Be so close to horrific annihilation (9)
24. Shelter marks City (5)

Down

1. Sauce eaten on mountain (5)
2. Self-seekers, intoxicated, judge drinks (8)
3. Talk to son at the top (5)
4. Inelegant prayer without a bit of finesse (13)



5. Game played in dance following quiet (7)
6. Bread is pain in the ass (4)
7. Opposite within poetry (7)
13. Prisoner with partial tic is close (8)
14. Overhang in rocky road is helpful (7)
15. Massage girl with disease (7)
18. Racket made by infant learner (5)
19. Abrupt guest has second thought (5)
21. Clansmen regularly have argument (4)

Please submit answers to editor@varsity.co.uk.



ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

An anonymous student describes his experience of dealing with alcoholism at university

The 'cause' of alcoholism has long puzzled doctors, psychiatrists, priests and laymen. A consensus is emerging within the scientific community that part of the answer is genetic. The results of brain studies in the 1990s suggest that for a certain proportion of the population, consumption of alcohol, or another addictive drug, triggers a unique reaction. Unusually high levels of activity in the midbrain produce a craving sensation. The individual then develops a mental obsession with the substance, which requires him to seek more and more of it.

This genetic predisposition seems to apply to about 10 per cent of people. The addiction specialist David Smallwood gives this figure in his book *Who Says I'm an Addict*, published in 2014. He cites an interesting example to make his case, which makes clear the distinction between physical dependency and addiction. During the war in Vietnam, between one-quarter and one-third of US service personnel used heroin, many becoming physically dependent.

However, when the war finished, around 90 per cent of these discontinued their habit once they had detoxed from the substance and did not use it again once back on American soil. It was the remaining 10 per cent, who continued to use the drug for the rest of the lives, which Smallwood identifies as suffering from the disease of addiction. They had a genetic predisposition that meant that they were vulnerable to becoming drug addicts before the drug was first administered.

This has some potentially disturbing implications for students at the University of Cambridge. Many of us have had little or no exposure to addictive substances before we begin at university. But within hours of being dropped off by Mum and Dad we are exposed to one of the most addictive of them all: alcohol. We are therefore in a position similar to that of the US service personnel in Vietnam. We are exposed to a drug that for some of us will change our lives irrevocably.

“

I WAS INCAPABLE OF STAYING AWAY FROM ALCOHOL ON MY OWN

My Freshers' Week began with Pub Golf, in which merely by purchasing the ticket I was entitled to one pint of Guinness, two Jägerbombs, and discounts on my first three vodka mixers. I enjoyed myself tremendously but ended up drinking more than intended. The following night I tried to limit myself to three drinks but proved unable to do so. This happened the following night, and the night after that, and the night after that.

Very soon I was incapable of drinking moderately. My first two years at Cambridge were characterised by different attempts to control my consumption of alcohol. I tried implementing a weekly quota; only

drinking after 7pm; and only drinking socially. These resolutions worked for a time but eventually I broke all one of them. In my second year, alcohol was a fixture in my daily routine. After a day in the library I had to have three cans of Strongbow in the evening to unwind.

The obvious answer was to quit drinking entirely. This I vowed to do at the beginning of my third year. I also began to see a private counsellor, to whom my college referred me. He told me to abstain from alcohol completely until such a point as we discovered the 'root cause' of my drinking. His theory was that there must have been some traumatic event in my childhood, the memory of which compelled me to drink so heavily.

What neither of us realised was that I was by this stage incapable of staying away from alcohol on my own will-power for any significant period of time. For the first few weeks of term I managed to abstain on weekdays, only to drink myself unconscious on weekends. By November I could not manage even this. I would resolve freshly each Monday to stay sober for the week, only to end up drunk by Tuesday or Wednesday night.

It was clear to friends and tutors that I was in grave physical danger. Mercifully, my college allowed me to intermit my studies and sent me to a detox centre in London. It was at this point that I was introduced to Alcoholics Anonymous (AA).

I began attending AA meetings while inside the detox centre and continued

to do so after I was discharged. I was introduced to alcoholics who had recovered from their condition and who had not had a drink or drug in many years. I told them about my drinking pattern and how I had arrived at AA. They told me that I was definitely an alcoholic, based on the symptoms I described. They then told me that if I continued attending AA meetings and followed the programme of recovery known as the 'Twelve Steps', I would never need to drink again. Like them, I could stay sober indefinitely.

“

NO ONE CAN RELATE TO AN ALCOHOLIC LIKE ANOTHER ALCOHOLIC

I spent the remainder of that academic year doing what was suggested. I went to AA meetings in London and began working the 'Twelve Steps', as they are set out in the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*, published in 1939, from which the organisation takes its name. My mental obsession with alcohol was quickly alleviated, so that I could be around it (for instance in bars and pubs) and yet have no urge to consume it.

I have not had a drink since intermitting from Cambridge in November 2014. Provided I continue to go to meetings and to work on the 'Twelve Steps', there is no reason why I will

not be able to stay sober for the rest of my life.

The format of AA meetings varies. Sometimes a sober member of the organisation will tell his or her story. Sometimes there is a general discussion. Why these meetings have such a powerful effect is something of a mystery. Part of the answer is that they enable identification. The alcoholic newcomer is able to hear stories which resemble his or her own. This makes it easy for the individual to relate to the other members of the group. It is often said that no one can relate to an alcoholic as can another alcoholic. This is surely the basis of AA's success.

21 AA meetings take place each week in Cambridge. Anyone who thinks they may have a problem with alcohol can simply turn up at one of these.

On Friday night there is a meeting specifically for young people. Several undergraduate and postgraduate students at the University of Cambridge attend this. If you are considering AA but would like to meet other students in the organisation first, this is the meeting to attend. It takes place in the Friends' Meeting House, 12 Jesus Lane and starts at 7.15pm. Details of other meetings can be found on the AA website.

The author of this article has asked to remain anonymous. However, they are happy to answer queries. If you have any questions about the content of this article, or about anything else to do with alcoholism or AA, please email cambridgeaaqueries@gmail.com

JAMES DOWNS

CAMBRIDGE, WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT EATING DISORDERS

On starting the conversation in Eating Disorders Awareness Week

The Empire State Building lit up for Eating Disorders Awareness Week

Thinking of eating disorders conjures images of painful thinness, starvation and going to any lengths to avoid eating.

For many people, including a proportion of health professionals, eating disorders are represented by anorexia nervosa and the profile of a middle-class, young white female. However, people who experience an eating disorder and are diagnosed with anorexia are actually in the minority. Increasingly, sufferers are more likely to be male, diagnoses are seen earlier than ever before and people are maintaining or even developing eating disorders well into later life.

If we make assumptions about the types of people who struggle with eating problems, then we are at risk of making it more difficult for sufferers to see their often hidden experiences as real for them. This only helps maintain the shame and stigma that often goes hand in hand with eating problems and prevents people from accessing the support they need.

When I developed anorexia nervosa, people around me found it hard to recognise the cause of my shockingly thin appearance for what it was – not an underlying physical health problem but a deep psychological disease rooted in an array of predispositions and life experiences. Surely I couldn't 'want' to look as thin as females with anorexia, because that body image isn't upheld as an ideal for males. Perhaps my presentation could better be explained by another diagnosis – or even several diagnoses – because a boy with an eating disorder must be an inherently more complex case than a girl.

Also, how could an intelligent person be overwhelmed with

something so outwardly irrational, and not think their way out of their mental illness? The refusal of others to accept something that didn't make sense at face value, and their disregarding the emotional as invalid, ultimately led to me being denied any specialist treatment for six years (despite having a terrible quality of life and high level of physical risk during this time). The personal costs were huge.

Despite having stopped attending school, by the end of my A-levels I had a place at Cambridge to read Music. I never took it up. With each deferred year that passed without the support I needed, my eating problems became more and more entrenched, and my attempts to seek help failed. I was 'too unwell' for the treatment available: a 'difficult' patient. Rather than these being compelling reasons for treatment, the withholding of support undermined my sense of what was real and destroyed any hope of recovery.

“

UNIVERSITY IS A DIFFICULT TIME FOR PEOPLE WITH EATING PROBLEMS

The eating disorder could always be relied on, even if it came with the cost of having to withdraw from a degree, losing friends or ending up in hospital. Making the choice to replace a way of regulating difficult emotions with a more positive way of being has been a daily decision: one which step-by-step has enabled me to come to Cambridge eight years later.

There are so many ways in which going to university can be a challenging experience. Compared to the sort of great time we think we 'ought' to be having the minute we arrive in a new environment, the reality for many students is that adjusting is a struggle. How reassuring it is to discover that you aren't the only one finding it hard to meet people, feeling an imposter or grappling with keeping up with the demands of your course. It can seem as though everyone around you is hitting the ground running and having the times of their lives, but there are invisible struggles, people whose inner reality is a stark contrast to their outer appearance.

This disparity is also a hallmark of those mental health problems which thrive on the combination of being hidden, major life changes and social isolation, and so it is no surprise that new students are especially vulnerable to deteriorations in their mental health. Making the transition to university is widely recognised to be an especially difficult time for people who have experienced eating problems. There are near-perfect conditions for maintaining disordered eating and every reason for needing something to rely on in the midst of so much pressure and uncertainty.

Having been through a recovery and being well-versed in the support and skills needed to be well, I still had a major relapse into bulimia after coming to Cambridge in October. Instead of meeting people or engaging with my course, things quickly became about living between trips to Sainsbury's and spending hours on end in my darkened room eating until the pain of fullness was alleviated by vomiting. Getting back on track only happened following a sobering time in Addenbrooke's, and

vomiting copious amounts of black blood after damaging my stomach, when I was reminded of the fragility of recovery and decided to seek support.

“

THESE PROBLEMS NEED TO BE ON THE UNIVERSITY'S RADAR GOING FORWARD

Despite not hearing anything about mental health in the lengthy inductions at the start of the year (but plenty about bike thefts and Wifi access), I've found that excellent support exists in the university, from tutors and nurses to the Disability Resource Centre and Counselling Service. I would encourage anyone with current or past experience of eating problems to think more than I did about the challenges of university life and not be as ashamed as I felt for many years to seek help.

There is so much on offer more widely to tend to your wellbeing, from exercise classes to mindfulness meditation, with the most important thing being to do what works for you, irrespective of feeling the need to conform to traditions and timetables or any particular student lifestyle.

The struggle with eating problems isn't confined to those arriving at university for the first time either. As well as being a centre of academic excellence, providing great opportunities for learning, working and growing as a person, Cambridge can provide just as much in terms of extreme pressure, lack of direction

and loneliness. It produces disparity and intensity, along with encouraging perfectionism and lengthy periods of isolation interspersed with vibrant social functions which often revolve around food and drink.

The tradition of formal hall is an especially exclusive one; the institutional focus on eating and drinking means that a significant number of people experiencing eating problems potentially face barriers to participation. These events are currently a hugely important part of Cambridge life in terms of making connections, engaging in intellectual discussion and having a sense of belonging.

If the university is serious about inclusiveness then it must consider the huge challenges that such central traditions might pose to the significant and growing number of people with eating problems, and think seriously about their place in the present day.

Eating Disorders Awareness Week this year focuses on eating disorders in the workplace, promoting awareness and reducing the stigma and discrimination faced by people with eating problems in their day-to-day occupations. With the highest mortality of any mental health problem and an often 'all-consuming' and debilitating nature, eating disorders are a serious and complex concern.

Living with an eating disorder and the process of recovery are enough, without additional barriers to working and engagement.

The existence of these problems needs to be very much on the radar of the university going forward if people with eating disorders are not to be disadvantaged in their occupation as a result of ill health.



EMILY FISHMAN

FASHION AND SOCIAL MEDIA

on the impact of modern technology
on traditional practices

Social media is all around us – Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat... the list is endless. It provides a platform to help us connect with the world around us and makes up a firm part of the younger generation's lives. But the effects that social media has had on the fashion industry have been quite profound. Social media is a new powerful marketing tool, which has the ability to shape our behaviour and our consumer habits. It also enables us to connect with the rest of the world, creating networks of a global scale.

In many ways social media has the ability to change the fashion industry – we are all 'fast' consumers, we desire the latest trend immediately. For example, at this week's London Fashion Week show Burberry have just announced that instead of waiting weeks or months for people to be able to purchase their designs, because of the added pressure of social media, they have decided as a company to release their fashion to the masses as soon as the models set foot off the runway. This is quite unprecedented, and shows the speed at which we as consumers participate in social media and the entire process of consumption.

The 'age of the selfie' has not just enabled us to share fashion but has

also created new types of fashion and popularity. Remember the dress last year – was it 'blue and black' or 'white and gold'? After the mass popularity on social media, it became an explosion and a fashion statement on websites in hours. Clearly what social media enables is time and efficiency. Rather than waiting for the latest catwalk design or new clothing range from a high street store, as consumers we can simply turn to our smart phones and browse Instagram for the latest ideas and inspiration, or look to Facebook and observe what our friends were wearing at the latest party or club for ideas. Not only this, but social media has also enabled us to share our ideas and inspiration.

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THE EVERYDAY BECOMES PART OF THE FASHION WORLD

Yet at the same time social media has placed more pressure on the world of fashion. There is more embarrassment in being seen in the same outfit twice and more attention paid to what you are wearing. A similar experience

happened to me this term, which fully exemplified the role of social media in our lives. Getting ready for half way hall, I was conscious of not wearing a dress I had already worn for a formal, pictures of which had been posted on Facebook and Instagram. To avoid the stigma of appearing as if I only had one choice of dress, I chose something different, but the entire thought process made it clear how important our choices are now within the world of social media.

Additionally, social media almost functions as a form of unofficial and free advertising, although companies can pay for advertisements on social media – the main marketing strategy ultimately comes through us. We as consumers are responsible for our own fashion choices and social media is able to publicise this. Social media puts life into fashion; the everyday becomes part of the fashion world; an Instagram photo drinking coffee with a Cambridge satchel, a Facebook selfie wearing a Topshop top, or a tweet regarding purchasing a new Ted Baker dress.

Social media sustains our growing demand and consumption, while at the same time altering the process of our consumer habits and speeding up how people view the world of fashion.



INSTAGRAM: FASHION FRIEND OR FOE?

Laura Day explores the positives and negatives
of the new wave of #instafashion

Nowadays, most of the world appears to have Instagram. Whether it be for personal or professional use, the hashtag has expanded in use, and filters suddenly make beautiful landscapes even more dreamlike than they actually are. The search tool allows any user, anywhere in the world, to search a specific hashtag, drawing up a plethora of photos related to the word. Search '#beach' and you'll be overwhelmed with images from Australia's Gold Coast, the white sands of Hawaii and, of course, the obligatory thousands of pictures of men and women clad in skimpy bathing suits.

But is Instagram a fashion friend, or a fashion fiend? In one sense, it's a free international platform through which a designer can exhibit their work to the entire world. The power of social media cannot be

underestimated in such circumstances when, just by the simple tap of a finger on screen, and image can be shared between hundreds more people.

This week, as London Fashion Week plays out, my Instagram feed is full of images from the women working at *Tatler*, *Vogue*, and *Glamour* magazines. Instagram allows me the chance to catch a glimpse into their star-studded lives, from the comfort of my own college room.

I needn't be front row at Mulberry England's runway show – I can instead spend an essay break looking at Alexandra Shulman's (Editor of *Vogue* UK) Instagram feed.

For wannabe designers, models, and fashion critics, Instagram is a favourite haunting ground. Building up a social media profile is safe



and easy, and allows instant global presence, despite being sat in the heart of bustling London, or hidden in the Scottish mountains. The humble phone camera has quickly become the passport to Instafame, and allows connectivity between Facebook, Twitter, and many more social media outlets. There's no room to hide.

But maybe this is the problem. Once a photo has been posted, and the hashtags carefully crafted, there is no room to go back. Almost instantly, the photo will be viewed and liked, not only by your friends, but also by complete strangers from all corners of the globe.

Because of the anonymity of Instagram profiles, who knows who is looking at the images, and to what end?

While Instagram may remain a place of inspiration, it can also be the location of the darker underbelly of the fashion world. If you search for the hashtag '#ed', thousands of images of thin girls and guys suddenly pop up.

Photos of models on catwalks also appear, with critical captions from users, chastising them for their weight and appearance. Instagram is a dangerous game to play at times, and this darker edge is the reason why.

So the next time you're on Instagram, think about what you're posting, and the implications of it.

Want to post an image of you in a bikini at the beach? Go for it, but do spare a thought for who may be viewing it, and what hashtag you've used to get them there.



REPOST TILL YOU DROP

Ana Persinaru looks at the evolution of the hashtag

U m, so, I guess this is it. Hi, my name is Ana and I'm addicted to shopping. What's worse, social media made me do it!

Like the rest of us, the first thing I do before going to bed or after waking up is scroll through all my social media platforms. All of them. Pinterest, Tumblr, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook...the list goes on. And what I always see is beautiful flatlays, #ootds and, more recently, snapchats of poised models parading the crème de la crème of haute couture at London Fashion Week that make me yearn for a luxuriously fashionable lifestyle. Retail is funny like that; it makes you want to buy into an ideal lifestyle that, admittedly, makes you very happy, if only temporarily, and social media is proving to be the perfect marriage between business and aesthetics.

Like many celebrities, shops and fashion brands now use the far-reaching and customisable powers of social media platforms to keep their existing fans in the loop and reward their loyalty as well as to increase their numbers. Think of it as a virtual army of disciples, ready to pounce on every online sale preview, giveaway competition and the like. And who wouldn't?

While an advert in *Vogue* or *Cosmopolitan* would set back a pretty sum off any publicist's budget, posting regular, fun content on Instagram or Facebook is the cheapest and most effective way of promoting a brand. But even so, there are some campaigns that stand out from the boring tweeted links and mannequin posts.

One of them is Mango's S/S 2016 campaign featuring Kendall Jenner that took Instagram by storm. Just

one Instagram post featuring her sees 50 per cent more reddened hearts and, with strong high street competitors like Zara and H&M, Mango sneaks into the lead in terms of cool points just by merging with the social media royalty that is the Kardashian clan.

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THERE ARE MANY TRAPS TO BE AWARE OF

Another example demonstrating the reign of the almighty hashtag and clever promotion is the Marc Jacobs campaign during New York Fashion Week. They had opened a pop-up

store in Manhattan (talk about chic) to launch the new line of the already popular Daisy fragrances. Customers who came in could tweet and Instagram about the collection with the incentive of free gifts, including perfumes, jewellery and accessories. Naturally, this resulted in 13,500 mentions on Twitter and 4,300 'grams – a veritable social media takeover and great 'word of mouth' publicity. And while we're on the topic of Instagram I'll just mention the cool way in which Nine West made every girl's dream of becoming a bonafide model true by having Instagram posts of their customers wearing their shoes digitally displayed in-store.

However, there are many traps to be aware of in this social media game. 33 million followers come with great responsibility and a huge comments section, as Victoria's Secret found out last season during the #PerfectBody

campaign. A line-up of smiling, toned, Amazonian-looking models just in lingerie sat atop the hashtag inviting other women to try on the bra collection and find their perfect fit for their #PerfectBody. Or at least this is what the intention was.

It created a social media frenzy with sizeable backlash at the disregard of body types other than the 'VS angel' and implied fat-shaming. Explanatory and apologetic press releases followed but the post was out for everyone to see and to judge the lack of Mattel-style revamp.

Love it or hate it, fashion social media is here to stay and likely to take over not just your Instagram, but Snapchat and Twitter too. I suggest you save up, go out and get hashtagging. You never know, you might win a Marc Jacobs competition or star in the next Burberry YouTube video...

INSTAGRAM IN NUMBERS

68%
OF USERS ARE WOMEN

\$1bn
SALE PRICE TO
FACEBOOK IN 2013

96%
OF US FASHION
BRANDS THAT USE IT

3.5m
MOST LIKED PHOTO
IN 2015, OF MODEL
KENDALL JENNER



THE DEATH OF THE SELFIE?

Louis Ashworth muses on the future of a generation's favourite medium

In fashion and social media, there's nothing worse than being trite. Look through the history of the internet, and watch prominent themes rise and fall – if everybody is doing something, that probably means it's time to stop.

So how will the selfie fare? The ubiquitous personal self-shot, which saw its birth in a cascade of bathroom mirrors and duckfaces, found its great utility revolution when

smartphones began to adopt proper front-facing cameras.

Nowadays, the little camera watching you as you flick through Facebook has millions of megapixels, and bests the camera phones of a few years ago.

Everybody takes selfies – your mum, your dad, a monkey, and Kim Kardashian. Most prominently, selfies dominate the pseudo-personal

world of Instagram models – carefully prepared and posed images passed off as spur-of-the-moment snaps.

So will they ever die? Selfie fatigue might set in, and someday this currently popular fashion trend may seem clichéd.

When that happens, who knows what the next big format for social media fashion will be?

THE NIGHT HERON

Eleanor Costello drops in on a rehearsal

Within minutes of meeting the cast of *The Night Heron*, they led me into a dark, dingy cellar and started taking their kit off. I was hoping to expose many details of the production, but I'd uncovered far more than I'd anticipated. I was assured that this was not the norm for every rehearsal; today they were trying on their costumes. They were a weird assortment of outfits - a police costume, willies, pyjamas, a tight black mini skirt, and an old lady's coat. Everyone was very shiftily whenever I asked them about the plot of the play, mumbling something about dark comedy. At one point a seemingly random man turned up to ask if they still needed him to appear stark naked, in the middle of the production. They debated whether to make him wear underwear. I personally always find nudity adds an element of excitement to a production, but I kept this thoughtful observation to myself.

While the cast are performing an energetic game of zip-zag-boing, the staple of any hard-hitting production, I speak to the show's director Naomi Obeng. A quick Google of the play revealed a recurring theme of 'religious symbolism', so I found it wryly amusing that Naomi, Hebrew for 'sweet' and 'agreeable', lives up to her namesake. Softly spoken, she was quietly enthused as I tried to draw her out on the mysterious production.

I open with an easy question; tell me about the play. "That's surprisingly a difficult question," Naomi answers. "It's a very complex play, and every time I think about it, it means something else and it's a different play to me. The main idea is that there are two ex-college gardeners and they live in the Fens and they are on the fringes of society. They are poor and it's winter. They take on a lodger to get some income, and the play unfolds from there."

"It's full of symbolism, it's full of crazy things, and it's very funny. It's a play that you won't see anywhere else. It was written by Jez Butterworth; people will know his other stuff like *Jerusalem* and *Mojo*. This was his second play, written in 2002, and it hasn't been performed very often. It's set in Cambridge, so it shouldn't be something that's unfamiliar to us. The things that they say and the jokes that they make about Cambridge will make people laugh, but also wonder about their role in it all, as students who are on the other side of it. There's definitely a separation between town and gown, and here we're considering a story of people that we see in college but we never really hear about. I really like that. I've often wondered what the college gardeners get up to."

I ask whether working on the play has changed her outlook at all. "Like I said, every time I think about it it's different. The first time I read it, I thought 'This is really shocking, these characters are just horrible, horrible people.' And then when I started casting, and we've had actual physical people playing them, I've become more sympathetic, particularly to the character Bolla. She's a lodger in the gardeners' home."

When I read it I just couldn't understand her, but now that we've been going through her character development I can understand where she's coming from. In a way that's a bit worrying, because if you see what she does in the play you think that her actions aren't particularly justified. She's just come out of prison and she has a past, and she gets up to some shenanigans in the play.

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EVERY TIME I THINK
ABOUT IT, IT'S DIFFERENT

"We've got some really great actors who are really excited about all the potential in their characters. Putting it together has just been a case of really working out who these people are and where they are coming from, because all of them do some questionable things. They're being pushed to the edge. We've still got a lot of questions about these people, and I think that's really cool. There's a lot of uncertainty written into the script, and it's been really fun testing that out. It's definitely been exciting to have the input of all of the actors on their

characters and also their other characters. You can't really think about all of the characters' headspace when you're reading it, but when you've got people defending their corner because they are playing this character it's a lot easier to see the different sides of the story. And that's opened it up to playing a story that's really multi-faceted. And funny! It's definitely funny."

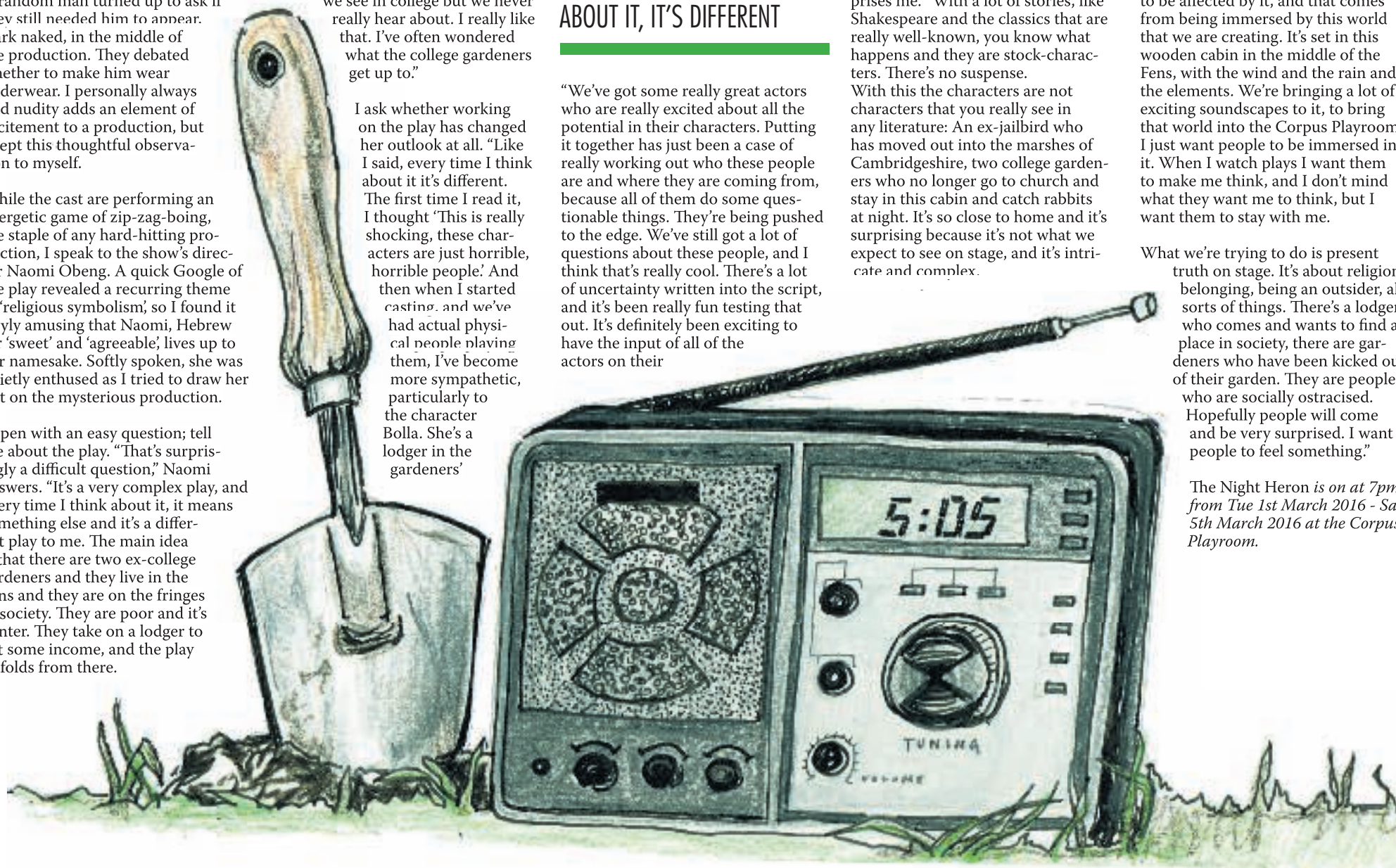
I ask what Naomi thinks about the Cambridge theatre scene. This is usually when directors launch into a gushing speech about how much they love all of the productions at the ADC, but again Naomi surprises me. "With a lot of stories, like Shakespeare and the classics that are really well-known, you know what happens and they are stock-characters. There's no suspense. With this the characters are not characters that you really see in any literature: An ex-jailbird who has moved out into the marshes of Cambridgeshire, two college gardeners who no longer go to church and stay in this cabin and catch rabbits at night. It's so close to home and it's surprising because it's not what we expect to see on stage, and it's intricate and complex."

I picked this play because when I read it, nothing about it felt inevitable. Everything felt like a shock or surprise, and you were on the edge of your seat when you were reading it, and I want to bring that to the stage. I felt like if I was going to direct a play it has to be something that makes people think, not something that you just watch and it doesn't affect you when you leave the theatre. It presents a world that's very shocking."

Is there a message that she wants the audience to take away? "I don't want to put particular thoughts in their mind, but I definitely want them to be affected by it, and that comes from being immersed by this world that we are creating. It's set in this wooden cabin in the middle of the Fens, with the wind and the rain and the elements. We're bringing a lot of exciting soundscapes to it, to bring that world into the Corpus Playroom. I just want people to be immersed in it. When I watch plays I want them to make me think, and I don't mind what they want me to think, but I want them to stay with me."

What we're trying to do is present truth on stage. It's about religion, belonging, being an outsider, all sorts of things. There's a lodger who comes and wants to find a place in society, there are gardeners who have been kicked out of their garden. They are people who are socially ostracised. Hopefully people will come and be very surprised. I want people to feel something."

The Night Heron is on at 7pm from Tue 1st March 2016 - Sat 5th March 2016 at the Corpus Playroom.



Will Dalrymple, writer, director and actor in the upcoming production, discusses bringing Sterne's classic character to life...again

*This is a sequel to **Tristram Shandy**, which you also wrote and directed. How does this compare to the original production?*

It's difficult for me to compare the two because they're so different: different tone, different cast (almost completely), different form: the first one was a sketch show-ish piece of literary criticism, this one is a tragicomic (a loathsome word, I know) road trip. It would have been a bit too easy (or as easy as the source material allows) to rehash the first one but with different bits of the book. What I've tried to do with this one is to take bits of the books (Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey* provides half of the material this time) and set them in an entirely different format – instead of the interview/book tour setup of last time, we now have Tristram attempting to coordinate and star in an actual play, with an actual plot and an actual focus to it, without giving too much away. Because of this I think it certainly has more of a dramatic thrust to it, which hopefully won't undercut the comedy of the play but will definitely present us with bits of Tristram's personality that the setup of the first one didn't really allow for tonally. This is because the first was a big, tacky, whizzpopping extravaganza, whereas this is a small-cast chamber piece; the change in venue from ADC to Pembroke New Cellars reflects this pretty well. Also this one goes off-book. A lot. To all Sterne purists out there, I apologise in advance.

How do you go about writing a play?

With both *Tristram Shandy* plays that I've done, I started out with absolutely no idea what I was doing. So I wrote a few pages of something and then stared at it for weeks and weeks until a good idea presented itself which allowed me to write a few more pages until the next 'brainwave'. Even when you have a 600-page book in front of you to plunder for scenes and characters, for me at least writing a play is mainly sitting around for ages waiting for a decent idea to pop into my head. I like scenes and plots to make complete sense in quite a pedantic way, so if I have an idea of a fun scene or two

(as was particularly the case with this one), I wouldn't write it down until all of the various, niggling 'why's' and 'how's' had been answered. Also, I've found it obligatory to tell absolutely everyone I encounter that I'm writing a play and then proceed to talk at them about a scene I'm 'grappling with' or something insufferable like that. I don't know why but it's such an integral part of the 'process'...

Without giving too much away, what is your favourite moment of the play?

Hmm, my favourite bit is actually the ending, which I can't really talk about sans spoilers! There is a wonderful scene that, while not in the books, is based on historical fact; Laurence Sterne and Samuel Johnson met once and despised each other. There are a couple of glorious accounts of this and I couldn't help swapping out Sterne for Tristram and letting the scene play out to its pornographic conclusion (look it up)! The cast also make a shipwreck scene towards the beginning of the play something truly glorious to behold – any fans of *Toast of London* will see 'High Winds Acting' by the bucketload! It's difficult to single out particular moments, because practically every scene contains Tim Atkin as Tristram along with Mark Bittlestone and Rhiannon Shaw playing almost every other part between them, and all three of them are so, so good, it's impossible not to love them all!

*Can we expect to see a **Tristram Shandy 3** on the horizon, or do you have any other projects planned?*

Oh, I don't think my friends or their Facebook timelines would tolerate another one! Tim and I had some rather silly ideas for a potential *Tristram Shandy 3*, and there are countless stories in the books that I've not yet touched, but to be honest this one is pretty final. I've tried to tie up some

of the loose ends that I thought the first one left and in doing so I think it comes to quite a nice, organic conclusion, so I wouldn't know how to go about doing a third! Rather dully, my 'next project' is exams next term, but after that, who knows? We might see *Tristram Shandy: Live at the (somewhere else)!* in the near future...

*The first **Tristram Shandy** received rave reviews. What do you think is the secret to a successful production?*

In my experience, it comes down to the people involved – a group of dedicated, enthusiastic, like-minded people is all that's needed on the production side. However, what this group must share is ambition! However, a producer who can be realistic and curb the more preposterous ambitions is always a bonus. So really several things are needed. In terms of making theatre people actually enjoy, I think it's so important, at every point in the script, to stop and think 'are we making an audience sit through something?'

If the answer is yes then something needs to change. It's all very well 'exploring' this idea or that, but just because a script explores something, it does not mean the audience will want to. Theatre, as far as I see it, should be many things – exciting, challenging, spectacular, involving, moving, funny – but I think the very least we can ask of a play is that it be entertaining. When the reviews for this come in I'm sure at least part of these highly strung reflections on theatre will come back to bite me on the arse, but I really do think everyone's in for a smashing time with *Tristram 2*. I said of the first one that *Tristram* would give Cambridge 'an evening of theatre like no other': I like to think that he was just getting started.

Tristram Shandy 2 will be on at 7pm, Tue 1st March 2016 - Sat 5th March 2016, at Pembroke New Cellars



TRISTRAM SHANDY 2

CAMBRIDGE THEATRES NEED GENDER QUOTAS



Eleanor Costello questions the lack of female roles

When I told my friend that I was writing a piece suggesting that we introduce gender quotas in the world of Cambridge theatre, he reacted with surprise. "Most student productions are majority-female," he pointed out. "It's not a problem here."

To some extent, he's right. Many Cambridge student productions swap the genders of characters during casting, and anyone who has cast for a show will tell you that there are far more female than male applicants. We're all young, educated, and this is 2016. There appears to be no reason why parts wouldn't be available for women.

However, this term the Corpus Playroom has offered 40 parts for men, compared to 33 parts for women, leaving women taking just 45 per cent of roles. At the ADC the figures are more skewed, with 66 parts given to men as opposed to 46 for women, resulting in a gender division of 60:40 in favour of men.

What are the reasons for this division? Well, it can partly be traced to the popularity of Elizabethan and Jacobean plays, which are heavily male-dominated. It is also partly

down to the gender bias found in most stand-up comedy shows, where male comedians dominate the field. Sometimes productions are actively barred from changing the gender of casts. The team behind Pembroke Cellars' production of *The History Boys* intended to make it all-female, but Alan Bennett's agent refused them the rights unless the characters remained male.

The issue of gender-swapping is controversial in the theatre world. Last month saw the launch of the 50:50 by 2018 campaign, with several leading theatres, including the Almeida, signing up to a commitment to equality in the gendered parts that are offered. It's an ambitious campaign, but one that's been a long time coming. Women are 50 per cent of the population. In 2016, it's insane that they don't form 50 per cent of casts.

When he was in town putting on *Measure for Measure*, I spoke to professional director Tom Littler about this issue: "It's really exciting. We are miles off that now, because we do so much classic work and work set in the past, which makes it difficult. I definitely think it's the direction that we should be headed

in. It's easier with Shakespeare than some other playwrights because you have a certain flexibility; we can pick a world in which it makes perfect sense for Escalus, as an authority figure, to become a woman. When you have a more socially realistic work it becomes more tricky in a weird way.



THIS WEEK'S FOOTLIGHTS PRODUCTION FEATURES JUST TWO WOMEN

"I definitely think if we're seeing all-male Shakespeare productions then we ought to see all-female Shakespeare productions, because it's bonkers. And that whole excuse about it being original practice is such bollocks. Such bollocks – you can quote me on that. If you are going to do original practice then you have to do it properly. You can have a 13-year-old boy playing Juliet, that's interesting as an experiment. But it's not original practice to have a thirty-year-old man playing Viola. That's not what happened. It's interesting

to do *Dido, Queen of Carthage* with a cast of boys because that's how it was done, but it's not interesting to use drama-school graduate men aged between 20 to 60. It's bizarre, and why take those parts away? There aren't enough parts for women as it is."

Littler was referring to Mark Rylance's famous productions of *Richard III* and *Twelfth Night*, with the latter seeing Rylance himself, a 42-year-old man, playing Olivia, one of the few strong Shakespearean parts for women. I saw *Richard III*. In an overtly misogynistic play, the whole thing felt very uncomfortable.

This week's Footlights production features just two women in a cast of nine. The ADC and Corpus Playroom have consistently failed to provide equal numbers of parts for women; in 2015 they offered 239 parts for men and 201 parts for women, a discrepancy of 10 per cent. In a town where the majority of applicants for roles are women, this is disappointing. If CUADC cannot provide equal parts for both genders, then surely introducing gender quotas is the obvious solution to the problem. I contacted CUADC for comment but received no response.



COMEDY

Comedy for Calais

McCrum Lecture Theatre, 21/02/16

★★★★★

Comedy for Calais was a night of stellar comedy and wine-drinking. But behind its conception was a bleak situation. It has recently been announced that the Jungle Refugee camp in Calais will be evicted by the authorities, leaving at least two thousand refugees without shelter and desperately in need of aid. To help raise donations, students pioneered a night of cheer and positivity, encouraging students to relax and have a giggle while raising money for a really worthwhile cause.

The evening celebrated some of Cambridge's finest student comedy, and none of the stand-ups disappointed. Host Yaseen Kader kept the energy going in between the acts with lively audience interaction and sharp, witty observations, like questioning the status of foot fetishists in today's society. Each set was kept

short and snappy. I could happily have sat through longer sets given that the performances were of such high quality, but I can understand the decision to cut them down as this may have made the event as a whole drag on somewhat. The comedians launched in with confidence, and left you wanting more. All of them offered original, side-splitting material, but among those who really stood out were Isa Bonachera, Haydn Jenkins and Ken Cheng. My friends had actually seen several of the sets before in a separate comedy show, and they told me that these were, if anything, only funnier the second time round. Many of the one-liners had the audience in fits of giggles including one of my personal favourites: "I left home at the age of sixteen – then I got back from school in the afternoon."

Had the organisers kept to having stand-up after stand-up perform one after the other, the format might have become slightly monotonous, but this was prevented by the inclusion of an interval in which to buy more wine (all proceeds went to charity) and also by the integration of refreshing group performances. These were the double act, Luisa Callander and Ruby Keane of the recent sketchshow *Mavericks*, and also Quinoa Comedy. Quinoa

Comedy performed a condensed (but no less amusing) version of their recent show *No Pain No Grain*. They quickly had the room in stitches with Elliott Wright's hilarious David Bowie impression and some brilliant physical comedy. Their set ended on a belter, with a stage mishap turning into a moment of perfect comedy as a prop baby's head smashed on the floor (it was less morbid in context, I promise). Meanwhile *Mavericks*' Ruby and Louisa made for an immediately likable dynamic duo, sailing comfortably through their range of hilarious impressions. They even included a dad joke.

The only way in which Comedy for Calais disappointed was in terms of the turnout. The McCrum lecture theatre (which, in spite of being a lecture theatre, made for a surprisingly comfortable venue when the lights were dimmed) was far from being at full capacity. Such a splendid show-casing of Cambridge's comedians, in aid of such a good cause, really deserved a larger audience.

Also, I waited until the interval before buying a glass of wine, so I can vouch that I teared up from laughter before I was even tipsy.

<http://www.calaid.co.uk/>
Charlotte Gifford



RESTAURANT

Pho

1 Wheeler Street, Cambridge

★★★★★

Pho landed with a bang on Wheeler Street on the eleventh of this month. The family-run Vietnamese chain, which opened in Clerkenwell in 2005 and has since expanded across the UK, has bagged itself some of Cambridge's most desirable commercial real estate: a sizeable double-storey spot thirty seconds from market square, beside the Corn Exchange, and surrounded by an array of established, successful neighbours including Jamie's Italian, the Pint Shop and Aromi.

Last Friday's 'Free Pho All', promoted via social media over recent

weeks, was a commendable marketing ploy. By noon, a long queue of pho-seekers (predominantly students – people were actually reading) had formed along the length of Wheeler Street, resolutely awaiting the promise of a free bowl of Pho (usually about £9). Pho is your ultimate noodle soup: a popular form of Vietnamese street food, it consists of rice noodles, stock (lovingly prepared for twelve hours) with meat or vegetables. Ardently avoiding pho-mo (ha), I ordered the most popular pho: deliciously tender beef brisket, swimming in a hearty bowl of rice noodles and aromatic beef broth. Pho is served with a side of fresh herbs, which you tear up and stir into the dish to add flavour and aid digestion. Navigating the floating noodles with chopsticks requires a certain degree of patience, but also forces you to pace yourself – always a good thing. The service was, as one might expect

for a soft launch, abundantly friendly and the place was filled with a happy buzz (only partially due to the thrill of free food and exceptionally sunny weather). As the 'clean eating' storm continues to rage, Pho ticks all the right boxes. Dishes are based around raw veg, lean protein and vitamin-rich broth, making Vietnamese cuisine one of the healthiest in the world, not to mention a brilliant hangover cure.

Pho is set to become a student favourite: the vibe is laid back and breezy, you can comfortably gorge for under a tenner, and the pho itself packs more punch than a tired Wagamama ramen. Be warned, though: Pho consumption is a slurpy and somewhat splashy business, so perhaps not a wise option for a dinner date.

1 Wheeler Street, Cambridge, CB2
3QB Sun-Wed 12pm-10pm, Thurs
12pm-10:30pm, Fri-Sat 12pm-11pm
Lily Spicer



FILM

Trumbo

dir. Jay Roach, 124 mins

★★★★★

"Daddy, are you a communist?" Nicola sits astride the family pony, as her father, Dalton Trumbo (played by Bryan Cranston), offers a careful analogy: if she made the choice to share her packed lunch with another child who had none, she'd be a communist too. This trite reduction – with all the scope of a thought-provoking meme – is the nearest the film comes to any real engagement with the C-word. *Trumbo* is no history, let alone a radical history, but rather that timeless reaffirmation of the American constitution and the rights of the (white) American (male).

In 1947 the Hollywood Ten came before the House Un-American Activities Committee in Washington. They were screenwriters and directors with unfashionable political leanings. When all refused to cooperate—to meet that toxic question, 'Are you now, or have you ever been...' – they were convicted for contempt. The studios, initially indignant that the state should dare meddle with free enterprise—free

expression – soon sensed the changing tide of opinion and baulked. Communist sympathisers would not be employed. While many emigrated to Mexico and Europe, the screenwriter Dalton Trumbo – one of the original Ten, out from prison – stayed in Hollywood, writing under pseudonyms, before finally breaking the blacklist in 1960 when he received a writing-credit for *Spartacus*.

Trumbo sells itself as a historical biopic. We have sombre intertitles telling us how factual it all is. There's even real footage from newsreels and contemporary films interwoven. But beside this apparent taste for authenticity is a tonal disingenuousness, and even a kind of ambivalence for the era. The film opens to a fast bebop number, but this is all we hear of the '40s; slushy strings soon take over. For a film set in Hollywood in the 1940s and 1950s – a place and moment for which we've so carefully curated our nostalgia – to give us nothing of that feeling, without in any way attempting, as an alternative, to dash these expectations and break through the charade, strikes me as a failure. So *Trumbo*'s interiors are fine, the shots are fine and make Hollywood look kind of like Hollywood – but they give us no relish of it; the camera has no taste for anything it passes over. The script is deathly flat apart from the rare zinger



EVERETT COLLECTION

from B-movie exec, Frank King (played by the ever-great John Goodman): “You wanna call me a pinko in the papers? Do it. None of the people that go to my f**king movies can read!” King, operating his studio from what resembles a bowling alley diner, and keeping a baseball bat under his desk, makes a welcome departure from the film’s otherwise stodgy and sentimental realism. He makes you think what the Coen brothers would have done (or did do much better in Barton Fink).

“COLDLY INSINCERE, AND INFREQUENTLY FUNNY

Trumbo simply cannot decide how seriously to take itself. It’s bursting with the mortal significance of its own matter—history—while simultaneously contorting it, showing actor Edward G. Robinson (Michael Stuhlbarg) naming names, when in fact he didn’t. ‘Real life’ stories of this variety always play with the facts, but this alteration makes *Trumbo*’s very basis feel desperately insincere. Helen Mirren makes for a calous Hedda Hopper—the Republican

gossip columnist and kind of Katie Hopkins equivalent—and yet she feels like a cheap villain. She and a bullish John Wayne soak up most of the antipathy, as if they alone—mere entertainers—had their hands on the cogs of American paranoia. Bryan Cranston as *Trumbo* is sassy and likeable, though we see him mostly through incessant type-writing montages, or in boring conversation with his friend (Louis C. K.) who also has lung cancer—just in case history wasn’t interesting enough. The Civil Rights Movement makes it into the background briefly, while the only non-white speaking part is a prison inmate, Virgil (Adewale Akinnuoye-Agbaje), convicted of killing a white man. He easily merges with the conglomerate bulk of America that condemns *Trumbo*, as he’s made a vigorous patriot. The camera would have *Trumbo*’s downsized suburban house look dingy, as if it weren’t on the cosy side of the Federal Housing Authority and its campaign of nationwide segregation over the course of the 1950’s.

Trumbo is a case of sanitised history; coldly insincere, and infrequently funny. There is not much radical history to be found in the story of Hollywood—the Hollywood communists that there were, failed—and yet what there is, is thoroughly purged from *Trumbo* and replaced with a saccharine family elegy.

Jim Hilton

ALBUM

Animal Collective - *Painting With*

released 19/02/16, Domino

★★★★★

Animal Collective are in a strange position as a band. They’ve made those early albums beloved by hardcore fans. They’ve made the critically acclaimed breakthrough album, and the knotty follow-up. Its members have forged successful solo careers, with their albums often being just lauded just as much as the main band’s. This leaves the obvious question of what more the band have to say, or if one were to be even more blunt: what reasons do they have for releasing anything new? The answer from Avey Tare, Panda Bear, and Geologist is that they can create the most enjoyable album of their career, and also the album that will probably wind up the band’s detractors the most.

Like any good opening track should do, the tone for the whole album is set by ‘FloriDada.’ Featuring yelping vocals and sounding not unlike the theme tune to a children’s television programme, the song on paper sounds like a nightmare. Yet the band overcomes this by delivering a simply fantastic melody that lodges firmly in the back of your head, willingly or not. The song is probably the most accessible of the band’s career; for all of their charms, Animal Collective could not be accused of being overly generous in the banger department, but ‘FloriDada’ goes a long way to addressing that.

Indeed, a feature of *Painting With* is that the tunes rather sneak up on you. For much of ‘The Burglars’ there is so much going on sonically that it can be hard to discern any melody, let alone the lyrics. The chaos soon takes on a hypnotic quality though, and by the end of the song Panda Bear’s refrain of “*what you think you own, you don’t*” stands out for its yearning beauty. ‘Golden Gal’ has a similar quality, opening surreally with a sample from the sitcom *Golden Girls* and a fairly standard beat, before really growing into its melody only in the last third of the song.

The band have said in interviews prior to the release of the album that they wanted to create punchier pop songs and capture the spirit of The Ramones. Quite what Johnny, Dee Dee and co. would have made of the cutesy clip about dinosaurs that opens ‘Hocus Pocus’ is another matter, but one can see where the band are coming from. No song reaches the five minute mark, with the band choosing to go for direct openings rather than any long drawn-out sections. Brevity is an attribute they seem to value, and *Painting With* certainly does not outstay its welcome. Rather, its concision lends the album a curiously addictive charm.

The album’s lyrical concerns seem to match the joyous mood. Although it can be difficult to make out what Panda and Avey are actually going on about, songs like ‘Vertical’ and ‘Recycling’ reflect not only a love of nature, but a feeling that so much is going wrong with the world that we may as well revel in it whilst we can.

There is much on *Painting With* that will fuel Animal Collective’s detractors. In fact the band seem to have doubled down on the tics that so irritate some listeners. Avery and Panda still share vocals, only this time they do it far more often and far more quickly. Some will find the saccharine nature of the album, so well embodied by ‘FloriDada,’ too much to stomach. It is also true that there is no song given time to space and breathe on this album, as ‘Bluish’ did to such good effect on 2009’s *Merriweather Post Pavillion*. Perhaps ‘Bagels in Kiev’, where Panda reflects on his grandfather back in Ukraine, but at breakneck speed, represents something of a missed opportunity.

Painting With is not going to change many people’s minds about Animal Collective. For those already converted to the cause though, it represents perhaps the purest and most entertaining distillation of what Animal Collective do. Perfecting their craft seems like quite a good reason to continue releasing albums.

Patrick Wernham

ALBUM

School of Seven Bells - *SVIIB*

released 26/02/16, Vagrant

★★★★★

“How could I have known?” singer Alexandra Deheza (inset) swoons in the first line of ‘Ablaze’, the album’s stomping synthpop opener. Well, how could she?

The subtext is inescapable. *SVIIB*, the fourth and likely final album from the indie-shoegaze synthpop group School of Seven Bells, is the first released in four years after producer (and Deheza’s lover) Benjamin Curtis died in December 2013 from lymphoma aged only 35. Deheza, as the sole remaining band member, finished the record alone, a tribute to her former musical, platonic and romantic partner and the band’s fans, calling it “a love letter from start to finish”.

All but one of these tracks were produced and recorded by Deheza and Curtis together in 2012 before his untimely diagnosis. The dramatic irony that results is striking, infusing the record with double meaning and adding depth to what at first blush comes across simply as well-crafted pop.

Throwaway lyrics become powerful statements all the more effective for their simplicity, as when a quick line affirming mutual respect in a relationship in the exhilarating ‘On My Heart’ over uplifting synths and an unstoppable beat takes a tragic edge in the context of Curtis’s death (“*There was a you before me, there was a me before you, and that’s the way it goes*”). The effect is all the stronger for the tenderly optimistic mood of the track (and the album as a whole), as if Deheza is ignorant of and reflective about loss in equal measure, with sorrow and defiance playing off each other to weave a vibrant, doggedly human bittersweet texture as her vocals soar with lyrics like “*With me your love’s safe*”. Most tracks, on the surface, are an ode or an elegy; the mixture of layers of interpretation means they are often both simultaneously.

On past releases, School of Seven Bells could be rightly accused of long, borderline abstruse lyrical flushes. Here, their songwriting technique reaches its apogee, with evocative metaphorical details sitting alongside piercingly direct emotional sentiments (“*Until I felt your hands on my skin, I felt nothing*”). Deheza frequently evokes the air, the sky and the stars, using them as a springboard for her memories of her lover (“*Do you remember when, in the morning hours, we would watch the stars play their song?*”) and for digressions into fantasy (“*Tonight I’m feeling the moon come through, stars sway under my feet, the lights all around me glow, and music takes me*”). We share the sentiment in the opening line of ‘Signals’: Curtis is absent, yet we feel him pervasively close throughout, both emotionally and more literally, as album producer. All the while the synths continue their fierce pace, barely giving us time to digest the rich evocation of human feeling throughout. The musical and emotional parallels with CHVRCHES’s recent *Every Open Eye* are significant: if you loved that, you’ll likely love this.

As the band mourns the loss of one of its members, so too, particularly in the album’s first half, do the songs draw firm musical inspiration from the past – the throbbing, repetition-driven structures and lyrics of 1980s synthpop and soaring New Wave ambiance make for near-perfect retro tracks. That sheen is sacrificed for songs like ‘Signals’ and ‘Elias’, where indie-pop experimentation and layered effects on Deheza’s vocals – a return to the band’s core sound – are less rewarding for sometimes lacking immediate hooks and masking the powerful lyrics lurking underneath. But ‘Confusion’ packs the biggest emotional punch, the only track on the final cut written and recorded after Curtis’s diagnosis. Deheza’s exhaustion over languid, ethereal synths is real and raw, and in the right mood the song is devastating. “*Confusion weighs heavy, and I understand nothing of these changes*,” she laments, the album’s only explicit, direct acknowledgment of loss and pain.

That is far from setting the overall tone. Anthemic closer ‘This Is Our Time’ encapsulates the broader optimism and vitality amidst mourning on these tracks: “*Our time is indestructible*,” “*We own the night, we escape tonight to the haze of the bright lights*”. The result is a moving and occasionally thrilling album that goes beyond a tribute to one man to make a broader, bolder statement about love, loss and life.

Tom Freeman



KEVIN MURPHY



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Lent Bumps: a cox's perspective

As college boats once again descend upon the River Cam, Sarah Doré describes Lent Bumps from the cox's seat

It's the biggest competition in Lent and Easter term collegiate rowing. Months of ergs, weights, outings, early mornings, late evenings: they all come down to this moment. Eight men or women sit poised, blades buried, waiting to see if all of their hard work has been worth it. The coaches count down; there is silence on the river. Then a single cannon sounds. Every crew takes that first stroke together, racing forward, desperately trying to catch up to the crew in front and 'bump' them. Eight oars rise and sink. Eight rowers strain their every muscle. Yet there are not eight people sitting in that boat; there are in fact nine.

Coxing occupies a strange position within the sporting world. It is a role in which you both take part in a sport, while simultaneously not doing any exercise at all. Coxes are the people who sit at the back of the boat, facing the rowers. They are responsible for the safety of the crew, for steering around the (many) corners of the Cam, coaching their crew and motivating during races. It is a test of mental, rather than physical, endurance. I have been involved in the Cambridge rowing scene since my first week in Cambridge: as a rower, a coach, a captain and now as a cox. This time last year, I coxed Lady Margaret's W2 boat in the Lent bumps; this year, it will be Lady Margaret M1.

The most fun that can be had in coxing on the Cam is undoubtedly during the Bumps races. Due to the narrow

nature of the river, side-by-side racing is difficult on the Cam: bumps offer the solution. College boats line up behind one another in divisions of roughly 17 – with the order determined by the previous year's finishing order – and set off at the sound of a cannon. They then race to collide with the boat in front of them, thus earning them a 'bump'. Those who bump or are bumped then pull to the side of the river, and the rest of the crews continue racing. The aim is to make as many of these bumps as possible. Achieving a bump every day of the races (four in total) will give the crew much-coveted blades.

Bumps present a unique challenge for coxes. Coxes often have the chance to make a real difference to the outcome of races and this is never more true than for the bumps. YouTube is strewn with countless videos of past bumps races where the cox has made a bad decision and subsequently lost the bump. Conversely, the right strategic move or a good line around a corner can make the difference between a bump or a row over (rowing the whole of the course without bumping or being bumped).

One of the most nerve-wracking moments of Bumps for a cox is just after the one minute gun is fired. This is the point at which your coach will start counting down. In your hand, you hold the bung: a piece of wood attached by a long chain that you must keep hold of until the start gun goes.



The best seat on the river for Lent Bumps

Another person pushes you out into the middle of the river with a long pole, with maybe 20-30 seconds to go. Bow and two seat (the two nearest to the back) take little taps until you are straight, and then everyone comes forward. The blades are square and buried, the counting stops, and then you hear the gun. Every boat jumps forward at once as you race through the start sequence. You settle into the race, trying to keep your rowers focused within the boat in spite of the chaos outside. You can hear other coxes yelling, coaches are screaming from the bank, and the first whistles (indicating how far you are off of the

boat in front) begin to be blown.

Maybe a boat in front of you bumps and blocks the river, and you have to take a difficult line to avoid them. Maybe one of your rowers crabs (gets their blade stuck in the water) and you have to make a tactical decision about how to deal with it. You might gain on the crew in front and have to call that all-important move to finally bump them, or you might have to motivate your crew to pull away from a crew gaining behind. At all times, you are calling to your crew, listening to your coach, listening to the umpires, and always looking ahead to see what the boats in front of you are doing.

It is an exhilarating and incredible experience.

However, coxing the Bumps is not just nerve-wracking; it is also potentially dangerous. Precautions are, of course, taken to protect all of the coxes who take part. Information meetings are held before every Bumps for coxes, outlining safeguards. All coxes wear lifejackets, and every boat is fitted with a bow ball (sort of a squash ball fitted to the end of the boat so that it is not a sharp point.)

In spite of this, however, the cox's seat is the most dangerous place to be during the Bumps. There is nothing more terrifying as a cox than looking behind you during a race to see another crew gaining on you at a much faster pace than you yourself are rowing. The adrenaline rush of urging your crew on, knowing that you may be hit, is intense. While coxing W2 in last year's Bumps, I was hit in the back by a Darwin crew (through no fault of theirs or mine, just bad luck). Although I was relatively uninjured, it brings home the dangers that Bumps can entail.

Ultimately, Bumps are a test for both rowers and coxes. For rowers, it is a physical and mental challenge, seeing if their training over the last few months has paid off. For coxes, it is purely a mental challenge: holding your nerve, urging your crew on and hoping to make that bump. In my opinion, it is the most exciting place to be in Bumps.

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When rowing is purely mental

Sarah Doré discusses coxing during Lent Bumps. Page 31



Sport

Varsity 2016: the Light Blues struggle



A strong performance did not translate into a positive result for the Volleyball Blues

Women's Squash: Oxford 6 – 0 Cambridge

Men's Squash: Oxford 5 – 1 Cambridge

Ali Hemingway
Sport Correspondent

Cambridge faced their old opponents on the squash court at one of squash's oldest fixtures, dating back to the early 1920s. With only two returning Blues in the ladies' team, and two from the men, facing a largely unchanged Oxford team, with a current professional giving the Oxford men a boost at the top of the order, Cambridge featured as underdogs, but were optimistic that they could upset the favourites.

The ladies took to the court first, with freshers Hannah Yogasundram and Miranda Nicholson starting the game off. Unfortunately, they both faced more experienced opponents, whom they couldn't overcome this time. Next were captain Katie Hanlon and fourth-year Jenny Martin, returning to squash after a spell on the ski team. Hanlon narrowly lost against a seasoned opponent, in a match which could easily have gone the other way, and although Jenny pushed her opponent to a very close final set, it wasn't quite enough to take it to a fourth.

Cambridge now looked to Laura Mullarkey, last year's captain, and Rina Einy, our most experienced player as a former National and British Open Champion. Mullarkey took the first game, but ran out of steam and could not keep her momentum going. Einy

had an incredibly tight match, with some great squash on display, despite being hampered by an injury that took her off court for last season and much of this year. She lost 10-9 in the fourth, with two of the games going to 10-9, losing 3-1 overall.

The men's matches followed straight after. Matt Lees, captain and 2014 Blue, whose leg injury had kept him out since last year's Varsity, was finally back on court. He comfortably took his match 3-0. Riki Houlden, continuing to improve rapidly, won the first, but succumbed to illness and eventually lost 3-1. Jamie Giddins had a very close match, but couldn't convert the games. Luis North, a fresher but an experienced junior player, didn't get off to a great start, but sharpened up to draw at 2-2. The work he had put in to get there showed in the fifth, with his opponent able to take advantage of his tiredness. James Liley, the only player from last year's Blues, played an experienced and tough opponent. Although he fought a close match, he wasn't able to convert it into a victory.

Josh Carter, unable to play Blues last year, fulfilled his potential when facing Phil Nightingale, the new Oxford number one. As a current professional, Nightingale was just a little too consistent for Josh, although they had some great rallies. Unfortunately, Oxford's experience proved just a little too much for Cambridge this year.

Women's Volleyball: Oxford 3 – 0 Cambridge

Katie Gibson
Sport Correspondent

It was with great anticipation that the four Cambridge University Volleyball teams – men's and women's Blues and seconds – made the journey to Oxford for the 2016 Varsity matches on Saturday the 20th February. First up at 9am were the women's seconds.

Throughout these matches the tension was building. When the time came for the women's Blues game it began in explosive style, with the first set being dominated by powerful hitting and committed defence from both Cambridge and Oxford. Every point was fought determinedly, with neither team letting up the pressure on their opposition. The score was neck and neck throughout, with Oxford stealing

the set 25-23.

Cambridge played solidly in the second set, losing it narrowly. Despite the loss, the Blues ladies came away from the match with heads held high after a spirited performance.

Unfortunately, the team then went on to lose their BUCS Student Cup Knock-Out match in Edinburgh on Wednesday – let's hope things look up for them soon.

Cuppers Semis: Robinson edge through to face confident Pembroke

Peter Rutzler
Sport Correspondent

Robinson 0 – 0 Fitzwilliam (pen: 3-1)

In a game that was as dire as the 0-0 scoreline suggests, Cuppers favourites Fitzwilliam missed out on their first final since their glory of 2013. They were dumped out of the competition by high-flying Division Two side Robinson through the lottery that is the shootout.

Perhaps the defining component of the match was, however, the atrocious wind, permanently keeping the ball on the far touchline and preventing either side from putting together any flowing football. The record number of passes from either side before the ball left the field of play stood at the grand total of five.

Fitzwilliam came into the game as favourites but were wary of Robinson's renowned stoic defence. The Division Two side hadn't conceded a goal in the league until midway through this term and, combined with the weather,

it meant goals were always going to be at a premium.

Fitz, although missing two key players in the centre of the park in Stefan Wolf and Joe Painter, looked the most likely to score of the two sides. With threats on both flanks, they were able to test the finger-tips of Harrison through efforts from Spyrou and Rutzler. But these were rare occurrences. The main struggle was keeping the ball on the pitch.

Robinson, too, posed a threat; twice they looked to break through the Fitz line, and they came close when Sibley broke through on the right only to be denied by Henry Warne. At the break there was still no prospect of any goals.

At full time there was no score either and not a lot to report on in between. The best chance saw Fitz substitute Meredith fire a cross-shot across the face of goal, but it agonisingly evaded everyone and went wide.

So to extra time. Fitz rallied late on in the second period and struck the bar through Meredith, who let fly from 25 yards, and could also have had a penalty when Ewen went down in the area with moments to go. Unfortunately,

penalties always seemed to be an inevitability.

The keepers, both of whom play at university level, duly put on a show, both impressively saving two penalties each. After the first two penalties were finely saved, Robinson finally opened the scoring, but Fitz failed to reply – blazing their second penalty over and wide. Two more saves left the score, after three penalties each, at 1-0 to Robinson. Robinson scored their fourth spot kick, and although Fitz managed to respond, Sibley had the chance to win it for Robinson. Unfazed, he calmly stroked the ball to the right of Warne, sending Robinson through to face Pembroke in the final.

Pembroke 4 – 1 St Catz

Pembroke, on the other hand, are now quite accustomed to cup finals. Grange Road is all but a second home now for the Valencians, and they will be back there today having swiftly cut St Catharine's cup adventure short with a comfortable 4-1 win over the weekend.

Pembroke came into the game off the back of a terrible run of form of

no wins in five games, a streak that has seen them slip perilously close to the drop. Plus, with forward David Ifere sidelined, they may have feared the worst coming up against the slayers of Jesus: St Catharine's.

Yet they came out of the blocks full of energy, quickly taking the

lead after 12 minutes through Captain Tom Ogier, who found the net following an excellent cross from Oldfield.

10 minutes later Lopez made it two, and minutes later an own goal left the home side 3-0 up and cruising into a third consecutive final.

Pembroke dominated

most of the first half, with numerous opportunities, yet St Catharine's were not about to surrender and Gareth Goh gave the second division outfit a glimmer of hope when he found the net from close range on 30 minutes. Yet a comeback of such unprecedented proportions was always unlikely.

Pembroke remained the most likely to score in the second half, with the home side getting plenty of joy down the flanks.

Finally, with the game nearing its end and St Catz getting desperate, Marcus Nielsen put the game to bed. The Blues forward slotted home a goal from close range to send the home fans into delirium, and ensured Pembroke will be back at Grange Road for the third successive year.

With many now claiming that Pembroke's golden generation is entering its twilight years, could this be their last chance to get their hands on that coveted Cuppers trophy?



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